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Bullying as a Means to Foster Compliance

JAANA JUVONEN AND ADRIANA GALVÁN

A growing body of developmental research on bullying (i.e., ridicule, intimidation, and exclusion) focuses predominately on either the perpetrators or victims of bullying. Although the critical role of onlookers or bystanders is recognized especially by intervention approaches (e.g., Olweus, 1994; Olweus & Limber, 1999; Salmivalli, 2002; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), little has been written about the effects of bullying on the peer collective as a whole. In the current chapter, we provide a conceptual analysis of bullying as fostering social norms. This analysis is based on the assumption that bullying is an abuse of power over both the victim and the bystanders who witness this abuse.

By targeting a particular person or a specific characteristic of the person, the bully communicates what is unacceptable or nonnormative. When witnessing bystanders do not convey their disapproval of bullying but instead reject the victim, the intimidating behaviors are sanctioned and encouraged (Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, 2002). The alliance between the hostile bully and bystanders (i.e., rejecting peers) thereby helps foster group norms, which are made salient by actions against violators. To protect themselves from humiliation and distress, most group members therefore comply with the perceived or enforced norms (Juvonen & Galván, 2008). This means that hostile peer responses function to “teach a lesson” not only to those who are repeated targets of bullying and rejection (Juvonen

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& Gross, 2005) but also to other group members. Hence, when someone gets ridiculed because of an “uncool” brand of shoes, no other classmate is willing to wear those shoes.

Our analysis is guided by the hypothesis that those who stand out or who do not fit in are most likely to be rejected and bullied (Juvonen & Gross, 2005). In the first part of the chapter, we describe why bullies are in the position to determine what makes someone different, and how lack of opposition from bystanders in turn helps reinforce norms of what is not tolerated by the group. The latter part of the chapter examines individual differences in compliance ranging from emulation of bullying to immunity from social pain.

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Why are some children bullied and rejected within their social groups? Most developmental psychologists agree that negative social reactions among peers are not random, but that certain behaviors or personality characteristics invite negative and even hostile responses (see Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kupersmidt, Coie, & Dodge, 1990; McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt, & Mercer, 2001 for comprehensive reviews). Although certain behaviors (e.g., social withdrawal) may be considered almost universal predictors of negative peer responses, a conceptually more parsimonious account suggests that perceived deviance from social norms (Juvonen & Gross, 2005) or person-group dissimilarity (Wright, Giammarino, & Parad, 1986) predicts who becomes a social outcast (see also Boivin, Dodge, & Coie, 1995; Stormshak, Bierman, Bruschi, Dodge, & Coie, 1999).

Research on children with disabilities clearly demonstrates that many types of deviations are frequently ridiculed and that peers with special needs are not accepted by their typically developing peers (e.g., Brandt, Kasari, & Rotheram-Fuller, 2007; Cummings, Pepler, Faye, & Craig, 2006; MacMillan, Gresham, & Forness, 1996). But youth who are envied by their peers because of their superior skills, good looks, and so forth are also at risk for peer exclusion and intimidation (cf. Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). It therefore appears that those who differ from others pose a threat to the group or its social identity (cf. Hogg & Turner, 1987). Hence, those who stand out or who do not “fit in” are excluded (Schachter, 1951; Williams, 2001). Based on this type of functional account of negative peer reactions, bullies appear to play a critical role in determining whom to target.

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Social Structure and Power

To comprehend who is in the position to influence whom within a group, it is critical to understand the group's social structure (Juvonen & Galván, 2008). As in human primate troops, social hierarchies among human adolescents are established and maintained through demonstrations of power (Savin-Williams, 1977). One effective way to show one's might involves bullying. When asked about bullying, secondary school students associate it mainly with dominance and power (Rigby & Slee, 1993). Moreover, several studies document that bullies are popular or "cool" (Gest, Graham-Bermann, & Hartup, 2001; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; La Fontana & Cillessen, 1998; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). Thus, bullies possess power to affect others because of their high social status.

