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SIDESTEPPING THE JINGLE FALLACY

Bullying, Aggression, and the Importance of Knowing the Difference

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Awareness of the "problem of the bully" goes back hundreds of years, references to which emerge in the literature as early as the late 1600s. These literary references, as such references generally do, shape public perceptions. Famously, for example, a deeply disenchanted Mr. Bumble from Oliver Twist (Dickens, 1838/1846), a "hard hearted brute" who was so insensitive to tears that his "heart was waterproof," was characterized as having a "decided propensity for bullying" in which he "derived no inconsiderable pleasure from the exercise of petty cruelty; and, consequently, was (it is needless to say) a coward" (p. 208). Bullying as "petty tyranny" had long been seen as a problem in school contexts. Thus, not only are bullies aggressive, but they also have deep character flaws reflected in their tendency to prey on the weak, presumably stemming from a low self-concept. Now, of course, it is cliché to consider the bully a socially unskilled tyrant who pales in the face of real danger.

Perhaps somewhat startling, serious scientific inquiry into the causes, consequences, and group processes related to bullying has only emerged in the last decades, no doubt in response to the call to arms by Dan Olweus (Olweus, 1978), who took his lead loosely from the animal behavior literature of the 20th century (mobbing; Barrington, 1932; see also Pilcas, 1975). Olweus has guided the field in accepting the critical characteristics defining bullying as (1) negative actions intended to harm (i.e., aggression), (2) repeated acts over time, and (3) an existing power differential between the bully and the victim.

The literature has made clear that bullying is a pervasive and serious problem. Nearly one-third of American adolescents are involved in bullying, either as a bully, a victim, or both (Nansel et al., 2001). Deservingly, the topic has garnered a tremendous amount of attention in the psychological literature (878 peer-reviewed journal articles with bullying or bullying in title since 1987). This literature (see other contributions this volume) has made clear that bullying is particularly bad for victims (anxiety, depression, and, in extreme cases, suicide; Espelage & Swearer, 2003) and, as a consequence, has been a topic of conversation among researchers, educational administrators, and government agencies (e.g., Olweus, 1995; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009).

The goals of the present chapter are less to report consequences of bullying or derive viable solutions or evaluate present ones, but rather to shed a light of a different color on
the problems of childhood aggression and bullying. First, we will explore the theoretical definitions and measurement models of aggression and bullying, and then describe the consequences of inadvertently blurring the two. Next, we will present an argument suggesting that, whereas aggression may be associated with the competent pursuit of human need fulfillment, bullying may not involve this same competent pursuit. We will cast this discussion in the parlance of Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and evoke arguments based on the evolution of human social development. We will close by discussing the possible ramifications of these arguments on intervention programs.

AGGRESSION VERSUS BULLYING

Olweus was clear at the outset: Aggression and bullying are different. Aggression typically is defined as a negative act that is specifically intended to harm a target (Cole & Dodge, 1998). For the greater part of the 20th century, researchers considered aggression to manifest exclusively in direct, physical forms (Cole & Dodge, 1998), consistent with the "male goals" of physical dominance and instrumentality (Oyane, Grunows, & Salmivalli; 1985; Hawley, Little, & Card, 2008) leading to the conclusion that males are more aggressive than females (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980). As is well known by now, researchers began identifying more subtle, social forms of aggression beginning in the late 1980s that are widely held to be more characteristic of females (Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Galen & Underwood, 1997).

Important for our present purposes are the different functions of aggression: instrumental and reactive. Instrumental aggression, by definition, involves goal-directed behavior and, accordingly, tends to be well thought out, planned, and self-serving (Dodge, 1991; Little, Jones, Henrich, & Hawley, 2003). With its theoretical roots in social learning theory (Bandura, 1973), instrumental aggression occurs when external reinforcements elicit planned, deliberately aggressive behavior. In contrast, reactive aggression has its theoretical basis in the aggression-attraction hypothesis (Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). Reactive aggression tends to be considered a "hot-headed" response to provocation or obstruction. Instrumental and reactive aggression can take overt (e.g., physical) or indirect (e.g., social) forms (Little et al., 2003).

Bullying is aggression, to be sure (see Olweus's first definitional point above), Olweus, however, stressed two additional criteria that cause bullying to stand apart from general aggression. The bullying must involve repeated acts and an imbalance of power. Olweus (2001) explicitly differentiates bullying from an argument between equals (e.g., "it is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight," p. 6) and additionally emphasizes the strength of the differential (e.g., "it is difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself," p. 6). Clearly, all bullying is aggression (regardless of form or function), but not all aggression is bullying. Thus, aggression is the super-ordinate category.

