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Investigating Adolescent Bullying Programs: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice

By: Amanda Waligora

Abstract

Recently, substantial research has been conducted towards the widespread concern of adolescent bullying. Definitions and qualifications of bullying incidents have changed as studies and factors relating to bullying have evolved. Extensive amounts of resources can be found and made available for schools, parents, and adolescents in relation to bullying, but the question stands if these theories and resources are being used in the schools, and if so, how. This study focuses to examine current bullying program implementations within school districts of the Southwest Michigan area. Qualitative analyses on interpretive interviews were conducted to determine what school districts are actually doing to prevent and intervene with bullying incidents through personal accounts of stakeholders. To help aid future research and adolescent bullying programs, the researcher's goal was to find the potential limitations and promotions that effect the movement of theory into practice. Interviews were conducted with multiple stakeholders who must be directly working with students in relation to bullying. Interviewees included guidance counselors, a vice principal, and a security officer. The results were decoded into the following themes: implementation, key players, success, problems, and resources. These themes should be identified by school districts when creating and perfecting their own bullying programs. The research concluded with the realization that bullying may never be eliminated, but stakeholders, like those interviewed, must still work for a more positive, encouraging school environment. Adolescent bullying programs should come from a proactive approach over a reactive stance, with a zero tolerance message towards bullying. With a teamwork approach,

schools may work to limit the underlying problems of bullying within their school, supporting both the victim and perpetrator.

Introduction

With bullying taking new light in the news and media, one can't help but inquire what prevention and intervention programs schools are actually implementing within their walls. It is vital that administrators put bullying programs at the top of their agendas because large amounts of bullying events take place outside of adults' watchful eyes. Administrators must do all they can within the school to reduce bullying so when students are not under their direct protection, their guidance is still there. In interviews conducted by researchers Crothers, Kolbert, and Barker (2006), students wished teachers would more efficiently notice and interfere in bullying situations while providing assistance to the bullied and involving the parents of both the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s). There are substantial resources available from the state, districts and online for not only adults, but more influentially, for adolescents in dealing with bullying. An appendix has been placed following the bibliography of such resources found during this study. This research is conducted to bridge the gap between bullying program theories and actual school practice. The goal was to interview multiple stakeholders, within the school system, who hold a significant role in dealing with bullying on program implementation. These five professionals hold different faculty positions, representing two different school districts in the Southwest Michigan area. I hoped to find successful program implementation devised from similar literature found in my own inquiry. I collected personal reflections from the stakeholders, seeking if there was a common theme in development of program implementation, success, key players (those involved in bullying), and potential problems. I ended the interviews with their own personal opinion on eliminating bullying.

This research is personal to me because my own sister was a victim of bullying. She experienced social isolation and exclusion from a member within her own peer group for over a year. Starting in her sixth grade year, the bullying progressed until it finally ended her seventh grade year when she reached out towards parental guidance that led to the awareness and action of the principal and bully's parent. During this isolation and exclusion, she experienced substantial weight loss and began excluding herself from activities. Even after the bullying had stopped, she would be in constant anxiety everyday going into school in fear that it would happen again. I have watched her personality be stripped away as she is still building her confidence back up a year later. As a future educator, I took it up as my own social justice to become a resource for students and begin my fight against bullying at the ground level of implementation, the classroom. As adults, we can do more to inspire adolescents so that they feel safe enough to stand up together against bullies, and fewer adolescents will have to go out into the world in fear.

Literature Review

Adolescents are not only facing physical and verbal discrimination and victimization at school and extra-curricular activities, but in their own home through the Internet. Bullying has evolved as it, "extends to a wide array of behaviors that include social exclusion, cyber bullying, verbal hate language, and public humiliation" (AERA, 2013, 11). One must become educated with not only these new types of bullying, but the new roles and factors within bullying. First, one must be able to correctly define bullying, which many find difficult to do. Several researchers have come to define bullying as a "form of repeated physical, verbal, or relational/indirect aggression against a less powerful individual" (Frisén, Hasselblad, Holmqvist, 2012, 981). Many argue that to be classified as bullying it must have the elements of repetition

over time and have a power imbalance. Most researchers have agreed that there are five features of bullying:

- 1) The bully intends to inflict harm or fear upon the victim
- 2) Aggression toward the victim occurs repeatedly
- 3) The victim does not provide bullying behavior by using verbal or physical aggression
- 4) Bullying occurs in familiar social groups
- 5) The bully is more powerful (real or perceived) than the victim (Griffin, Gross, 2004).

