

THE IMPACT OF A DRAMA INTERVENTION PROGRAM ON THE RESPONSE OF THE BYSTANDER TO BULLYING SITUATIONS

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Abstract

Much research exists in the literature concerning bullying intervention for the elementary and middle school population focusing on the bully and victim. This study examined the effectiveness of a drama based social skills program, the 5 W's of Bullying Intervention with a population of 56 urban high school students in the ninth grade (ages 14.5-15). The program specifically targeted the bystander in the bully and victim relationship. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the response of the bystander to school bullying situations following intervention. An objective of the study was to teach the bystander how to effectively interact with school officials, victims and bullies in the school environment. This objective was to help break the code of silence that surrounds bullying in school. Comparison of responses on a pre- and post-bullying questionnaire for an experimental ($n = 29$) and control ($n = 27$) group, show significance for bullying situations involving: reporting to school officials, offensive remarks, sexual harassment, girls planning to jump another girl, boys stealing things, skipping school because of bullying and school safety. Gender and ethnic differences had an effect on the significance of the data.

Introduction

Much of what is known about intervention for school bullying primarily comes from studies that focus on the bully and victim in that relationship. The present study provides support for the use of drama as an intervention in high school and further adds to the literature on bullying by focusing on the bystander in bullying situations.

The reporting of bullying incidents in school is an effective way to prevent and intervene in bullying situations. The present study tests the following hypothesis: drama related to bullying improves the bystander's response to bullying situations. Specifically, through drama-in-education (a method where students learn through interactive observation and performance of life issues), students have an opportunity to observe, practice and reflect on social skills being taught in the school setting. Improving the bystander's response to bullying situations includes teaching effective social skills (e.g., peer interaction, communication, cooperation) to help reduce bullying behavior. The use of drama to teach social skills in high school is hypothesized to be an effective method of instruction for the high school population (grades 9-12, ages 14-18) (Gladding, 1992; Jensen, 2001; and Rambo, 2001).

Although drama is hypothesized to be an effective method for the high school population, a predominance of research in this area has been done with the elementary and middle school student (Olweus, 1993; Olweus and Limber, 1999; Winship, 2001; Krajewski, 1999). Findings of this study address the needs of research including providing more information about the bystander and assessing the effectiveness of an intervention for the high school setting.

The 5 W's Approach to Bullying Intervention

Overview of the Program

This study involved the use of a bully prevention and intervention program, The 5 W's Approach to Bullying Intervention. The author designed this intervention to follow a drama-in-education format that focused primarily on the bystander in high school. Objectives of the program included providing an opportunity for subjects to (a) model behavior for bullying intervention through role-plays, (b) practice skills of reporting, and (c) reassess their attitudes about bullying.

Participants included 56 (experimental group, $n = 29$; control group, $n = 27$) randomly selected ninth graders (14.5-15 years old) from a total population of 400 ninth graders in an urban high school situated in upstate New York. Participation in the program was voluntary. The original design of the study included 60 students. One student of the experimental group was not able to complete the program because of an out-of-school suspension, and three students in the control group decided not to participate after the program started.

Experimental Design

Both groups participated in a series of sessions beginning with the Pre-Intervention Bullying Questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was for assessing subject response to the reporting, intervention and attitude about bullying prior to the intervention. The experimental group received the 5 W's of Bullying Intervention Program including five role-plays: Who to report bullying to, Why report bullying, What to do in bullying situations, Where to report bullying, and When to report bullying. After each session, the participants wrote reflection cards (3 x 5 index cards) to assess their immediate reaction to the scenarios. In addition, the reflection cards offered additional information about the impact of the intervention during the study as well as at the conclusion.

The control group did not receive the intervention during this study. Instead, they participated in the Freshman Seminar program at the school. This is a program that all ninth graders complete during the ninth grade year. Topics for the sessions included careers, the report card, four-year plans, My Roads computer program, tutoring and school success. Reflection cards were also written after these sessions requesting information about the freshman seminars.

During the final session, participants of both groups completed the Post-Intervention Bullying Questionnaire. The author collected data from the Pre- and Post-Intervention Bullying Questionnaires to make comparisons on the bystander's reporting of bullying, direct intervention and attitude towards bullying. Analysis of the results determined if there was a statistically significant difference between those students receiving the drama intervention and those completing the regular Freshman Program. The difference would indicate that drama works as a method to improve responses concerning bullying.