CONCEPTUAL DRIFT AND ITS VAGARIES

Due to the considerable influence of Olweus's work, researchers in psychological and educational settings tend to agree on the definition of bullying and that it is explicitly distinct from aggression. At the same time, however, many writers drift from their theoretical model (their definition of "bullying") when specifying their measurement model. That is, when measuring bullying, they fail to consider the repetitive nature or power differential aspects of the construct (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009 also make this point). In other words, many authors measure aggression rather than bullying even though they set up the distinction at the outset. Often one finds that the measurement model is so vague that the reader cannot adequately judge. Alternatively, children are sometimes asked to identify peers who bully, but the particulars about the definition of "bullying" (versus aggression) are absent; that is, children are not asked to focus attention on those who repeatedly violate the weak. Thus, when children are asked, "Who is a bully?" or "Who bullies you?" they tend to answer in terms of who they find aggressive (Monks & Smith, 2006). Whereas some older children and adolescents reference power differentials in open-ended descriptions of bullies (20–35% of 10–18-year-olds), most do not (Vaillancourt et al., 2008). By the same token, less than 10% of children aged 8 to 18 years mention the repetitive nature of bullying (Vaillancourt et al., 2000), further suggesting that children are equating bullying with aggression. Additionally, and perhaps most frequently, we find many articles where "bullying" and "aggression" are simply used interchangeably.

Are we just splitting hairs or is this issue consequential? We have good reason to believe that aggression and bullying, though overlapping, are actually distinct. This conclusion has been borne out of confirmatory factor analysis, for example, where bullying and aggression have only 26% shared variance (Pepler et al., 2008). Since the mid- to late 1980s, several researchers have identified social control or socially well-integrated aggressive youth (e.g., Cairns, Cairns, Necker, Gest, & Garofalo, 1988; Hawley, 2002; Rockin, Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 2006). Bullies, however, tend to receive the fewest number of friendship nominations from their peers or be rejected by them (e.g., Parahu, Davis, Pellegrini, 2007; Boulton & Smith, 1994; Salmivalli et al., 1996). For example, Salmivalli and colleagues (1996) examined the sociometric statuses of all bullying participants (e.g., bullies, assistants, reinforcing factors) and found both bullies and victims to be overwhelmingly placed in the sociometrically rejected category. Yet, in contrast, an important subset of aggressors garners more friendship nominations than the majority of their peers (Rockin & Rotman, 2010; Hawley, Little, & Card, 2007; Bost, Vaughan, Washington, Gielenski, & Bradbrad, 1998). Both bullies and aggressors, however, tend to draw many liked least nominations (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Hawley et al., 2007). Bullies and aggressors share the common outcome of being disliked by their peer groups, but some aggressors manage to attract many friends.

The Jingle Fallacy

At this point, we would like to interject an age-old cautionary tale. Common use of language is notoriously imprecise. This imprecision is an issue that has historically dogged lexical approaches to personality (e.g., Allport & Odbert, 1936), but is in no way limited to this domain. For example, often when we (the authors) talk about the high levels of "aggression" in youth with prosocial skills, several audience members assume we are referring to "assertion" (i.e., moving toward rather than moving against). Certainly this is a commonly accepted use of the term "aggressive," and indeed might so be understood when aggression is used effectively rather than ineffectively (we return to this point below). And herein is the crux of the problem well understood by, for example, Jack
Block: "Psychologists have tended to be sloppy with words. We need to become more intimate with their meanings, denotatively and connotatively, because summary labels often in unrecognized ways—the way we think." (Block, 1995).

The jingle fallacy (see also Thorndike, 1904), a common error in which two different psychological constructs are labeled identically, and as a consequence, are confused (erroneously certainly not all) bullying research (see Hawley, Johnson, Mitre, & McNamara, 2007). The jingle of ambivalence toward aggression. As psychological researchers, we tend to display a considerable amount of ambivalence toward aggression, possibly because aggression can be used in ways that support the goals of the group. Scarc's prosocial acceptable to the moral standards of the group, p. 471) is a case in point (see also Dodge, 1991, warranted, and if put under duress, to lash out on their own behalf, or on the behalf of justified.