Dominant individuals have social capital not only to maintain the social order (Sapolsky, 2005) but also power to influence the behaviors of other group members (Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003; Prinstein, Meade, & Cohen, 2003). Cohen and Prinstein (2006) demonstrated this influence manipulating social status in an Internet experiment. Eleventh-grade boys supposedly interacted with peers from their grade in a chat room. The adolescent males were most likely to emulate risky behavioral responses of high- rather than low-status peers in challenging social situations involving vandalism, teasing, smoking marijuana, and so forth. Thus, while dominant peers may engage in bullying to boost or maintain their power (Hawley, 1999), others are likely to go along, possibly even join in and emulate the hostile behavior rather than challenge it.

To examine whether youth indeed emulate the behaviors of bullies, Juvonen and Ho (2008) examined changes in antisocial behaviors across middle school grades. Consistent with the social mimicry hypothesis (Moffitt, 1993), those who regarded bullies as "cool" during the fall of 6th grade were more likely than others to display increased levels of antisocial behavior during the 2nd year in middle school. By emulating the behaviors of dominant individuals and possibly also distancing themselves from low status peers (Cohen & Prinstein, 2006; Juvonen & Cadigan, 2002; Kinney, 1993), group members increase their own social standing by appearing more like those in power (Moffitt, 1993). When high status is associated with bullying, emulation of hostile behavior is also self-protective: youth lower their risk of becoming the next victim when they act more like the bully and unlike the victim.

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In sum, the social structure of the group in part explains why bullies have power over others: The behaviors of dominant aggressors not only help maintain their social status, but they also are emulated by some group members. Moreover, bullies also affect group norms. We contend that the characteristics (e.g., behaviors, looks) that are targeted by bullies promote perceptions of group norms that create compliance pressures.

Bullying Targets Norm Violations

Focusing on deviations or violations of social norms is an effective and informative way to define social norms (Baumeister, Zhang, & Vohs, 2004; Eder & Enke, 1991). When a bully calls a classmate a “fag,” the ridiculing communicates to the rest of the group that homosexuality is not tolerated or that “members of our group are heterosexual.” Thus, bullying, much like teasing (e.g., Eder, 1991, 1995) and gossip (Baumeister et al., 2004), helps foster social norms that increase within-group conformity.

Teasing can be conceptually distinguished from ridicule and other forms of bullying in terms of its friendly intent, but empirically the distinction is made based on the response of the target (Eder, 1995). If a sly comment such as, “Nice shoes!” is met with a smile, the friendly intent presumably is understood by the recipient. But if the target reacts with embarrassment or discomfort, the comment is construed as an insult. Given that the boundary between teasing and ridicule is somewhat elusive and often difficult to judge, research on teasing is highly relevant to explaining group dynamics involved in bullying.

Although joking comments about someone’s shoes are not necessarily meant to hurt the target’s feelings, the comments nevertheless reinforce the group’s concern about the markers of its identity (“We don’t wear shoes like that!”). The content of the comment provides insights into the group identity that separates one group from another (cf. Terry & Hogg, 1996). Teasing therefore provides an indirect way to enforce social norms among group members by allowing marking of violations of norms without directly accusing someone (Eder & Enke, 1991). The same dynamics apply to bullying, except that the threat of exclusion is explicit.

Gossip also entails communication about social norms (Baumeister et al., 2004), and participation in the spreading of such information strengthens group members’ sense of belonging within a group. Baumeister et al. (2004) demonstrated that adults who spread rumors gain in social status because engaging in this activity conveys that the gossiper

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is knowledgeable about rules that govern the collective. Similar findings have been documented regarding bullying (Villarreal, Bellmore, & Ho, 2008). The social standing of bullies varies depending on the strength of their reputation. Popularity decreased for students who did not maintain their bully reputations, whereas those who develop such a reputation by the end of the school year gain in popularity. Hence, bullying, much like participation in gossip, can strengthen and elevate the perpetrators' status within the group.

In sum, tactics used to bully peers frequently entail valuable information about group norms. By targeting a specific individual within the collective, the perpetrator questions whether the target belongs to the group and thereby helps define the boundaries of group membership. This message is not only received by the targeted individual but also by onlookers. Unless bystanders object to bullying, the norms are reinforced by the rest of the group. But are bystanders concerned about bullying? What can explain their lack of involvement in incidents?