Following completion of the sessions by both groups, the experimental group received seven sessions of the Freshman Seminars and the control group completed seven sessions of the 5 W's of Bully Intervention program. No data was collected on the sessions for either group during this phase of the program.

Significant Findings of the Study

Reporting

Silence is a major factor influencing bullying in school. Studies show that less than a third of the victims in school report bullying to someone in school. Moreover, the most universally accepted position of students about bullying is that snitching is against a "code" among peers. The literature on bullying indicates that few students report bullying incidents to school officials (Batsche and Knoff, 1994; Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993, and Weinhiold, 1999). Instead, the tendency is to tell a friend about bullying incidents, as was the case with the control group in this study, in which 43 percent of the group selected the category "Other (e.g., friend or parent)" as a reporting source. After the intervention, there was improvement in the reporting behavior of the experimental group students. There was a decrease in subjects indicating they would report a bullying incident to "No one" and an increase in specific choices such as the school counselor, principal or as indicated on the reflection cards, a vocational teacher as reporting sources. These results were statistically significant for the African American and Latino students though not for the experimental group as a whole.

For example, information from the reflection cards suggests that there are certain vocational teachers that the students can talk to and whom they feel comfortable sharing information with in school. Choice of the school counselor perhaps comes from my role as a facilitator of the intervention as well as a counselor in the school. Although the author was not a counselor for the students in the experimental group, the students used time before and after the sessions to discuss bullying situations that were specific to them as well as other situations going on in school.

Attitude

Data for this study suggest that the overall attitude of the experimental group students did not improve significantly in comparison to the control group. However, some aspects of the students' attitude did improve. For example, one attitude about bullying discussed in the literature is "Bullying helps to make students tougher" (Hoover et al., 1992). Findings in this study suggest that more experimental group students disagreed with this statement than control group students. Moreover, gender differences exist in these findings. It was reported that experimental group females disagreeing with this statement went from 68.4 percent to 75 percent and experimental group males disagreeing with this statement went from 22 percent to 33.3 percent at post-test. While control group females disagreeing went from 33.3 percent to 40 percent and males in this group decreased in those students disagreeing with this statement going from 58.3 percent to 25 percent at post-test.

Also achieving significance was a change in attitude of the students from "Bullying is not a big problem in school" to "Bullying is a big problem in our school." This is a major finding of the study with the experimental group going from 59 percent to 24 percent agreeing with the statement "Bullying is not a big problem at our school." The control group on the other hand, increased in their attitude going from 33.3 percent to 63 percent agreeing with the statement "Bullying is not a big problem at our school." These findings suggest that through the use of activities in the intervention, such as role-plays, discussion about bullying situations in school, and reflections of personal bullying situations, students became more aware of the impact of bullying in their school.

Recognizing that bullying is a big problem in school, students were ready to target the kind of bullying that most frequently occurs, and that is gossip. Numerous requests were made by the students to practice and perform role-plays with the theme of gossip. The students recognized the value of the intervention for others as well as themselves. They were willing to go to the feeder middle school (students projected to attend their school next year) and perform role-plays about gossip and relationships so that students would have an easier transition into high school. In addition, a consistent theme of the reflection cards throughout the intervention was that the bystander could be helpful to victims in bullying situations.

Findings in the study also suggest a change of attitude about the victim from the "Victim deserves to be bullied" to "The victim needs help." More experimental group students (65 percent at pre-test and 69 percent at post-test) disagreed with the statement "Most students who get bullied bring it on themselves." In comparison, fewer control group students (48.1 percent at pre-test and 33.3 percent at post-test) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In addition, a bigger improvement was seen for the experimental group students going from 55 percent to 76 percent agreeing with the statement "It's important to help peers" while control group subjects went only from 48 percent to 55 percent.

In response to the bullying situation, "If I saw someone being bullied by another student, I would feel _____?", more students in the experimental group, 46 percent, initially indicated that they would "feel sad" in comparison to 24 percent of the control group students who indicated the same response. The difference between the groups was statistically significant at pre-test but not a post-test. At post-test, 66 percent of the experimental group students indicated that they would "feel sad" in comparison to 55 percent control group students.