Unlike past interpretations of bully interactions being between just the bully and its victim, there are six different participant roles a child can engage: the victim, bully, bully re-enforcers, bully assistant, defender of the victim, and the outsider (Gini, 2006). These bullying events can be direct, open attacks or indirect social isolation, exclusion, or non-selection towards the victim and all the possible adolescent roles (Bosworth, Espelage, Simon, 1999). Boys generally take place in direct physical bullying behaviors while girls participate in indirect relational bullying behaviors (AERA, 2013).

While adolescents may find bullying wrong or may not be directly involved in a bullying scenario, certain variables will encourage adolescents to join the bullying or remain on the sidelines and not intervene. With bullying reaching new levels and scenarios like those previously stated, school districts must take advantage of the vast resources that are available for students and adults to bridge the gap between theory and practice, in hopes to reduce bullying altogether. This thesis is an analysis of the conducted interviews with stakeholders to see actual implementation that is taking place in school systems today. The paper is arranged into the methods the research took, the results from the conducted interviews, and concluding paragraphs of where to take this research in the future. Again, an appendix has been placed following the

bibliography with suggested resources found from my own inquiry to help aid those interested in education on bullying and programs. These resources can easily be found via the Internet and target both adolescents and adults.

Methods

The research was a qualitative analysis on program implementation from five interpretive interviews of a sample of five different stakeholders from three schools in the Southwest Michigan area. The target demographics were wide-ranging so the research could obtain results from multiple perspectives. For school and personnel privacy, the three schools that participated will be labeled School A, School B, and School C with only titles of positions named. My inquiry was to find what gaps are obstructing current practices and encourage future research for implementing effective bullying programs in the school. The research goal was to interview people who were directly involved in the process of implementation. From my own research, I believed that obtaining these personal, relational responses from the interviews would directly benefit my goal of determining what is being implemented within school districts, across the Southwest Michigan area. The main strategy was to conduct in-depth interviews of the individuals to obtain individual lived experience in dealing with bullying implementation. Email invitations were sent out to Southwest Michigan school districts asking for participation in the research study. Participants had to be currently working in the school and with students in relation to bullying. Participants that replied and accepted the invitation were scheduled for an interview. The interview sample included three guidance counselors, one security officer and a vice principal.

All the participants were asked the same interview questions framing the study. The 25 questions were focused on the following areas: What are schools currently implementing? Who

is involved in the process? What are potential problems in the implementation? What has been successful and what do schools still need to become successful? What resources do schools have, wished they had, and where do these come from? Interviews were conducted individually lasting at an average about 20-25 min. The sessions were recorded with a digital audio recording device so they could later be coded. An outline of the interview was present for the interviewer to make notes. A limitation to this method is in interpreting the interviewees' responses. The questions were created so there was no bias in what a school should be doing. The interview was set up for the interviewees to tell their own story and their own personal response to how they see bullying and how it could be ended. The quotes used in the research come directly from the recorded interviews.

After the recorded interviews were completed and documented, they were then coded into the following sections: implementation, key players, problems, success, and resources. These codes were chosen from the interview responses because they had a direct relation to bullying program creation and operation. The results were interpreted from these codes to determine what schools are actually practicing and what that looks like, who is involved and how much weight do they carry in the process, what is stopping successful implementation and what resources are needed, and what do schools need to be successful and how does that affect the key players. Every effort was made to remove bias and personal agenda while interpreting these interviews so personal stories were able to tell authentic implementation and results. I believe these codes will best aid future implementation because an effective program needs to have an awareness of the following elements to use their resources correctly and to directly benefit their students.