Lack of Bystander Opposition

Although most youth regard bullying as unacceptable or wrong (Boulton, Trueman, & Flemington, 2002; Rigby, 2006), observational research demonstrates that peers rarely intervene in incidents (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Observations of bullying incidents in Canadian elementary schools reveal that although peers are present in over 85% of bullying situations, a peer intervenes in only about 10%–19% of the cases (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Hawkins et al., 2001). Among Finnish 6th-grade students, the majority were classified as reinforcers or assistants to the bully as opposed to defenders (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Kaukiainen, & Osterman, 1996). Thus, bullying rarely gets publicly challenged, even when the witnesses object to it (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004).

There are a few possible reasons why onlookers do not intervene with incidents and challenge bullying even when they disapprove. First, witnesses may simply want to protect themselves. If they challenge the bully, they are risking their own safety and reputation (Juvonen & Galván, 2008). Such concerns should manifest themselves in heightened level of fear or anxiety (Baumeister & Tice, 1990). Although these effects are well documented in the context of exposure to community violence (Lynch, 2003), witnessing of family abuse (e.g., Adams, 2006) and marital discord (Cummings, Kouros, & Papp, 2007), there is little research

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on this topic regarding bullying. We are aware of only one study documenting the association between observed real-life incidents of bullying and distress. Nishina and Juvonen (2005) demonstrated that on days when sixth grade students reported witnessing a bullying incident, they also reported heightened levels of worry, fear, and nervousness.

Witnessing bullying incidents is anxiety-proving in part because youth realize that they can become the next victim. This is not only a reason why bystanders do not intervene but also a reason why anxiety may increase level of compliance. Janes and Olson (2000) documented the effects of such *jeer pressure* (i.e., the potential threat that ridicule imposes on bystanders), showing that individuals who witnessed someone acting in a particular manner were inhibited from displaying similar behaviors themselves. Thus, anxiety likely mediates the association between witnessed incidents and increased compliance. Members of the group come to understand that by looking or acting like the one who is bullied, they run the risk of becoming the next target and outcast.

Anxiety and concerns over one's status and reputation shape behavior even when the "accusation" or label is false. Eder (1995) demonstrated that norms about sexuality are often endorsed through name calling and ridicule. Labels, such as "fags" and "sluts," mark what is beyond the limits of acceptable male and female sexuality. The concern for getting labeled as a homosexual or a sexually promiscuous individual therefore restricted displays of affection between same-sex youth (especially boys). Similarly, concern for being labeled sexually promiscuous can restrict girls' choice of clothing (especially of those who mature earlier than others). Thus, bullying sets an example of what not to do or wear.

Reinforcement of (False) Norms

Although analyses of the emotional effects on bystanders can help us comprehend compliance from the perspective of the individual, the collective bystander "effects" have additional ramifications, namely, that lack of objections to bullying maintain and reinforce false perceptions of acceptable conduct. In other words, while the effects of witnessing someone else getting bullied restrict public behavior, lack of opposition also gives an impression that bystanders accept the perpetrator's conduct (Juvonen & Galván, 2008). As such, the lack of bystander opposition reinforces group norms that may not be representative of, or necessarily

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therefore arise: “Pretence becomes reality” (Miller & Prentice, 1994, p. 542). Based on research on juvenile delinquents, Miller and Prentice (1994) concluded that the false norms “led to a level of antisocial behavior that no individual member fully embraced.”

The best empirical evidence for pluralistic ignorance comes from research on college drinking. College students not only overestimate the level of drinking among their peers (e.g., Baer, Stacy, & Larimer, 1991) but also rate themselves as less comfortable with drinking on campus than the average student and other friends (Prentice & Miller, 1993). When none of their peers publicly question drinking behavior, students behave in ways that strengthen their social identity and sense of belonging to the group. Thus, misperceptions of the norm guide the behavior of youth who wish to be part of a group, even when they do not privately accept the behavior.