Bullying Intervention

Another finding of the study tends to highlight the various attitudes that students take to different kinds of bullying. Bullying intervention by the bystander is dependent upon the type of bullying situation in school. This was indicated on the questionnaire when students were asked, “What would prevent you from intervening in a bullying situation?” Response to this question for the experimental group (59 percent at pre-test and 55 percent at post-test) included “It depends on the kind of bullying.” The reflection cards written by students in the experimental group also indicated the same attitude with the comment “Different kinds of bullying, different kinds of intervention.” In comparison, 74 percent of the control group at pre-test responded to the question with the statement, “The need or desire to mind my own business.” At post-test, 51.9 percent of the control group students indicated that response.

Other data indicating various attitudes that students take to bullying situations was seen in the responses subjects gave to the “imagined response” section of the study. In this section, subjects were asked to indicate what they would do in various bullying situations. The data collected indicated statistically significant differences in change scores between the groups on situations, such as,

- a group of boys saying offensive remarks about some girls during passing time
- a friend being sexually harassed by one of the students at school
- a group of girls planning to jump (attack another girl)
- boys taking things from another boy on the bus ride to school
- a friend afraid to come to school because of bullying

Although these situations required an “imagined response” they are helpful to the study in assessing an attitude change of the bystander concerning bullying. Significance of these findings indicates that the bystander would be proactive as opposed to passive when observing bullying situations in school.

When comparing the experimental and control groups following intervention, data suggest differences between the groups on the basis of ethnicity and gender. In most cases, improvements in the imagined reporting or imagined direct intervention were seen for participants in the experimental group as opposed to the control group. For example, in response to the bullying situation—a group of girls planning to jump another girl—more experimental group subjects, 17.2 percent at pre-test and 24.1 percent at post-test indicated that they would report this bullying situation. On the other hand, fewer control group subjects, 11.1 percent at pre- and post-test indicated that they would report this situation. Also for reporting, more experimental group students would report the bullying situation—a friend afraid to come to school because of a bully. The percentage of those indicating that they would report went from 10.3 percent to 24.1 percent while the control group remained at 11.1 percent from pre-to post-test. Likewise, more experimental group students (24.1 percent at pre-test and 51.7 percent at post-test) said that they would directly intervene in a bullying situation of—boys saying offensive remarks about some girls during passing time—than control group students (11.1 percent at pre-test and 14.8 percent).

Researchers suggest differences in reporting would come from gender as opposed to ethnic differences (Acoca, 1999; AAUW, 2001; Olweus, 1993). In this study, both gender and ethnic differences resulted. For example, in the situation about—a friend afraid to come to school because of bullying—24 percent Latino students would intervene, compared to no African American student in the same group indicating that they would directly intervene at post-test. In another example, more African American experimental group subjects would directly intervene in a situation about a friend being sexually harassed, 41.1 percent, than experimental group Latino, 25 percent, students at post-test. Furthermore, gender differences indicated more males in the experimental group, 50 percent, would directly intervene in the bullying situation of—a friend being sexually harassed—compared to females in the experimental group, 29.4 percent, indicating that they

would directly intervene at post-test. On the other hand, more females, 32.5 percent, would report the situation involving sexual harassment than males, which totaled to 12 percent at post-test.

Lastly, there was also a general concern in the experimental group on both the pre-and post-test to help all victims regardless of whether he or she was a friend or cousin. On the other hand, a concern of the control group went from having a similar disposition as the experimental group on the pre-test to being unlike them on the post-test to think that helping a victim was dependent upon whether he or she was a friend or cousin. An example of this situation was found in comparing the responses of sexual harassment. Of the 44.4 percent control group subjects indicating that they would directly intervene, 29.6 percent indicated direct intervention only if it was a friend or cousin who was the victim of sexual harassment. In comparison, for the same situation, experimental group students, 41.1 percent, at pre-test and 29.4 percent at post-test indicated that they would directly intervene for “anyone.”