Aggression versus Bullying: A Question of Proximal Function

An important question thus is: What are the key distinctions between aggression and bullying that can lead to different social outcomes? We believe that part of the answer lies in the function of the behavior, or, as described above, what the behavior is for. Little and colleagues (2003) found important differences in developmental outcomes associated with hostility and aggression, such that reactive aggression is associated with social influence (see also Dodge, 1991). This pattern of differential associations is consistent with peer rejection and externalized behavior (Poulin & Boivin, 2000; Vitello, Gendreau, Tremblay, & Olligny, 1998). Thus, in general, we might expect to find instrumental aggression associated with various competencies (see also Sutton et al., 1999; Hawley, 1991, 2002). This is performed in the service of resource control (i.e., social dominance), and is performed in a manner suggesting that it is strategic rather than impulsive (e.g., aggression balanced with prosocial behavior in the service of goal attainment), then it tends to be attributes that might be characterized as "skills" (e.g., Hawley, 2003; think of CEO rather than function for developmental outcomes (Little et al., 2003). Specifically, some authors argue that strategic aggression may be associated with status and likeability can in fact the analytic method employed. When one looks at the relationships among variables

In terms of correlations (i.e., a variable centered approach), the relationship between aggression and acceptance is equivocal (some authors find a negative correlation and others find no correlation). Researchers who look at types of youth (i.e., person-centered approach) who have both positive and negative characteristics clearly find a subset that is highly aggressive and yet who garner positive attention. Taken together, these conflicting findings highlight the importance of taking into consideration the analytic methods employed when drawing conclusions. For an extended explanation of person versus variable-centered approaches and their ramifications, see Hawley et al., 2007, and, more recently, Rodkin & Rolman, 2010.

Other researchers have examined peer-aggression outcomes from a standpoint of "perceived popularity," a construct associated with both leadership and aggression (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). Ethnographic studies suggest that peer-perceived popularity may better typify power and influence in peer groups (Adler & Adler, 1995, 1998; Eder, 1985; Merten, 1997; but see Hawley et al., 2007). Unlike measures of acceptance, bullies and victims experience different patterns of perceived popularity; victims maintain low levels and bullies maintain high levels (Sitsenn, Veenstra, Lindenberg, & Salminvalli, 2009). These findings suggest that bullies are afforded and maintain power in group contexts.

Goals of acceptance or domination? Are bullies disliked but powerful? Perhaps domination is the goal of bullying (Pellegrini, 2002). Time and again the power differentiation between the reputed bully and their victim has been documented (e.g., Veenstra et al., 2007; Vaillancourt, Hyrc, & McDougall, 2003). Others have made inroads by considering the social goals of bullies (e.g., Renshaw & Asher, 1983). Olsen and colleagues (2005), for example, construe goals as either agentic (status, dominance, respect) or communal (intimacy, acceptance; see also a "goal framing approach" of Djikstra, Lindeberg, & Veenstra, 2007). Generally, instrumentally aggressive children endorse agentic goals (presumably the raison d'être for their aggression; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Erdley & Asher, 1998), and agentic goals increase over time as children approach adolescence (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Much of work on bullying evoking "goals" concepts converges on the point that bullies pursue power, popularity, or domination more so than non-bullying peers (e.g., Sitsenn et al., 2009; Vaillancourt et al., 2003; Veenstra et al., 2007), or that bullying is an "agentic strategy used to obtain and maintain dominance" (Long & Pellegrini, 2003, p. 402).

It is difficult to reconcile the images of the rejected bully whose future "looks quite bleak" (Parault et al., 2007, p. 150) with the aggressive social dominant who attracts a great deal of positive attention (e.g., Hawley, 2003; Rodkin et al., 2006; Bost et al., 1998; Cairns et al., 1988). The former uninviting portrayal may apply more to children who are both bullies and victims of bullying (Holt & Espelage, 2007). Moreover, numerous victims of bullying tend to be passive, anxious, physically weak, and insecure (Olivescu, 1978; Parault et al., 2007). It is not clear to the present authors that repeatedly victimizing the helpless and socially isolated is an effective path to social dominance in and of itself. This point will be discussed in more detail later.