Although lack of opposition can give an impression that behavior is accepted, subtle nonverbal responses further enforce misperceived norms (Miller & Prentice, 1994). In the case of bullying, when a student is targeted the witnesses might smile or even nervously laugh at the incident. These positive reactions on the part of the observers of bullying further perpetuate misperceived norms of approval of the behavior. Similarly, if the target wants to hide or feign embarrassment, the mere lack of a visible negative response may prevent observers from intervening (cf. Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Therefore, ridicule may look like friendly teasing when the target does not want to exhibit hurt feelings. Bystanders are even less likely to intervene in such situations. Therefore, a false sense of acceptability of intimidation is fostered by the apparent acceptance of the behavior by the observers and in some cases also by the victim.

In sum, social norms conveyed through bullying may be perpetuated by false assumptions. When peers witnessing bullying and victims themselves fail to communicate their disapproval of the treatment of the bully, the intimidating behaviors maintain group norms that are partly arbitrary and most likely also inaccurate. But not all group members are equally affected by the threats and the norms set by the dominant bullies and supported by others. We next turn to the topic of individual differences in compliance to group norms.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN COMPLIANCE

The conformity regulating function of bullying does not mean that all ___S
group members are equally affected by the threat of becoming the next ___E
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target. Rather, there are substantial differences in the degree to which youth comply with perceived norms. We have identified three groups as having distinct reactions to bullying. We start with the most vulnerable group inasmuch as they may modify their behavior to the degree that compromises their subsequent adjustment. This group is not only motivated to comply with perceived norms but also to emulate the behavior of their more dominant peers. Another group includes individuals who simply go along with bullying but who do not emulate bullying. This second group is motivated by protection of their social status, and their socially adaptive behavior may be an indicator of their social skills. Finally, a third group includes youth who seem immune to negative peer sentiments and group norms; they do not change their behavior to emulate others nor are they particularly hurt by rejection.

The Most Vulnerable

As discussed earlier, passive permission of bullying (e.g., not intervening) may reveal less about the endorsement of group norms and more about the need to protect oneself. In other words, those least likely to challenge the conduct of more dominant others may be particularly sensitive to negative peer reactions (Romero-Canyas & Downey, 2005). Moreover, these individuals might not only comply with norms set by dominant individuals, but also engage in the very behaviors they associate with power (cf. Juvonen & Ho, 2008). Thus, uncertainty and concern about peer evaluations increase compliance and emulation of behaviors associated with dominance (Cohen & Prinstein, 2006).

Allen, Porter, and McFarland (2006) suggest that susceptibility to negative peer influence reflects lack of autonomy or ability to defend one's point of view. They found that those who changed their opinions to match their friends' not only were engaging in a range of risky behaviors (externalizing behaviors, substance use), but they also subsequently experienced more instability in close friendships, decreased popularity, and higher levels of depression. These findings suggest that high level of compliance is associated with imbalanced friendships that do not last, as well as with emotional vulnerability.

Extending the idea of imbalanced dyadic peer interactions, Juvonen and Ho (2008) showed that unreciprocated desire to affiliate with peers who engage in bullying in the fall of the first year in middle school is

S__ associated with elevated levels of antisocial conduct two years later. No
E__ support was obtained for the mutual attraction hypothesis, suggesting
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that reciprocal friendships between peers who engage in bullying during the first year in middle school do not increase antisocial behavior over time. Thus, unmet social desires or needs are powerful motivators to change behavior.

In a recent study (Galván & Juvonen, 2008), we relied on a new measure that directly assesses the need to “fit in” with a group. The measure assesses the degree to which youth are willing to modify their behaviors or opinions to be consistent with those of their peers in order to protect or boost their social standing (e.g., to belong to a “cool crowd”). Both perceived behavioral norms and the need to fit in had largely independent effects on both antisocial as well as altruistic conduct (i.e., standing up to the bully or resolving conflicts). However, conformity to antisocial norms was stronger among boys with high, compared to low, need to fit in. These findings provide direct evidence supporting the notion that unmet social needs are related to peer-directed behaviors and, in the case of male students, also to their level of compliance.