Unanticipated Results

Reporting

It is uncertain at this time whether the intervention had an impact on increasing the reporting of bullying incidents in school. For this study, the author assessed “How often” bullying incidents were reported from pre-to post-test, a total of seven sessions. At pre-test, no experimental group student indicated that they reported a bullying incident in school. This changed to 17.2 percent of the students at post-test indicating that they reported a bullying incident in school. However, the change in comparison to the control group (14.8 percent at pre-and post-test) was not statistically significant.

The author used no other collection source after the seven sessions to record reporting of bullying by the students. In addition, students did not report bullying incidents that were told to me during and after the sessions. During the sessions, students told me about past and current bullying situations. The number of incidents reported on the questionnaire did not match the number of incidents told to me during the sessions. These discussions did, however, give me an opportunity to check in with the students. The author was prepared to recommend the students to appropriate people in the school if there was immediate danger to the students from bullying.

Along with no significant change in how often reporting occurs, there was also no significance in the findings for the questions, “What would prevent a student from reporting a bullying situation?” and “When would a student report bullying?” The response to these questions differs from other findings in the literature. For example, in response to the question, “What would prevent a student from reporting a bullying situation?” the literature suggests that students do not tell school officials about bullying incidents because of the fear of being called a snitch (Batsche and Knoff, 1994; Hazler, 1996; Olweus 1993, and Weinhold, 1999). Contrary to what the literature says, preventing over half the students in this study from reporting was, “The need or desire to mind my own business.” This finding exceeds the results of another study that indicates, 34 percent of the students said they would try to help the victim, 33 percent said that they should help but would not and only 24 percent said that bullying was none of their business (Charach, Pepler, and Ziegler, 1995). There was no discussion within the groups concerning what “mind my own business” meant for the students. “Mind my own business” could take on different meanings depending on the bullying situation. For example, it could mean that a student does not cheer a bullying situation on but instead walks away, avoiding the actions of a participant bystander. On the other hand, it could mean, as some students expressed in the situation about sexual harassment, that they would not get involved in someone’s love life.

Direct Intervention

Unanticipated direct intervention included responses to the question, “Have you ever done one of the following things to discourage bullying (e.g., pushed the bully away from the victim; yelled something to make the bully stop; talked to the victim in a helpful way after an incident)?” Forty-one percent of the students at pre-and post-intervention indicated that they “Talked to the victim in a helpful way following a bullying incident.” This is a form of direct intervention. No statistical significance was found for this response between pre-and post-intervention. Indicating the same response to the question were the qualitative comments written on the reflection cards. However, there was a difference with the comments on the reflection cards. Most of the students not only wrote that they “Talked to the victim in a helpful way following a bullying incident,” but also made comments such as “I told the victim to let someone know at school or I told her I would go with her to see the counselor.”

Findings also suggest that some students said they would “fight the bully” in response to the question “Have you ever done one of the following things to discourage bullying?” In particular, 13.7 percent of the experimental group students at post-test said that they would fight the bully in response to the situation of a friend being sexually harassed by one of the students at school. Consistent with this form of response to bullying were comments on the reflection cards indicating that the bystander is not afraid of the bully and that in some cases will push the bully away from the victim. In addition, experimental group students increased in the response that they would “fight the bully” in situations involving a friend being sexually harassed by a bully.

Findings also suggest that the intervention had no significant influence on attitudes, such as “Most students who get bullied bring it on themselves”; “Most teasing I see is done in fun, not to hurt people”; “It’s important to help peers when someone is bullying them”; and “It’s okay to call someone names because everyone does it.” According to the literature, teasing and name-calling (verbal bullying) are major forms of bullying in high school (Olweus, 1993 and Whitney and Smith, 1993). Although data in the study indicate the majority of students accept teasing over name-calling, reflection cards indicate different results. Comments also suggest that as long as no one is getting physically hurt, teachers in school do not care about these forms of bullying.