Results

In 2011, the State of Michigan adopted an anti-bullying law that required school districts to adopt policies regarding bullying within six months to be in place by the start of the 2012-13 school year. The debate stands if districts need a highly esteemed program to end bullying or if a simple protocol would suffice. The research found that the three schools' policies were differentiated in their implementation, but had relatively the same outlook on what needed to be done to be successful. The results may seem oversimplified at the surface level, but digging deeper into the ground level of implementation, a school district needs the full participation of all key players and key factors to reach success. This research found that to be successful in any implementation one needs: clear expectations of student behavior, staff and student education, clear rules on what to do in the situation, community involvement, and most of all, student and staff buy-in. An effective program needs to have an awareness of the following key factors to implement their own bullying protocol.

Implementation

Implementation differed across the three schools and key players with a spectrum that ranged from reactive to proactive approaches. No one approach has eliminated bullying completely, though each had key elements to note in any effective bullying program. School A addressed bullying from the reactive side; the school had set in place a protocol and system over a program based implementation of what to do if a student reports a bullying situation.

“I don't know if we specifically have a program. We do have a protocol if a student is bullied that there are certain steps and certain paperwork they fill out and security does investigate it and meet with the kids” (Guidance Counselor, School A).

This protocol is framed centrally around an incident report that relies on student incentive to fill out the report after the bullying situation. One Guidance Counselor from School A noted how

students are encouraged to be the eyes and ears of the school and report any incident they see. From these reports, the security team deals with the investigation of the bullying situation. While faculty can report situations, the protocol's participation is mostly encouraged to students with word of mouth, informing students where and who to go to. Incident reports can lead to peer mediation among students and faculty members to discuss what has taken place. The key element to this system is the documentation of the bullying reports that was mandated by the district. Just recently the school has begun numbering the documents with a log number and scanning them into the system. This system was developed by the head of security, whose former work as a public safety officer gave the school the idea of logging the document like a case number. This is the heart of the system as the Security Officer in School A quoted, "it all goes back to the incident reports." The incident report is the start and referral of the system for security to investigate leading to mediation and if need be, suspension. It helps to aid key players to notice any repetition in bullying, track how long this has been going on, and to find if there is any common denominator from these occurrences.

School B sits in the middle of the spectrum framing their system on incident reports and peer mediation, but takes a more proactive approach in limiting bullying. This is effectively done through their school flow patterns set up in the beginning of the year. The school creates "pods" where all four of the main core classes are put into a pod area to be supervised by teachers, "it's kind of a divide and conquer and supervision, but the biggest thing is flow patterns of it" (Guidance Counselor, School B). When students come from the exterior hallway into the pod there will be a teacher actively supervising in the hallway and another in the locker room. Other teachers are watching the classrooms to help divide the work among the team. The three story building divides each level to a grade and each pod to have about 130-140 students. This

active supervision limits quarrels between classes and common times where bullying would take place.

“...most of the time, from what I see, it is from the unstructured times when you kind of see kids flare up. So we push to have a flow pattern in the school and also have active supervision when you’re out in the hallways as well” (Guidance Counselor, School B).

When a student gets bullied and it comes through a referral, student services handle the situation by first contacting both parents and bringing them in to talk about the issue at hand. These referrals are documents much like the first school to target the patterns that occur in bullying. Counseling is available for both the bullied and aggressor with the vice principal coming in to decide actions of mediation or suspension. School B implements bullying prevention projects into content classes to address and limit bullying among peers. The Guidance Counselor from School B brought up how the honors society created anti-bullying posters, “buddying up with the art project form [sic],” and mentored other students on what it means to be a good friend.