But youth may also engage in the behavior of the dominant peers not out of fear but simply to improve their inclusion to the group (Williams, 2007). In one experimental study with college students, participants who had previously been either rejected or included were asked to generate ideas with the group of peers who had just rejected or included them. The participants worked on the task either coactively, in a manner that their individual efforts could be easily assessed, or collectively in a way that their efforts were unidentifiable (Williams & Sommer, 1997). Consistent with social loafing effects, individuals who were previously accepted worked less hard collectively than coactively (Karau & Williams, 1993). Conversely, rejected female students worked harder in the collective relative to the coactive condition, supposedly to gain the group’s approval.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that those who feel uncertain about their peer relationships (i.e., those who do not defend their opinions but give in, those whose social needs of friendships or inclusion are not met) are most likely to comply with perceived norms. But also the mere desire to belong to a particular group may be sufficient to comply with what is considered normative within their group. Youth unsatisfied with their relationships or social ranking, those who possess low status, or individuals with a history of bullying and rejection experiences might be most vulnerable to negative “peer pressure.” Unless their unmet social needs can be satisfied, these youth are at risk for long-term adjustment problems (Allen & Antonishak, 2008; Juvonen & Gross, 2005).

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Strategic Self-Presentation and Compliance

But what about others whose social needs may be met, yet they seem to comply with the group norms and not challenge bullying? By not objecting to or intervening with the behavior of the high-status bully, youth do not risk their status by objecting to bullying, but they are also unlikely to join in to bully anyone.

Socially adjusted youth, who know how to adjust their behavior in ways that help them get along with others, are likely to resort to strategic self-presentation tactics to fit in (Baumeister, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). These youth are able to modify their behavior as needed (i.e., depending on whom they desire to impress or get along with), and therefore the way they behave with dominant others is not necessarily consistent with their private beliefs. They understand how impression management works. Although 6th-grade middle school students disapprove the ridiculing of loners, they recognize that they must go along and portray themselves as tough to protect themselves (Juvonen & Cadigan, 2002). Thus, behaviors are affected by dominant bullies, but as long as youth are cognizant of their motives, impression management tactics have no long-lasting negative effects.

One reason teens seem to put up with bullying and comply is that they may not possess the confidence or skills to stand up for others in a manner that is socially acceptable (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2008). Lack of low-risk strategies to intervene with incidents involving peers may account for the apparent contradiction between private disapproval of bullying and public behavior that seems to reinforce intimidating conduct.

Taken together, there is a fine, but critical, line between overt conformity and skillful compliance. While some youth comply with norms set by a dominant group member because of their understanding of negative social consequences of noncompliance, there are others who do not learn their lesson because they seem immune to negative peer reactions.

Immunity From Social Pain

Why do some children appear *not* to be hurt by the threat of exclusion? To understand this issue, we turn to those youth who engage in bullying themselves. In spite of their high social standing, bullies are often also rejected by their peers (Asher & Coie, 1990). That is, although they

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may not publicly get challenged, rarely do peers wish to spend time with those who intimidate others. Yet, bullies who are rejected by their peers do not report social pain following rejection (e.g., Parkhurst & Asher, 1992; Renshaw & Brown, 1993). This finding implies that the group function of rejection might not work for bullies. Thus, not surprisingly, immunity from social pain may explain why bullying behavior is very difficult to change.

A number of explanations have been advanced to account for the absence of direct adverse psychological effects of peer rejection on aggressive children and adolescents. One explanation that has received considerable attention is that aggressive-rejected youth display a variety of self-protective social cognitive biases when assessing their own competencies and their responsibility (or lack thereof) for problematic peer experiences (Dodge & Crick, 1990; Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch, & Monshouwer, 2002; White, Rubin, & Graczyk, 2002). In a meta-analysis, Orobio de Castro and colleagues (2002) found aggressive children perceive a peer's ambiguously threatening behavior as intentionally provocative. This attributional bias helps to explain the aggressive child's lack of emotional distress, inasmuch as blame directed at others is associated with anger and hostility (Weiner, 1995) rather than with social anxiety or depression (Graham, Hudley, & Williams, 1992).