Qualitative versus Quantitative Data

Another unexpected finding was the difference in the qualitative data in comparison to quantitative data. Data seem to suggest that when writing a response to the bullying situations (“What would you do if?” questions) or writing reflection cards after the role-plays, students indicate a change in response from pre-to post-test. For example, no significant difference was found between the experimental and control group for the question “When would you report a bullying situation?” but when asked, “What would you do if my friend told me she is being sexually harassed by one of the students at school?”, a significant difference between the experimental and control group was found. In this situation, more students in the experimental group (24.1 percent at pre-test and 34.5 percent at post-test) than the control group (11.1 percent at pre-test and 18.5 percent at post-test) would report the bullying situation. In addition, following a role-play about sexual harassment, the majority of experimental group students indicated that they would tell the friend to report the situation to a school official or go with the friend to report the situation. Perhaps this is due to students having an easier time visualizing a response to bullying situations in comparison to recalling past bullying incidents such as that found on the questionnaires. To address this issue, the questionnaire could be revised to have more qualitative questions (short answer) to get at the nuances that the multiple-choice questions fail to pick up.

School is a Safe Place

On school safety, findings of the literature suggest that students feel teachers cannot protect them and that school is an unsafe environment. In addition, students skip school because of bully related problems (Batsche and Knoff, 1994; Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993; and Weinhold, 1999). In this study, both the experimental

group students (75.8 percent at pre-test and 89.7 percent at post) and control group students (85 percent at pre-test and 63 percent at post-test) indicated that school is a safe place, that teachers protect students from bullying and that students do not skip school because of bullying.

Limitations of the Study

Sample Size and Attrition

One limitation was the unanticipated attrition rate of students in the total population. Sixty students were selected but 56 (29 experimental and 27 control group) went through the complete program. The sample size of this study could have resulted in finding no statistically significant difference between the groups from pre-to post-test on certain research questions of the study (e.g., “How often have you reported a bullying incident?” “When would you report a bullying incident?”). Sample size has an influence on the statistical power of the intervention because the larger the sample size, the smaller the standard deviation of the distribution of means. If the distributions have a smaller deviation, they are narrower and thus there is less overlap between them. This will then help to indicate a change resulting from the intervention.

Ethnic Diversity

Another limitation related to the population was ethnic diversity. Although the group reflected the ethnic characteristics of the school district located in an urban school setting (predominately African American and Latino), the author was not able to compare Native Americans or Caucasian students because of the limited number of participants in these ethnic groups for this study. In addition, no Asian subjects participated in the study. This lack of diversity could have an impact on the generalizability of the results of the study. Since ethnic differences were found for responses made to some of the research questions, further studies will need to be done to assess differences, if any, concerning other ethnic groups as well as students in other school settings (e.g., rural, suburban).

Group Differences

Another possible limitation of the study was that data at pre-test suggested that the groups were not as similar as anticipated in the beginning of the study. One example is the difference in reporting of the control group, with a larger percentage, over 41 percent selecting “Other” to report bullying situations to in comparison to the experimental group who did not select the “Other” category at pre-test. At times however, the experimental group indicated many responses at pre-test that were significantly different than the control group. For example, in response to the question, “If I saw someone being bullied by another student, I would feel _____?”, 46 percent of the experimental group students indicated that they would feel sad in comparison to 24 percent of the control group students who would feel sad at pre-test. An explanation of these discrepancies might be that the differences are due to chance since both groups were randomly selected on the basis of similarity in age, grade point average, and socioeconomic status. In other cases, these differences are not due to chance because pre-test results were statistically significant.

Session Environment

Students exhibited an interest in participating in the role-plays as opposed to writing responses to the questionnaire. In this case, students were concerned over who was going to be in the role-plays and what part they would play. One boy in the experimental group said, “I’ll come back when it is time to do the role-plays.” Since the questionnaires served as a major source of data collection, it was important to monitor the completion of the forms by the students as well as help students stay focused on the task. All group sessions were held in the auditorium including completion of the questionnaires. It might have been more beneficial to

have the students complete the questionnaires in a traditional classroom setting to avoid the distraction of the auditorium environment (e.g., stage, microphone, comfortable seating, skirts). That way, focus could have been more on the questionnaire items as opposed to who was going to play what part in the role-plays.

Sharing of Responses

Although instructed not to share responses, on occasion, students showed group members a response to a question or talked about a question with group members sitting near them. Sharing such as this might have influenced some of the students' responses to a question. This was a limitation because a student listening to or reading comments from another student could bias the response to a question thus affecting the results of the study.