School C takes a proactive approach in implementation by infusing a curriculum based program called PBIS, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. A main lesson is conducted at the beginning of the year with refreshers done quarterly on the school’s mission of “expect respect.” These lessons give students the tools to address bullying through the premises of “Stop Walk and Talk” and how to respond if someone gives them the “stop” hand signal message shown through the curriculum. The goal of this is for students to become educated enough on the program where it becomes a pattern. The most important thing to note from this implementation is that every student is educated and gets the same message about bullying, “the education part is mandatory, they have to be educated in it” (Vice Principal, School C). Along with the lessons, teachers are also educated on “15 second” interventions where if they see

something questionable, they have the language of how to step in quickly and address it.

Through the Character Counts program, students are educated in the classrooms about the “six pillars of character.” These are standardized behavioral expectations with measurable rules of what they look like. The Vice Principal states that the education process needs to focus on the positives as well, “obviously also part of the education is how do they [students] support their classmates. How do they advocate for a friend that is being bullied.” School C tries to make these rules as clear as possible so students know what the targets of the expectations are. A reward system is even in place for students that meet those goals of positive behavior.

Designated times in homeroom are set aside for students to role play bullying situations and create some of their own positive programs to support the message.

When bullying occurs, students are called down to the office to address what is going on. The victim and the bully’s parents are both notified through a letter signed by the students. The letter states the school does not expect any contact, just the students have met and the issue has been addressed. If the bullying occurs again, the school follows their code of conduct for consequences and the guidance counselors meet with both sides. Students can report bullying to a teacher or parents and fill out a referral online.

Key Players

It is just as important to inquire who is doing the implementation and how when looking into school bullying programs. All three schools agree that the mission against bullying starts in the home, with influences from the community, that shape students’ mentality prior to entering the school. As the Security Officer in School A put it, “I think it goes back to the home and what’s being taught in the home.” In any implementation program or protocol, a school needs a team to be successful. While School A takes a realistic approach to bullying and the root of the

problem, it leaves the bulk of the work to the campus security team with one individual taking it as their own mission to implement more programs.

“The reason why we’ve done things in the past is because I’ve had a passion for bullying, so there wouldn’t have been anything...I have such a passion for it, I am researching and looking, and trying to find out things that work and implement things back in this building. I had trouble implementing programs that other schools were implementing on bullying and didn’t have any success because I didn’t have people and faculty to jump on board with me, so it is hard” (Security Officer, School A).

While students know who to go to in relation to bullying, this leaves little to evolve if only one person is on board to implement more engaging programs. In the current protocol, the security team does the investigation and the follow up, leading to disciplinary action to be decided by the vice principal. Counselors are involved with the security team to conduct mediation and one-on-one counseling to students. Students are encouraged to self-report and participate in mediation.

School B takes a more team approach to implementation through their flow system and their own student services program. Implementation starts at the top as administration sets the policy, working with the vice principal and student services. The vice principal heads the student services and deals with documentation and discipline. Student services handle student affairs by developing programs, dealing with reports and teaching how to identify bullying to staff members. The faculty and teacher team is involved by supervising and reporting bullying. Students are chosen by faculty to lead peer mediation sessions and are encouraged to report bullying situations. School B contacts both families when bullying occurs and invites them into meetings to discuss the issue at hand, involving them as a key player in the process. An online website is available for parents to log on to report bullying,

“at the beginning of the year, there is a letter that is sent out by our principal that is about bullying....also online on our website we do put some anti-bullying information and things we can do about it” (Guidance Counselor, School B).

School C addresses family during a bullying situation through formalized letters signed by the student. Like School B, School C understands that because families are a key player, it is important to educate them as well. Letters are sent to homes encouraging parents’ involvement because, as the Principal stated, they are the closest to their son or daughter. An online website is available for parents and/or students to report bullying or schedule a visit. School C emphasized how it takes a “school wide approach” when dealing with bullying.

“It takes a whole staff. Everyone needs to be involved with the educational process, common language, common theme of how you are going to address it when it happens, you know; staff and students, you’ve got to include students in this process” (Vice Principal, School C).