Group Cohesion and Social Identity

Bukowski and Sippola (2001) suggested bullying may additionally serve group goals, and accordingly serve some cohesive function especially when group goals are blocked (e.g., when an individual pursues individual goals that are contrary to group goals). Given the power campaign in which bullies appear to be engaged, how then could bullying foster
group cohesion! Additional answers may stem from classical concepts from social psychology. Founders of modern social psychology emphasized the role of the "in-group" (e.g., Allport, 1954; Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Namely, feelings of positive sense of identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Hostility and rejection toward "out of belonging in the in-group members (Brown & Abrams, 1986). Such rejection can prey: 1954) to extreme forms, including physical attack. Anticipating the recent strides in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) have established the minimal conditions necessary for individuals to favor the in-group at group perception (i.e., the quest for positive distinctiveness; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Tajfel and contrived tendency to over- and underestimate others, and participants still showed in- and out-group distinctiveness, personal identity gives way to social identity. Bullying has long been found to be a social process (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Indeed the bullying episode has been shown to be more likely to continue when there is an audience implicitly why children bully escape us and appear to have little more than to make outlooks on attention to the social psychological research gives the chilling impression that even anxious or physically weak could very well do the trick. In contrast to precocities of those working in the developmental domain, considerations of "personality" or "social skills" or "theory of mind" generally do not influence social psychological models. How- the in-group is especially strongly are at heightened risk for prejudicial behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Branscombe & Wann, 1994). Implications for intervention. Interventionists might do well to be mindful of social identity processes. Recent work, for example, makes the point that taking the perspectives associated with one's social identity and, accordingly, challenges our inherent motivation to achieve identity distinctiveness (e.g., the motive to maintain a sense of difference-emphasizing with out-group members (Tarrant, Dazeley, & Cottom, 2009), especially a positive effect of perspective-taking on views of out-group members (e.g., Gallistock & Moskowitz, 2000). This of course is good news to interventionists that is, those who do not strongly identify with the in-group (see Tarrant et al., 2009). Individuals who strongly identify with the in-group are less likely to adopt the perspective of out-group members

HUMAN NEEDS AND BALANCING "GETTING ALONG" WITH "GETTING AHEAD": DIFFERENTIATING BULLYING FROM AGGRESSION

Such discussion of social identity processes and group cohesion highlights the necessity of considering fundamental human needs and the roles they play in child and adolescent behavior. That is, the basic human need of "belongingness" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) can drive much behavior for good or ill. Human needs have long been a part of psychological discourse (see Adler, 1924; Freud, 1930/1964; Maslow, 1971) and accordingly may well inform the discussion about the differences between bullying and aggression; namely, we wonder if aggression plays a role in healthy need fulfillment in a way that bullying does not. Again, we believe the distinction may lie in function and how function interfaces with human needs.

We will ground our discussion of aggression and human need fulfillment on self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). SDT is a meta-theoretical perspective of adaptive functioning that emphasizes the evolution of the organism and its basic needs and need fulfillment. With its foundation in evolutionary theory, SDT acknowledges the essential role of self-interest in human functioning. Thus, because of its focus on the interest of the organism, SDT is somewhat at odds with more traditional, other-oriented theories of human functioning that place more importance on peaceful group relations than on individual success (see Stump, Ratliff, Wu, & Hawley, 2009, for extended discussion).

As its primary thesis, SDT recognizes that humans universally have three innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). Autonomy refers to the extent to which one perceives that his or her behaviors are caused by the self versus directed by others. Competence is derived from efficacy motivation (White, 1959), the motivation for successful and accomplished interactions with one's environment. The need for competence is dependent upon skills, action, and ability to master one's environment. Relatedness, the third fundamental need, signifies a feeling of connectedness to others, and serves as a foundation for interpersonal relationships and group cohesion.

Insufficient need fulfillment can result in marked deficits in psychosocial functioning (Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995). When autonomy is suppressed, for example, individuals are likely to experience ill-being; extreme suppression levels may result in psychopathology such as depression and eating disorders (Ryan et al., 1995). One can certainly imagine that individuals who are repeatedly victimized by bullies may not be satisfying all of their fundamental human needs. Plotting alternative routes home from school to avoid bullies, for instance, illustrates a significant suppression of autonomy.

From our perspective, a socially competent and optimally functioning individual satisfies the three fundamental human needs within his or her social environment (see also
Aggression versus Bullying: A Question of Ultimate (Evolutionary) Function

Resource control theory (RCT; Hayley, 1999) is primarily concerned with individual proximal adaptation to local circumstances, with group response as a secondary outcome of that adaptation process. Resource control (RC) in general refers to the degree to which individuals successfully access social, informational, or material resources (Hayley, 1999). Successful RC or competition in the presence of others results in social dominance, and she or he who controls resources wields power (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003).

