

[Home](#)[Training](#)[Publications](#)[Research](#)[Resources](#)[Press Room](#)[Supporters](#)[Trainers](#)[About Us](#)[Donate](#)[Articles](#)[Funding Sources](#)[Links](#)

## Articles

On this page you'll find articles about bullying and how to build your caring community by BPYS authors, researchers and trainers. We will be posting new articles on a regular basis.

### [Internet Bullying](#)

Carla Garrity, Ph.D

### [Group Dynamics and Negative Peer Behaviors: Engaging the Bystanders](#)

Lawrence D. Epstein, Ph.D.

### [Group Harassment and Cliques](#)

by Sally Stoker, MSW and Jill McDonald, MA

---

## Internet Bullying

by Carla Garrity, Ph.D.

An overweight boy finds a picture taken on a cellphone while he changed in the locker-room has spread throughout the school. He is deeply distraught, unwilling to go to school and refusing to ever again attend P. E.

A shy middle school girl discovers a rumor circulating via email that she is gay and has contacted AIDS. She feels helpless and does not know what to do or where to find help.

An outgoing, popular high school girl, who instant messages constantly, finds her gossip about others has been forwarded right into their in boxes. She doesn't know who or where to lay blame not knowing who the source was or how to trace it.

Cruel message, untrue messages, vicious gossip and rumors spread today with the click of a button. They are anonymous – no one knows who sent them. They are powerful and they are destructive. One in seventeen teens say they have been harassed on line.

There are few rules about what can be posted on the Internet. Law enforcement officials are often powerless. School officials cannot force a Website to shut down or even learn the identity of those who have posted.

The most effective techniques are the same ones CCC teaches and encourages:

### WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

1. Tell your child to report these incidents.
2. Encourage your child not to engage with the bully. Do not respond – click away.
3. There are ways to track the owners of an email address. [www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org) outlines the steps. Keep copies of all abusive emails and forward them to the Internet Service Provider.
4. Install software that filters or tracks emails.
5. Think hard about whether your son or daughter is ready to use Instant Messaging or Text-messaging

### WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO?

1. Include internet bullying in the school anti bullying policy as a disciplinary matter to break the code of silence
2. Identify a trusted adult to whom students can report incidents.
3. Install filters on all school computers and prohibit emailing and instant messaging on

school based computers. Prohibit text-messaging on cell phones.

4. Post and enforce anti-bullying policies throughout the school. Be clear that cyber bullying will not be tolerated. Students deserve to feel safe and are to be encouraged to stand up for others.

Copyright 2005, Carla Garrity, Ph.D.

---

## Group Dynamics and Negative Peer Behaviors Engaging the Bystanders

by Lawrence D. Epstein, Ph.D.

Today's students face an increasingly difficult task of learning in school environments that can feel unsafe and unfriendly. As students progress from elementary school to middle school, peer pressure and peer cruelty can create feelings of fear, which dramatically interfere with the learning process. Within this dynamic, bystanders play an important role in the creation of a safe, caring learning environment where all students are welcome and allowed to participate in the educational process.

Estimates of the frequency of negative peer behaviors, often labeled as "bullying" vary widely. Marla Bonds and Sally Stoker report in *Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Guide to the Middle Schools* that bullying tends to peak and become most serious during the middle school years. Victims of bullying become afraid to go to school which leads to absences, difficulty concentrating, and poor school performance (Batsche and Knoff). However, it is not only the direct victims who experience these feelings. Bonds and Stoker indicate that vicarious victims feel vulnerable simply as a result of knowing that bullying is occurring and that they are potential victims.

Thus, the impact of negative peer behaviors on the educational process is clear. The reasons for its continuation are also clear. In their observational studies of playground and classroom behaviors, Wendy Craig and her colleagues found that adults are frequently unaware of bullying episodes (1997) and tend not to intervene in these episodes (2000). In contrast, Craig and her colleagues (2000) found that peers tend to be involved in the vast majority (from 79% to 84%) of bullying incidents on the playground and in the classroom. When peers do get involved, they often behave in ways that reinforce rather than discourage bullying behaviors (Salmivalli). The bullies can even interpret silence on the part of the bystanders as permission for their bullying behaviors. In *Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Interventions for Bullying and Victimization*, Richard Hazler notes that students report that they don't intervene in more helpful ways because they don't know what to do, they are afraid of retaliation, and they are afraid of making the situation worse.

The bystanders have very real and valid reasons for not intervening and therefore must be actively supported to stop these negative peer behaviors. In their book *Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools*, Carla Garrity and her colleagues report that bystanders typically make up 85 percent of the school population and are thus a powerful resource in the creation of a safe, caring climate. However, the positive involvement of the bystanders needs to be facilitated by the adults. Bonds and Stoker suggest the following approach. The bystanders's fears must be acknowledged and an expectation to take action must be communicated by the adults in the school. The bystanders need to be taught effective skills for intervening and they must be acknowledged and rewarded when they do intervene. Further, the notion of strength in numbers should be emphasized. In other words, the bystanders need help understanding that by pooling their resources and taking a stand, they have the power to positively influence the school climate. In doing so, the silent majority can become a caring community which is essential in the process of creating a safe, caring learning environment.