Some may argue that standardized programs do not touch the relational root of bullying, but having a “school wide approach” like such helps make the program personal to students. The Vice Principal, with others from the district, developed a universal approach to bullying through the PBIS model because they have seen its implementation. The teachers hold one of the most significant parts of the team by conducting the PBIS and character lessons throughout the year, being more than the eyes and ears with 15 second interventions, and participating in faculty meetings. Students are encouraged in the process of developing the education section through homeroom activities; the student leadership team also addresses bullying education in their agenda during the fall retreat. The Vice Principal noted how even the local Girl Scouts in the building are earning their silver patches by developing a week promotion of random acts of

kindness and how to encourage and build up peers. This encouraged staff members to start a club to keep the momentum going to build into the school culture. Counselors, behavior specialists, and school psychologists are all available for students dealing with bullying.

Problems

With implementation laid out and key players in place, one must be ready when problems occur. One of the first problems that occurs when discussing adolescent bullying programs is determining what exactly is bullying. All schools agreed that students and faculty need an education of bother vs. bullying to correctly diagnose what is going on. “Kids obviously bother each other constantly, but they’re children. They’re going to pick and make fun of, but that’s not considered bullying” (Security Officer, School A). Faculty must note to not underestimate what to a student feels like in an imbalance of power and constant targeting.

“Be direct, talk about it, be specific on what kids are dealing with and have the discussions and don’t down play it. Take an incident of a kid feeling an imbalance of power or frustration, don’t get caught up in the word bullying, just not treating someone in the way they’d like to be treated with care and dignity” (Vice Principal, School C).

With correct education to students, faculty will be able to implement and intervene with problems more efficiently and students will have a stronger confidence to deal with bullying on their own. The Guidance Counselors and Security Officer in School A noted several times that bullying is just a symptom of bigger problems,

“I think we just need to take care of our kids... I think we need to address those needs that drive that behavior; so I think I don’t think it’s just a bullying thing, I think we need to take a look at the perpetrator person who’s exercising that behavior and help them and

deal with any issues they might have and meet their needs” (Guidance Counselor, School A).

As families in the community are hurting, students have become insensitive and unmindful because those old fashion character and morals are not being taught at home.

“...from the kids that I talk to and the counseling that I do kids are hurting, they’re struggling. I don’t think they mean to be mean, but they’re mean, they’re just mean, insensitive, they’re not mindful of other people and I just feel it just really starts at home and understanding those old fashion character and morals” (Security Officer, School A).

The Security Officer went on to say this leads to teachers having to conduct this “home-training” in the classroom, adding on to the already large list of duties for teachers. It is hard for schools to be successful in bridging their own theories to practice when the home is not leading by example. While this outside key player does little within the school walls, its influence is one of the strongest forces.

Even when schools have determined the definition of bullying and any preconceiving causes, if faculty is not equipped with the knowledge and tools for conducting intervening steps, implementation will not successfully develop. This leaves students uncomfortable with what to do and unaware of their role in this process. Students may not be reporting because of this lack in education or confidence with the system/program. As noted before in the literature review, students may not intervene in the issue because they are worried what may happen to them if they do. If students do not trust the school program to protect them as well as the victim, they may not report the problem. The Guidance Counselor in School B addresses this problem directly through his mediation,

“What I say to kids is handle what you can handle, you know if something is really wrong you’ve got to report it. You know reporting to us is not tattling. The big thing I would say is kids feel like ‘I don’t want to rat someone out,’ or tattling. It is going to be worse until you report to us what is kind of going on.”

This staff and student buy-in to whatever program is being done in the school is a large factor of its success and failure. School C is directly implementing lessons into the classroom, but while School A does not, all stakeholders noted that implementation needs to happen at the base level to obtain student engagement. Another factor that limits a program is a lack of holding kids accountable for their actions. Students are more likely to report if they see something being done about it, “the first thing we need to do is to reassure the students this is going to be done and actually do something and have a follow through with it” (Guidance Counselor, School A). Without that accountability from the staff to get things done, students lose their drive as well. To do this, schools need time for professional learning communities which cost time and money. The lack of funding towards bullying programs makes it harder to develop the time to address the issue and teachers being able to implement new programs. School B noted with outside factors, such as social media and the Internet, taking a new role in bullying faculty need more training to address the new problems. There is such a demand already on teachers for what they “have to do” that bullying gets pushed to the side.

