The harsh reality of the bully/victim dyad is experienced by thousands of children every day (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992). Although it is unlikely that childhood bullying will be completely eliminated, there is reason to believe that with the cooperation of communities, agencies, schools, counselors, teachers, and students the problems can be significantly reduced. Schools should explore the implementation not only of programs that assist bullies and aid their victims but also of those that strengthen the positive relationships between teachers, bullies, victims, and all other students who also lose a sense of security and academic accomplishment as a result of being bystanders to bullying.

There have been numerous recommendations for using school-based programs for confronting the issue of bullying; however, there has been a paucity of empirical studies to validate the effectiveness of these programs. Olweus’s (1978) school-based intervention program was the first bully reduction program to be evaluated by systematic research. His intervention program was constructed to have an impact on the school and classroom environments, students, teachers, and parents. The program significantly affected existing victimization, while concurrently reducing the number of new victims. In the 2 years after the intervention, the frequency of bully problems in the schools decreased by approximately 50% (Olweus, 1993). Although Olweus’s program demonstrated that it is feasible to reduce bully/victim problems in the school, his intervention was conducted in Norway with different cultural and educational conditions than in the United States. Olweus’s work used a comprehensive approach that was broad in scope; there is still a need to examine whether less comprehensive programs may also yield results of lower aggression in the context of schools in the United States.

The bully prevention program, Bully Busters: A Teacher’s Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders (Newman, Horne, & Bartolomucci, 2000), used in this study was developed in response to the need for a psychoeducational program that counselors could implement with teachers and that could be empirically tested. Prior studies have identified weaknesses in aspects of teacher training for violence reduction (Pianta, 1999; Whitney, Rivers, Smith, & Sharp, 1994) or have found difficulty in attributing the reduction in bullying to specific aspects of an intervention program (Olweus, 1994). The literature encompassing the arena of bully prevention and antibully programs has suggested the need for continuing teacher education pertaining to student bullying (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985; Stephenson & Smith, 1989) and has provided a suggested outline of the components of a curriculum to increase teachers’ awareness of bullying and their skills relating to handling it (Johnstone, Munn, & Edwards, 1991; Kikkawa, 1987; Olweus, 1978). However, little research has been done focusing solely on the effectiveness of a bully prevention teacher-training curriculum.

**RELATED LITERATURE**

Aggression and the United States of America are long, intimate companions (Hazler, 1996; Horne, Glaser, & Sayger, 1994; Horne & Orpinas, 2003; Patterson, 1986). America’s schools represent a microcosm of the American culture; thus,
it is not surprising that they closely parallel and reflect the levels, forms, and causes of aggression in our society at large (Arndt, 1994; Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1991). Bullying, an international phenomenon (Hoover et al., 1992; Munthe & Roland, 1989), is one of the most widely practiced forms of aggressive behaviors in American schools (Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1994). As defined by Olweus (1994), bullying occurs when a student intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort on another student. Bullying has a direct negative impact on students, teachers, school property, the community, and the educational process (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Oliver et al., 1994; Sweare, Song, & Frazier-Koontz, 2001).

Bullying behavior among students has long been a disruptive factor in the educational realm and continues at a threatening level, affecting the emotional and physical safety of students (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sayger, & Short-Camilli, 1995). The United States Department of Justice and The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) estimate that 160,000 children miss school each day because of fear (Lee, 1993). Bullying, a major cause of this fear, keeps children from perceiving school as a safe environment. Unfortunately, many of these children are reluctant to request aid from school staff for fear of reprisals and because of inadequate protection.

School for many is not the safe, learning environment it was intended to be (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Many students are anxious about witnessing bullying and fear that they may become victims of bullying if they have not already been targeted (Olweus, 1978). Given the misery that thousands of children endure daily over the course of several years of education, the problems surrounding bullying should not be ignored or simply tolerated. Many teachers ignore bullying because they believe they lack adequate skills and training to intervene (Stephenson & Smith, 1989), they fear that intervening in a bullying situation will only add fuel to the fire, or they fear that their involvement would force the problem “underground” (Besag, 1989; Hoover et al., 1992; Olweus, 1994). Two out of three students report that teachers handle the problems of bullying inadequately (Hazler, 1996; Hazler et al., 1991). Many students surmise that their teachers are not cognizant of problems because bullying often appears to go unnoticed by the teachers. In fact, bullying incidents are rarely brought to the teacher’s attention unless there is a serious incident (Bryne, 1994).

Teachers play a critical role in sanctioning the bullying behavior that occurs in the schools, either intentionally or unintentionally. Hence, “bullying will never be eliminated unless teachers and children become partners in this crusade against cruelty” (Fried & Fried, 1996, p. 107). The most effective means by which teachers can manage the problem of bullying is by developing increased knowledge and awareness of the problem; by ensuring that there are minimal opportunities for acts of bullying to materialize; and by offering student support, training, and education aimed at attacking the root causes of the bullying behavior (Besag, 1989).

The use of continuing education and continuing training to enhance teachers’ knowledge has been shown to be effective in dealing with difficult students. Schools whose administrators kept their teachers educated on intervention techniques, provided them with advice and support, and informed them about problem students had fewer incidents of bullying (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). Combining in-service training with follow-up support in the form of consultation is important because in-service training on classroom management issues is insufficient to produce lasting changes in teachers’ knowledge and intervention skills, whereas in-service training combined with follow-up consultation is effective in producing significant changes (Shapiro, DuPaul, Bradly, & Bailey, 1996). Shapiro et al.’s success with a psychoeducational program, in tandem with follow-up support, for teachers working with “emotionally disturbed children” indicates that a psychoeducational antibullying intervention for teachers, accompanied by follow-up group support, may be a viable program for reducing and preventing childhood bullying.