Other types of social-cognitive biases could also account for the lack of distress following peer rejection. Schippell, Vasey, Cravens-Brown, and Bretveld (2003) identified attentional biases among adolescents classified as reactively aggressive: they displayed suppressed attention to rejection, ridicule, and failure cues. Whereas vulnerable youth appear hypersensitive to negative peer evaluation, aggressive "deviates" seem *hyposensitive* to negative peer reactions. Hence, the apparent protection enjoyed by bullies who are rejected may be in part explained by individual differences in social cognitive processing, including but not limited to attributional and attentional biases.

In addition to these social-cognitive biases that help some youth ignore the pain associated with negative peer interactions, sentiments are not expressed as overtly toward aggressive peers as toward other rejected individuals. Peers may simply be afraid to convey their disapproval of the behaviors of the mighty in their group. Therefore, it is not surprising that aggressive-rejected boys are significantly less likely to report negative peer treatment than their socially withdrawn counterparts (Sandstrom & Cillessen, 2003). Thus, in addition to social-cognitive biases that protect

aggressive youth from experiencing social pain, peer interactions experienced by these youth are kinder than those experienced by other rejected youth.

There is additional evidence suggesting that aggressive youth are not socially isolated in spite of their rejected status, but they are connected to other deviant youth. These relationships can therefore compensate for the rejection by the larger peer group. For example, Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest, and Garipey (1988) found that compared to nonaggressive peers, aggressive 4th- and 7th-graders were equally likely to be nominated as a best friend, to have reciprocal friendships, and to be perceived as a central member of a social cluster. However, these peer affiliations are typically formed with others aggressive youth (e.g., Bagwell, Coie, Terry, & Lochman, 2000). Moreover, affiliation among deviant peers is known to facilitate deviance training, whereby antisocial youth encourage one another's problematic behavior (Dishion, Spracklen, Andrews, & Patterson, 1996).

If peer rejection serves to enforce group norms, then the absence of negative sentiments (or lack of awareness of such sentiments) toward bullies constitutes a breakdown of the norm enforcement process. Although lack of negative feedback from peers protects aggressive-rejected children from social distress, they have less of an impetus to modify their behavior, especially when they have similar others to affiliate with. Yet in the long run, rejected aggressive youth are likely to display serious adjustment problems (e.g., Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Tremblay, Masse, Vitaro, & Dobkin, 1995). Patterson, Capaldi, and Bank (1991) contend that peer rejection in childhood restricts aggressive children's options for healthy peer relationships, limiting them to associate mainly with similarly aggressive peers. It is therefore not surprising that antisocial (including aggressive) youth who affiliate with similar others are at greater risk for subsequent criminal behavior (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999). Thus, the lack of responsiveness to peer rejection in the short run can carry some serious long-term risks.

In sum, although most youth wish to avoid the company of bullies, the dominant status of bullies is not compromised. Indeed, group leaders are not necessarily prototypical but rather, in a sense, deviates who frequently engage in strategic marginalization of others (Hogg, 2005). Aggressive youth who are initially rejected by their adjusted peers might therefore ultimately exert considerable power over others because they

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members are reluctant to take on a teaching mission to modify their behavior.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Research on bullying focuses mainly either on the perpetrators or victims of bullying, and relatively little is written about the social or group *function* of bullying. In this chapter, we analyzed bullying as a mechanism that highlights violations to group norms and fosters compliance. We began the chapter by describing the social misfit hypothesis, suggesting that perceived deviance from social norms or person-group dissimilarity predicts who becomes a social outcast. We then discussed how bullies show their might by targeting individuals who deviate from the group norms. Whether by intimidation or by admiration, bystanders respond to bullies' actions in ways that are likely to increase (rather than alleviate) the social pain experienced by the victim. Onlookers side with bullies in an attempt to protect themselves or at times to boost their social status. Lack of bystander opposition further marginalizes the victim of bullying and helps promote group norms that may not be representative of, or even consistent with, the private opinions and attitudes of group members.