Contamination of the Results

Further contamination of the results of the study could come from experimental group and control group participants sharing information about the sessions during lunchtime or hallway conversations. For this limitation, as with participants in the group sharing responses, students could report what they think is the "correct" response to meet the expectations of the facilitator as opposed to giving their own feedback about a question. On the other hand, students could also be influenced by peer reaction or response to the program. For example, a student might make a comment to another student—"You shouldn't snitch about bullying." This could have an effect on the response of a student to an item on the questionnaire (e.g., "How often have you reported a bullying incident at your school?")

Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

This was the first study that the author used the Pre- and Post-Bullying Intervention Questionnaire. Although the questionnaires were adapted from the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire Olweus (1996), it would be helpful to the program if more studies were done using the instrument to test for the reliability and validity of the results.

Limitations of the Program

Nature of the Intervention

The nature of the intervention is drama based which requires students to participate in role-plays. Some students were reluctant to participate because of the fear of getting on stage even though it was explained to them that performing in the role-plays was not a requirement for their participation. Perhaps the nature of the program being drama based, had an influence over the genders that decided to participate. As indicated earlier, the design of the study follows a drama-in-education format that the author has used for various activities throughout the school year. Traditionally, girls in the school are willing to try out for the different role-plays and acting assignments. However, since boys are involved in bullying it is necessary to find methods to recruit more males for participation.

Limited Time

The program ran for seven sessions. A notation on the reflection cards was that there was not enough time in the sessions to allow for more students to participate in the role-plays. It took time during the sessions to practice and role-play the different situations. Perhaps videotapes of students performing the scenarios, along with the students practicing the suggested behavior on the video, would help to address the theme of the lesson, allowing more time for student practice and participation.

Reporting Bullying Incidents

As discussed earlier, there was a lack of recording by the author of bullying incidents that were discussed during and after each session by the students. Although the author did incorporate the bullying situations into the role-plays, it might have been more beneficial to record them as well. Then the author might have had a more accurate account of pre and post-reporting of incidents.

Length of Year over which the Project Was Implemented

An ideal time for the study to begin is in the beginning of the school year for ninth graders. If the program begins at that time, students can get the benefits of the program as they establish relationships in high school. The school principal finally gave me clearance to start the project in March of the school year. Ideally, students should participate in the bullying program at least once a month beginning in September or October of the school year. So this may not have been a fair test of the efficiency of the program.

Implications

Taking into consideration the findings of the study, this section looks at the significance of the program, modifying the program for future use and extending the research to future studies.

Significance of Program

Results of this study suggest that the use of drama provides students with an opportunity to observe the bullying relationship in action, recall bullying incidents in school, and practice responses to intervene in bullying situations. One question of the research was the usefulness of the program to the high school population. The following is a discussion of what information the findings suggest:

School violence prevention research

Recently, the author participated in a committee at an urban high school to write an action plan for school safety including bullying and sexual harassment prevention and intervention. That committee was just one of numerous committees being formed throughout school districts across the United States as well as in colleges and universities interested in school violence prevention research (Hamilton Fish Institute, 2002). These committees have the goal of meeting the August 2001 Colorado mandate to implement school safety programs for bullying and sexual harassment prevention and intervention. Extending this study further adds to the knowledge about how to address violence in schools. In particular, it provides a program useful to the high school setting with a focus on what the bystander can do when confronted with bullying.

The high school setting

Comments such as an opportunity to share experiences of bullying incidents and discussion of real issues in school suggest that the program addresses the needs of the high school population. Identifying one bullying problem in school (gossip), the students were willing to do more role-plays. In doing so, the students felt that they could help prospective students to the school (middle school students) as well as other ninth graders in the school.

Assessing student needs

Other benefits of the program are that it helped to assess what the needs are of the students in the school. Through the use of the questionnaires and reflection cards it was learned that students felt safe in school and that they felt that teachers could protect them from bullying. It was also learned that students initially thought that bully was not a big problem at school but during the intervention, they realized that bullying does occur and that no one deserves to be bullied.