### Bibliography

- Batsche, George M., & Knoff, Howard M. (1994). Bullies and their victims: Understanding a pervasive problem in the schools. *School Psychology Review*, 23 (2), 165-174.
- Bonds, Marla. & Stoker, Sally. (2000). *Bully-proofing your school: A comprehensive guide for middle schools*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.
- Craig, Wendy M., & Pepler, Debra J. (1997). Observations of bullying and victimization in the school yard. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 13 (2), 41-60.
- Craig, Wendy M., Pepler, Debra., & Atlas, Rona. (2000). Observations of bullying in the playground and in the classroom. *School Psychology International*, 21 (1), 22-36.
- Garrity, Carla., Jens, Kathryn., Porter, William., Sager, Nancy., & Short-Camilli, Cam.

(1994). *Bully-proofing your school: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools* (2nd ed.). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Hazler, Richard. (1996). *Breaking the cycle of violence: Interventions for bullying and victimization*. Washington, DC: Accelerated Development.

Salmivalli, Christina. (1999). Participant role approach to school bullying: Implications for interventions. *Journal of Adolescence*, 22, 453-459.

Word Count (Not including title): 536  
Copyright 2005 Lawrence D. Epstein, Ph.D.

---

## Group Harassment and Cliques

by Sally Stoker, MSW and Jill McDonald, MA

Joining a group is an important part of a high school student's experience. Being a part of a group meets adolescents' developmental needs for affiliation and connection and provides them with positive experiences needed to define themselves. However, certain groups can contribute to the dynamics of bullying and harassment in school and cause significant disruptions in the school climate.

Bullying can occur within groups and between groups. Schools are usually more familiar and used to handling the bullying and power struggles that occur between groups. What can be more difficult for schools to handle is the intense and sometimes vicious bullying that can occur within a group. The competition for power within a social group or athletic team can be extremely vicious and is more easily hidden from adults' eyes, making it hard to detect and effectively address. Sometimes the first hint of trouble occurs after the damage is done, when a member or members quit out of frustration and unhappiness.

One relevant dynamic to understand about group bullying and harassment is that students can behave differently in a group than they do as individuals. The importance of group membership and acceptance can influence students to participate in negative group behaviors. A student who would not ordinarily bully or harass another can get carried away by the phenomenon of "group think" and join the group in harassing others. A sort of "gang mentality" can develop when group members allow their need for acceptance and "fitting in" to compromise their own feelings and override their individual judgment.

There are several reasons to explain these negative group behaviors:

- \* Students can get caught up in the contagious excitement of crowd behavior during the bullying episode, go along with, or contribute to the harassment.
- \* Students can become desensitized to repeated bullying and become more aggressive themselves.
- \* Students sometimes go along with a group's actions in order to avoid being victimized themselves.
- \* Students' sense of empathy for others can become dulled, causing them to justify their aggressive actions.
- \* Students are more likely to imitate an aggressor who receives positive attention or is successful in his or her bullying actions.
- \* Students who have positive attitudes towards the aggressor will be more likely to imitate the behaviors

### Cliques

Another contributing factor to the dynamic of group bullying in high schools is the formation of certain groups called "cliques." As opposed to healthy peer groups that support teenagers and provide to them a sense of belonging, these exclusive groups can become toxic forces in the high school environment and contribute to a hostile climate of intolerance and exclusion.

A clique is defined as:

A group that is motivated by and has social power that tends to lead to excluding and negative behaviors.

Cliques are commonly found in schools that have a "culture of celebrity" where only a few, popular students or groups are recipients of recognition and status (Walker & Eaton-Walker, 2000). With this unequal distribution of power among a few select students, an unhealthy competition is created and a cliquish atmosphere develops. The social structure of the school becomes rigidly organized around groups, with students competing for their own sense of social recognition and power. This set up, in turn, provides fertile ground for group bullying and the abuse of power through humiliating,

harassing, and tormenting others who are different. A school with a rigid social hierarchy creates a culture made up of students who are competing for power based on their differences, rather than working together to create a sense of community.

#### Healthy Peer Groups vs. Cliques

Listed below are some general differences between healthy peer groups and unhealthy cliques.

#### Healthy Peer Groups

- \* Inclusive
- \* Shared power among members
- \* Open system—members can come and go
- \* Flexible rules and expectations
- \* General respect for individuality
- \* Status within group is shared and can change without upset
- \* Less pressure to conform

#### Cliques

- \* Exclusive
- \* Controlling personality at the top
- \* Closed system—difficult for any new members to join in
- \* Strict rules and requirements for membership
- \* Less respect for individuality as opposed to group
- \* There are clearly defined roles with some having more power and others having less
- \* Strong pressure to conform

Groups and cliquish behaviors will always be a part of the high school culture. The problems arise when the students' social structure becomes rigidly hierarchical and then is reinforced by school authorities and policies. The goal is not to eliminate groups, but to assure that all groups in the school community have equal rights and equal access to power and recognition. Cliques have less of a foothold in a school where power is shared equally throughout the school and diversity is valued and promoted.

Excerpted from, "Bully Proofing for High Schools: Creating a Safe and Respectful School". Copyright 2005 Sopris West Educational Services. Scheduled for publication in 2006.

---

[Home](#) | [Training](#) | [Publications](#) | [Research](#) | [Resources](#) | [Press Room](#) | [Supporters](#) | [Trainers](#) | [About Us](#) | [Donate](#)  
[Return to top](#)

---

© 2008 Creating Caring Communities  
6795 E Tennessee Ave #402, Denver, Colorado 80224-1614  
Email: [johndandurand@bullyproofing.org](mailto:johndandurand@bullyproofing.org) | Toll-Free Phone: 866-941-9494