“It doesn’t work with just one person or just two or three...I would still go back to the lack of funding and the lack of, I wouldn’t say teachers would have a lack of interest, but they have so much going on with trying to teach and with so many behaviors going on in the classroom now a days, teaching is just really difficult to do” (Security Officer, School A).

This limits teacher buy-in which severely reduces student buy-in to the program. No program can be successful without this.

Success

How does one describe success in human affairs when it cannot be put easily into a numerical scheme of data? If more cases are triggered, does that mean a program is successful because staff is aware of them? Or does that mean there is a bigger problem among students within the school? Is success measured large scale by the number of reports? Or if a bullying incident has reduced in one case? How does a school measure school environment, by safety or involvement? This research looked into the themes of what makes a program successful because it is more relevant to the study of bullying than a number can show. Schools need to look at their current programs' potential and occurring problems and develop a way to turn those into solutions. With School A and School B focusing much of their program on incident reports, students need reassurance that something will be done when they report and then faculty actually does something with the referral. Documentation has been deemed very successful, but School A notes, a follow through should be scheduled with students for them to see what was done because they personally took action. With more legitimacy and action from faculty, students begin a feeling of trust that is more powerful than any assembly,

“you could have all the assemblies, you can have the posters and things like that, but if that person is not available and that person does not follow through and is a high priority for them, then everything else is not going to count for much” (Guidance Counselor, School A).

The more consistent and available faculty can be for students, the more likely a relationship can be built for students to feel they have someone to come to. This relationship cannot be

standardized. This men/women power that creates a team and school wide approach to address bullying in a proactive manner is the most powerful thing a school can implement into their bullying program.

“I think with anything it is not what to do, but how you do it. You can put any program out there and say we’re going to do this and this works great, but really it is the manpower and women power of the group...you can run any program, but once you get a program running, it is the consistency on it that makes it successful” (Guidance Counselor, School B).

When a program has staff buy-in they are more likely to develop student buy-in; without this it would lead to the failure of any program. The emphasis of team work is especially infused in School B and School C’s implementations. More action is placed on faculty and student involvement with the idea of being proactive in mind, “our experience has said the more direct approach you handle it, the better results you have” (Vice Principal, School C). This should stimulate the school climate to be positive with the idea to lead by example; teachers should model for students what it means to be a good person and how to effectively work with peers when problems occur. A common language on what is bullying and what to do if bullying occurs needs to be educated so there is no gray area in the matter. Education and creating a common language is what School C states is the success of their program. The more resources schools have available, the more they can build and use this information. To be successful, school programs need to involve parents as much as possible. By keeping an open line of communication, schools must utilize this direct connection to the student to help prevent bullying and support victims.

Resources

Resources are a great aid in the success of any bullying program to guide key players, but the lack of them can result in problems that hinder effective implementation. Again, an appendix is placed following the bibliography for aid in future resources. One must remember that key players are a resource in themselves and should be readily available for student use. If key players are unable to assist students properly, they should know where to address students to. School A's use of documentation serves as a significant resource for evidence when dealing with reoccurring bullying situations. The Security Officer noted during the interview how implementing a program that would promote education on bullying would be a vital resource to move the school from being reactive to proactive. School B offers an online website for parents and students, full of bullying information and what to do if it happens. The Vice Principal, along with updating the website, sends a letter to parents every year on the issue of bullying. These two resources can be a great use to key players outside of the school. The Guidance Counselor realized with new factors developing in bullying, such as cyber bullying, more training needed to be done to educate key players better. The idea of a parent night was brought up to talk about technology and its role in bullying. School C uses visual resources directly in the school, such as posters on Stop Walk and Talk, to help remind students what to do if bullying occurs. This goes hand in hand with the reboot lessons from the PBIS and Character Counts programs. School C uses a Google site for staff to obtain resources to use when implementing lessons on bullying. This helps lessen the strain on teachers to find these sources themselves. With clearly drawn out expectations and rules of the programs available, the Vice Principal stated the best resource School C could use now is time for professional learning communities to discuss what's working and what's not.