In the second part of the chapter, we discussed individual differences in motivations to comply with the presumed norms and the possible long-term consequences of compliance or lack thereof. The individuals most vulnerable to bullying are least likely to challenge the conduct of the bully and may be more likely to emulate the bully's behavior because they are particularly sensitive to negative peer reactions. A second group includes socially adjusted youth whose behaviors can be understood in light of their self-presentational concerns. These individuals strategically straddle the line between overt conformity and skillful compliance. The last group we discussed includes those who seem immune to social pain. Youth who engage in bullying fall into this group, inasmuch as peers' negative reactions (rejection or aggressive retaliation) do not seem to affect them. This apparent immunity may reflect their social realities in the sense that others are reluctant to display negative feelings toward bullies, and bullies also often affiliate with like others. Additionally, self-serving biases in social information processing can account for the lack of distress and lack of initiative to modify their hostile behaviors. Regardless of the reason, immunity from social pain may explain why bullying

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behavior persists and why these behaviors are difficult to change without considering the larger social context in which bullying takes place.

Beyond Individual Differences

The principles pertaining to bullying and maintenance of peer group norms outlined in this chapter can also help account for findings on the effects of social settings on perceptions of belonging and safety. Juvonen, Nishina, and Graham (2006) found that ethnic diversity (as opposed to homogeneity) is associated with less bullying, safer school climate, and lower sense of loneliness. In contrast to homogenous contexts in which all members may feel pressure to conform to a narrow set of norms, diverse settings with multiple social groups and norms possibly provide youth with more opportunities to fit in and belong. Thus, in addition to individual differences in sensitivity to social norms, further research is needed on how different group compositions affect perceived compliance pressures.

Intervention Approaches

But are bullying and its ill effects on individuals and groups inevitable? First of all, let us be clear about two important premises underlying our analyses. We are not saying that bullies are consciously shaping group norms, but that their behaviors inadvertently have these negative effects on peers. Second, we are also not implying that hostile means is the only way for youth to become popular. Although high status can be achieved by hostile and abusive means, it does not mean that all high-ranking or popular youth are bullies. Rather, bullying may be a relatively easy way to gain status especially during the times of social reorganization (e.g., when youth start in a new school; Juvonen & Galván, 2008). There are certainly popular youth who do not engage in bullying (Villarreal et al., 2008), and not surprisingly, these are also the ones most likely to challenge the bully (Pöyhönen et al., 2008).

What are the ways then to decrease bullying and its detrimental effects? It is critical to understand that bullying is not a problem of a few troubled kids, but a collective challenge requiring change in the power dynamics that support bullying. This implies that individually focused programs aimed to change the behavior of bullies are inadequate. Even

S__ if aggressive behavior can be reduced initially, the social reward system
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over in the long run. Therefore, reductions in aggression are unlikely to be maintained over time unless collective norms that reward bullying are changed.

School-wide antibullying interventions developed in Scandinavian countries (Olweus, 1993; Olweus & Limber, 1999; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Voeten, 2005) aim to change the pro-bully culture of schools. Youth are taught how they contribute to the problem of bullying as bystanders. This can be accomplished by discussing stories about bullying (or also about discrimination, persecution, or genocide). Films that help youth take the perspective of the victim and highlight the role of bystanders are used to initiate discussion. These empathy-inducing and consciousness-raising exercises are then complemented with explicit instruction of behavioral strategies that help youth not only to defend themselves but also to stand up for others (Juvonen & Graham, 2004). Program evaluations (Olweus, 1994) show about 50% decrease in the number of students reporting being bullied or bullying others. Also, overall increase in satisfaction with school climate suggests that the social dynamics of the collective are changed. Although not assessed in program evaluations, we predict that students would also report decreased compliance pressures as bullying incidents decline.

In sum, although there are times and situations when youth resort to primitive tactics to form social hierarchies, it does not mean that bullying and its negative effects on individuals and groups cannot be changed. The challenge is to make sure that peer networks do not function as ape troops but more as fair democratic societies where everyone can find a niche and fit in. By relying on systemic school-wide intervention efforts, the ultimate goal is that students are feeling united not by their concerns for their safety or social status, but by their ability and confidence to object to the hostile behaviors of dominant youth.

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