Social skills development and role-plays

The program also helped to identify where the students are with bullying intervention. The majority of students commented that they would talk to the victim in a helpful way following an incident. Usually when situations are discussed among the students, fights occur or the bullying continues. Teaching or demonstrating the social skills to take the intervention a step further by reporting it to a school official helps students to address bullying and intervene in an appropriate manner. For example, after observing a bullying incident in the role-plays, students made further comments that they would tell the victim to report the situation to a school official or go with the student to report the situation.

An advantage of the role-plays, as indicated in the study, was that students were able to show a before and after response to bullying situations. In the before situation, students showed how they would retaliate against a bully, as opposed to being quiet if they were the victim or the bystander. In the after situation, they showed the audience (bystanders) what they would do, which in most cases were different than the first response.

Redesigning the Program and Its Assessment for Future Use

One objective of the design of the program is to be on going in a school environment. To accomplish that goal would mean addressing the limitations discussed earlier including providing more time for the sessions, finding ways to recruit for gender and ethnic diversity, testing the reliability of the instruments (pre- and post-bullying intervention questionnaire), and providing a reporting log or journal to better assess the reporting of incidents. Other redesign measures could include:

School wide initiatives

According to Olweus (1993), bullying intervention must be a school wide effort. This would include involving teachers, administrators, counselors, and secretarial and custodial staff to be a part of the program. One issue that administrators, counselors and teachers are faced with is how to implement programs in school so that it does not disrupt the academic environment. The author suggests that this program has future implications for the current school setting as well as other settings because of the following reasons:

- Time efficient. The design of the program was to be time efficient for the school setting. Being time efficient, the author worked the program into the regular freshman program schedule of the school. This allowed for little disruption of the academic school environment. To extend the program further would mean to implement the program in the fall of the school year so that students could have at least one session per month. In that way, the program would be on going in the school and become a part of the regular school day.
- Across grade levels The ongoing goal of the program would also mean extending the program to the tenth and twelfth graders in the school. A consistent comment from group participants was the need to help students that were coming to the school (current eighth graders) as well as helping ninth graders the following year. Going across the grade levels would also mean providing bully prevention and intervention topics specific to the different needs of the students (e.g., Topics for twelfth graders on how to deal with bullying when they enter college).

More qualitative data

The author would also consider including more qualitative responses on the questionnaire and more time for the reflection write-ups. In that way there will be more opportunities for immediacy of response and a range of responses not restricted by the choices of the questionnaire. In addition, the author would include more opportunities for reporting of bullying incidents in a journal or log as opposed to responses only on the questionnaire. Immediate recall of bullying incidents and what a student did during the incident are beneficial data for the study.

As indicated earlier, there was a statistically significant difference between the groups at post-test on “What would you do if?” type questions on the questionnaire. Because of this difference, the author suggests extending the research further with a qualitative follow-up. This follow-up would help to continue assessing the program to fit the needs of the high school student. The author would consider continuing with the role-plays and reflection cards but also add an interview session with the students at pre-and post-intervention to assess change in attitude or response to school bullying. The questions that this proposed study would address include:

- “What are the bullying issues that are prevalent in school?”
- “Do you think bullying is increasing or decreasing at school?”
- “Are these bullying issues different for the different grades levels?”
- “How did you address bullying situations?”
- “Do you feel better prepared to intervene in bullying situations after completing the 5 W’s Approach to Bullying Intervention Program?”
- “How could we get teachers involved in helping students?”
- “How could we get parents involved in bullying intervention and prevention at school?”

Future Studies

Future studies will provide opportunities to further test the hypothesis that “drama related to bullying improves the bystander’s response to bullying situations.” In addition these studies will add to the data already gained from working with the program as well as to provide test reliability and validity of the bullying questionnaires used in this study.

Addressing other grades in high school

There is a need for programs that specifically target the high school population (Inderbitzen and Foster, 1992; Merrell and Gimpel, 1998 and Ollendick and Prinz, 1994). Although implemented with ninth graders in a high school, role-play sessions could be adapted to address situations of students in grades ten through twelve. These sessions could continue to focus on bullying identified with ninth graders in this study including, gossip, teasing, name-calling, and sexual harassment as well as include other forms of bullying (e.g., bullying on sports teams, bullying among cliques, “nerds” versus “popular” students).