Conclusion

This research began with the anticipation of finding several bullying programs and approaches implemented in the Southwest Michigan area to stimulate interest and awareness in other school districts. During the beginning of the research I was very optimistic because research has developed substantial amount of theories of what works best when approaching bullying, and hundreds of campaigns have spoken out against it. One can find various resources via the Internet such as the “Bullying Prevention Resources Guide” from the Nonviolence Crisis Intervention or previously created programs from the National Bullying Prevention Center. I believed that there must be some kind of “cookie cutter” approach to programs with new researches developing new theories. Yet when developing a program, the issue of bullying expands beyond mere definition to the different perspectives a school could take. This research has shown me the depth of bullying programs and the multiple perspectives one needs to take as they develop the school’s program. As a Guidance Counselor put it in School A,

“do you look at the perpetrator and their issues, or do you make the environment with XY and Z that it’s going to deter the perpetrator from executing that bullying? Do you extinguish what is in the perpetrator or do you deter its expression because what you implemented in the environment. Is punitive action going to deter that perpetrator or do you address the perpetrator and ask what are you doing?”

The goal of eliminating bullying through programs takes on a larger perspective when program creators ask these questions during program creation. I found that this research broke into the underlining factors of bullying programs that a school first needs to recognize before it begins to bridge the gap between literature and theories into effective school practice.

The research inquiry focused on three schools, with three different implementation programs and three different outlooks, yet all addressed to bullying. Each interview conducted

told a different story as each person had a different role and view of what effective bullying programs looked like; it was a reflection of the current practice in the school and what that looks like in action. The research found that there is not a “one size fits all” approach to programs that will eliminate bullying. Former research has shown how in depth program creation can be as Rebecca Griffin and Alan Gross’s (2012) largely centered on correctly defining bullying to lead the future direction of research. Research conducted by Ann Frisé, Tove Hasselblad and Kristina Holmqvist (2012) focused on what actually makes bullying stop from the voices of former victims. In relation, this research focused on the themes and practice that each school should take note of when developing their own program through the view of multiple stakeholders.

Each school was at a different step in the process to reduce bullying, each with their own objective. School A had developed a reactive protocol, but was in need of a team effort to progress into stronger proactive programs. Their use of documentation and mediation was effective in seeing patterns of bullying, but education was limited. The research saw this progression in School B who not only used documentation as a resource, but practiced implementation from a proactive approach with active supervision. This was shown best in their use of “pods” and flow pattern developed directly into the school layout. School C had an established, effective program set and implemented, but what made it so effective was the team effort put forward ‘school-wide;’ without this element any program, assembly or protocol is put to waste. One must remember that a standard program cannot stop bullying alone.

Does then a school need a large program and implementation like School C or would a simple protocol such as School A suffice? There are elaborate bullying programs and assemblies readily available for school systems, but what is truly realistic for the school district to gain staff

and student buy-in? This answer differs across school districts, which they must answer for themselves, and decide if the school can approach a program through large implementation or just key notes to implement into simpler actions that fit the school's demographics. The next question lies in its key players; should implementation be student centered, with the bulk of the program counting on them to confront the issue, or should staff interfere and try to eliminate the problem? Like many theories in education, it is subjective to the school's staff and students. Yes schools need to have a strong team of staff to give students not only a feeling of legitimacy, but reliability to come forth. As educators, it is also our job to educate our students to be able to implement these practices on their own. While students may wish for teachers to notice and intervene efficiently, we need to give adolescents the tools to address bullying themselves when they are not in the view of our watchful eye.

Discussion

What remains the same is the realization that the human condition of bullying may never be truly eliminated. All interviews ended with the question of what it would take to eliminate bullying in American schools and if this was possible. Here are some of the responses:

“No, I don't think it is possible, we will always be dealing with people being frustrated with other, should I say peers...I think we are always going to have issues with people not getting along with one another and being frustrated, but I do believe that the repetitiveness of bullying that can be addressed and reduce” (Vice Principal, School C).