Resource control strategies. According to RCT, there are two primary strategies (products of evolution) that humans use to control resources. Coercive strategies involve threats, manipulation, and instrumental aggression. These strategies are well discussed in the primate literature as methods of obtaining dominance (e.g., Alberts, Watts, & Altman, 2003). Because they are associated with an aggressive sorting, they may be considered akin to aggressive domination. Setting RCT apart from other theories of social dominance (e.g., Krebs & Davies, 1997), however, are prosocial strategies of resource control (behaviors that serve to gain resources via cooperative means such as reciprocation; Charlesworth, 1996). That is, in the competitive arena, cooperation can be as effective as aggression.

Resource control subtypes. Resource control theory employs a person-centered, typological approach in which we classify individuals into "types," depending on their relative usage of prosocial and coercive strategies. "Bistrategic resource controllers" are those who employ high levels of both prosocial and coercive strategies, "prosocial controllers" predominately use prosocial strategies, "coercive controllers" predominately use coercive strategies, "noncontrollers" employ neither, and the remaining "typical controllers" display average levels of both strategies (see Hayley, 2003 for details).

When discussing the distinctions between aggression and bullying, the two most instructive types are coercive and bistategic controllers because both display high levels of coercive behavior. Though they share this common behavioral thread, coercives and bistragistics experience disparate outcomes. Coercive controllers are better than average at goal attainment and power pursuit; that is, they "get ahead." Yet, they are hostile, unskilled, rejected by peers, and sustain low-quality friendships (Hayley, 2003, Hayley et al., 2007). Thus, they are not "getting along," and, as such, coercive controller achieve their control needs at the expense of relatedness needs. In contrast, bistategic controllers are far more successful; they are not only very effective at resource control, but they also are well integrated into the social group in that they accumulate many like most nominations (but also like least nominations), are perceived to be popular, and attract more friendship nominations than the majority of their peers (Hayley, 2003; Hayley et al., 2007). This marked divergence in social reception already clearly emerges in preschool (Hayley, 2002). Thus, they do not seem to suffer the same social costs borne by the coercive controllers.

If aggression is associated with skills deficits, then how do bistragistics pull off the prosocial strategies and concomitant positive reception from the social group? Bistraticists do not seem to suffer the same skills deficits that the coercive controllers do (Hayley, 2003; Stump, Middleton, & Hayley, 2009). A traditionally trained developmentalist may predict that bistragistics have poor quality relationships because of their elevated level of like least nominations. This prediction has not been empirically supported; though friends of bistragistics report that their relationships are high in conflict, they
also describe their friendships as close, fun, and high in companionship (Hawley et al., 2007). It seems that bistrategics are displaying an effective balance between “getting along and they appear to be meeting their competence and relatedness needs and, because they tend not to defer to the will of peers, also satisfy their autonomy needs.

Are Aggressive Social Dominants Bullying?

Bistrategics seem to be benefiting from their aggression as they are certainly powerful in their social contexts. This, of course, raises the question: Are bistrategics bullying? One might reasonably assume that bistrategics do not aggress against members of their friends, both relationally and overtly (Hawley et al., 2007). It is not clear, however, that circle. Indeed, though bistrategics display the aggressive characteristic of bullies, we are engaging in significant bullying behavior. Low status, weak victims of bullies (Oliveus, 1978) likely correspond to “non-control resources, are not well socially integrated, and continuously defer to others (Hawley, 2003; Hawley & Little, 1999), they fail at meeting their basic needs from an SDT perspective. In contrast, bistrategics tend to be very instrumental and socially savvy individuals. Aggression and prosociality might be doped out with care; especially, perhaps toward much to be gained. What could they gain from a non-control? Instead, we wonder about the aggressive profile at bistrategics, but lack social intelligence (Hawley, 2003; Stump, Middelton, & Hawley, 2009). Their aggression, therefore, may not be as tactically employed.

Group level and dyadic investigations regarding bullies and victims and resource and coercive controllers are purely speculative. At the same time, we have long held the for human needs satisfaction (see Hawley, 2007; Stump et al., 2009, for extended arguments). Empirical and theoretical treatments of bullying, however, do not give us the impression that bullying fills the same role. As the bullying and aggression research progresses, we are more than willing to be proven wrong. Indeed, these are very interesting and important questions to pursue.

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

As we are not skilled interventionists, we hesitate to analyze or suggest specific prevention and intervention programs that might reduce bullying in school contexts. Such issues are already in very capable hands (e.g., Swearer et al., 2009; Salimivalli et al., 2005).