Evaluating other drama-in education programs

The Pre- and Post-Bullying Intervention Questionnaires can provide a method of assessment for other drama based social skills programs. A concern of researchers in the field was little if any use of an assessment method to determine program effectiveness following implementation (personal interviews with Krajewski, 1999 and Winship, 2001). The questionnaires given at the onset and conclusion of a program can provide useful information to researchers with specific questions that address the nature and extent of bullying in a school or student reaction to bullying situations.

Addressing different methods of bullying in the school environment

Cyber-bullying is on the increase. Cyber-bullying is the use of information and communication technologies-e-mail, cell phones, pagers, text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites or a combination of these to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group for the intention of harming others (Franklin, 2004). The questionnaires and role-play sessions could include themes related to cyber-bullying. The 5 W’s Approach to Bullying Prevention offers students an opportunity to gain answers to the who, what, where, when and why of cyber-bullying. In particular, students can be taught how to report cyber-bullying to school officials which is one step in the prevention and intervention of bullying.

Teaching other social skills

A concern of researchers is the assumption that adolescents will automatically learn social skills as part of the developmental process (American Psychological Association, 1993; Bowman, 2001; and Ericson, 2001). In this case the thought is that adolescents will learn how to resolve conflicts, make friends, and resist bullies as they increase in age and/or maturity in school. However, reviewing disciplinary problems in school, administrators address level three offenses (warranting short or long term suspension), including fighting, harassment, and threatening bodily harm to others on a daily basis. Teaching social skills to students will help address some of these concerns in school. The 5 W's Approach to Bullying Prevention, a social skills program, can be adapted to include lessons on other social skills (e.g., peer interaction, communication, cooperation).

Other high school environments

Finally, future studies involve implementing the program in different school settings (e.g., suburban, rural). This will help to address the need of diversity amongst the high school population, which in some ways (ethnic diversity) was lacking in this study. This will allow for the assessment of the needs of students in various communities as well as to add to the richness of data on bystander behavior, the bullying relationship and social skill development in general.

Conclusion

The intervention worked on many levels. As a result of the intervention, bystanders became more empowered to intervene in bullying situations. Data collected demonstrated a potential of the program to have a positive impact among a larger population (e.g., all the students in the school, other high school settings).

The author had four primary tasks during this study planning the intervention, implementing the intervention, monitoring the intervention, and evaluating the data. The planning was based upon student needs for social skill development in addressing the issue of school bullying and using a drama-in-education format to address the hypothesis drama related to bullying helps to improve the bystanders response to bullying situations.

The implementation was a systematic effort to change existing conditions for the bystander. This involved teaching social skills to the bystander to facilitate the process of moving him or her from snitch to peer support during bullying.

The author's third responsibility was monitoring the intervention process, which included the institution of the intervention, a review of each part of the implementation, identifying the problems that occurred during each phase of the intervention, and collecting data on response to research questions of the study and comments on the reflection cards. The final element of the author's responsibility was evaluating, writing and reporting the data in this document. Data was analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention and to assess future generalizability. In addition, data was utilized to refine the program for future application. The program was not designed as a one-time effort. Based on the data, students benefitted from the intervention. Continuation, expansion and enhancement of the intervention will improve the conditions of the bystander beyond the terms of the intervention and have lasting effect in the school environment.

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Biography

Rose Helen Merrell James, Ed.D., is the fourth child of five children reared in an U.S. Air Force family that moved from Japan to Nebraska during her childhood. While attending high school in Nebraska, Merrell James was inspired by a home economics teacher to pursue a teaching degree. Her 25 years as an educator began by attending the City University of New York at Herbert H. Lehman College where she received her Master of Science degree in Family and Consumer Studies. After teaching home economics for six years in Westchester County, she took another Master's degree and Certificate of Advanced Studies in school counseling at the State University of New York at Brockport. Merrell James completed the Doctor of Education degree in Counseling and Human Development at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York. Under the supervision of Professor Howard Kirschenbaum, Department Chair of the Warner School, she researched social skill development in adolescents and focused on the use of drama as an intervention to address bullying behavior. Throughout the author's career, she used the performing arts, counseling, and teaching as tools to facilitate and help students develop their social skills and address personal and social concerns. The author is married with one daughter and resides in Fairport, New York. She currently works as a school counselor in an urban high school.