The idea of a bully-free school may be possible in a utopian society, but here we must face the fact that there will always be an issue of frustration, imbalance and jealousy.

“I think it’s a condition, I think there is going to be an imbalance of power between people. I think we need to just keep working and pushing back the inclination to exercise that power you know... the bullying” (Guidance Counselor, School A).

Nobody can change the power differentiation that is present in schools and community, but schools can use local resources to promote role models to reach out and encourage positive behaviors and morals. It is up to schools to create an environment that allows kids to feel safe and not have negative messages brought before them. Schools need to address both sides of the perspective of the perpetrator and the victim when trying to reduce bullying. “I think there is always going to be an underling current. There is always going to be someone that is struggling emotionally and taking that pain out on someone else” (Guidance Counselor, School A). There are underlining causes of every bullying situation that need to be addressed. Staff must treat these underlining issues with high priority and promote zero tolerance with negative actions. With all of this in mind, schools can work towards reducing the repetitiveness of bullying inside and outside of schools.

So where do we take this information? Schools should reflect on their own bullying practices and question if their implementation is directed truly to helping eliminate bullying and then look to each theme to see how their implementation practices relate. Inquire what may be limiting the school from reaching their goal and what the school can do to bridge the gap between their own program theories and practice. Schools should look towards their program approach and the key players they have available to inquire what potential key players could make a substantial difference. All interviewees agreed on the need for parents and the community to help promote the mission. Getting parents, staff and most importantly students directly involved as key players and a support system inside and outside of the school is a great

way to help and support the mission. While bullying may never be eliminated, we all can work towards a more positive, optimistic school and community environment.

Acknowledgments

This research is dedicated to my younger sister who was a victim of bullying. It strives to not only be a resource for school personal, but an encouragement to implement bullying awareness in schools. The process has taught me it is better to be proactive than reactive and never to underestimate ground implementation. Thank you to my mentors Dr. Jones and Dr. Hermann-Wilmarth for helping me through every step of the research process. Most of all thank you to the volunteers who agreed to participate in the study and further the education of bullying programs. I hope this helps to guide program development and begin to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

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Appendix

For anyone interested in learning more about this topic, I have compiled the following list of Internet resources, Facebook pages, YouTube videos, and active organizations for future use.

Internet Resources:

Utterly Global Youth Empowerment	www.antibullyingprograms.org
American Educational Research Association	www.aera.net
National Bullying Prevention Center	www.pacer.org
Teens against Bullying	pacerteensagainstabullying.org
U.S Department of Health and Human Services	stopbullying.gov
Crisis Prevention Institute	
educate.crisisprevention.com/School-Bullying-Guide.html	
Kalamazoo College	
www.kzoo.edu/psych/stop_bullying/resources/websites.html	
Australian Education Authorities: Bullying. No Way!	bullyingnoway.gov.au
Stop Bullying Now	stopbullyingnow.com
Kidpower Teenpower Fullpower International	kidpower.org
Seventeen Magazine: Delete Digital Drama	Seventeen.com/delete

Facebook:

Stop Bullying
Bully
Everyone Matters
Stop Bullying: Speak Up

YouTube:

Imagine a World Without Hate by Anti-Defamation League
Jeff Yalden – Teen Motivational Youth Speaker
Bullying Prevention Resource- Film One by p3rstories
Nobody Likes a Bully – How to Stop Bullying in Schools
Cyber Bullying Virus by Daniel Fraser
Bullying We'll Stop It OFFICIAL MUSIC VIDEO – Long Branch Middle School by
bullyingwellstopit cover to "I Like It" by Enrique Iglesias
Pink – Perfect (AHMIR cover) – Anti-Bullying video- ahmirTV

Promotions:

STOMP Out Bullying
SECRET Mean Stinks "Gang Up for Good"
1D+ OD Together Against Bullying
STOP the Hate