Efforts by teachers to help create a safe learning environment, where students are comfortable, feel confident, and are able to express themselves and their individuality, greatly facilitate student learning and personal comfort at school. This suggests that teachers’ intervention could be effective in reducing and preventing the impact bullying is having on today’s youth.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE BULLY BUSTERS PROGRAM

An ecosystemic model of understanding bullying identifies the influence of the child’s individual characteristics, the family, the school (including peers and adults), and the community, and it is important to be aware of the levels of influence each component of a systemic model has on child development. Within the individual child, interacting regulatory systems operate, resulting in reciprocity of behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental events (Bandura, 1989). The influence of environmental events on behavior is influenced by cognitive processes, which govern what environmental influences are attended to, how they are perceived, and how the individual interprets them (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989). Children learn to be aggressive by observing aggressive behaviors in others (Bandura, 1973) and by receiving reinforcement for their own aggressive behaviors; that is, children raised in a culture with aggressive models will learn aggressive responses (Horne & Orpinas, 2003). A result of this learning of aggressive behavior is a belief on the part of children that those who are weaker or victimized deserve to be victims, resulting in "blaming the victim for being a victim" (Horne et al., 1994, p. 5).

Childhood bullying is a complex problem. Bullying behaviors are learned and reinforced through different environmental contexts, that is, cultural, societal, school, familial, and individual. In examining how to change the cycle of aggression in schools, one factor that appears to be of great significance in reducing bullying is the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the child (Howard, Horne, & Jolliff, 2001; Pianta, 1999; Sweare & Doll, 2001). Children are in school for a large portion of their waking lives and are in constant contact with teachers who are models for their students.
(Bandura, 1986; Besag, 1989). There is a hidden curriculum at work in the schools, and students are highly sensitive to picking up and assimilating cues on how to conduct themselves, often looking to teachers for guidance and to a code of conduct that can influence how they treat others. Teachers play a critical role in influencing the bullying behavior that occurs in the schools (Wilezenski et al., 1994) because they may fail to intervene appropriately or may ignore the bullying because of a lack of adequate skills and training. Teachers often fear that intervening in a bullying situation will only cause more harm to the victim (Hoover et al., 1992; Olweus, 1994).

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Participants were sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade middle school teachers employed in a public school in a school district in the southeastern United States. The program was organized and conducted with the collaboration of the school counseling team. The bully prevention program was announced at teacher staff meetings as well as through distribution of promotional flyers in teachers’ mailboxes. The teachers were invited to participate in the research by attending a bully prevention staff development training program, for which they received continuing education credit. There were 42 teachers eligible to participate, of whom 17 completed the pretesting and participated in the training program as treatment teachers. After the first training session, 2 of the 17 teachers withdrew from the program due to time conflicts, thus reducing the treatment population to 15 teachers. All 15 of the treatment teachers remained in the program and completed the postassessment.

Teachers who declined to participate or could not attend the workshops at the designated times completed pre- and postassessment packets and served as the control group. Of the 22 pretest packets administered to control group teachers, 15 were completed and returned. All 15 of the control group and 15 intervention group teachers completed the postassessment; teachers were not randomly assigned to the respective categories.

Demographic information of the participants follows. There was a total of 30 participants. Fifteen were in the treatment group, of whom 5 were male and 10 were female, and 2 of the participants were African American with the others being White. In the control group there were 15 participants, 4 male and 11 female, and 3 were African American. All participating teachers had an undergraduate degree, while 11 in the treatment group and 9 in the control group had advanced graduate degrees.

In an effort to determine if treatment and control groups were different on baseline demographic variables, independent samples t tests, examining the initial differences between the treatment and control groups on the pretest, found no significant differences on the dimensions of each of the variables, indicating that the two groups were statistically equivalent on each variable. Whereas the two groups were equivalent before the intervention, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted for the analyses of research questions, because this procedure increases the statistical power (Keppel, 1991).

**Description of the Treatment Program**

*Bully Busters: A Teacher’s Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders* (Newman et al., 2000) was the treatment program implemented in the present study. This bully prevention program (referred to as Bully Busters) was developed by incorporating from the research literature those aspects of training and intervention that appeared to have the most support. The program was instituted based on requests by community middle school counselors and teachers, school administrators, and parents and was intended to address the increase in aggressive behavior occurring in the school.

This psychoeducational program was designed to facilitate the teachers’ acquisition of skills, techniques, and intervention and prevention strategies specifically related to problems of bullying and victimization, as well as to enhance teachers’ self-efficacy for confronting bullying and victimization in the classroom. The program was implemented in the form of a staff development training workshop. The contents of the program included information pertaining to bullying and victimization, recommended interventions, prevention strategies, stress-management techniques, as well as classroom activities. The training program was a composite of seven modules, each focusing on specific goals:

- Module 1: Increasing Awareness of Bullying
- Module 2: Recognizing the Bully
- Module 3: Recognizing the Victim
- Module 4: Taking Charge: Interventions for Bullying Behavior
- Module 5: Assisting Victims: Interventions and Interventions
- Module 6: The Role of Prevention
- Module 7: Relaxation and Coping Skills

Each teacher was provided with a manual containing the seven workshop modules, including classroom activities and worksheets for each module. The instructional manual served as an educational guide as well as a classroom curriculum resource.

Teachers participating in the study attended three separate staff development training sessions, which began 2 weeks after the start of the school year. The training sessions convened once a week, over the course of 3 weeks, for a period of 2 hours per meeting. Each workshop followed the same instructional format combining both a didactic and experiential approach. In an effort to integrate the workshop materials into the teachers’ curriculum, after each workshop, teachers were instructed to share with their students what they had learned in the workshop by using this knowledge in class activities.

Upon completion of the psychoeducational workshops, eight teachers were assigned to Bully Busters Team A and seven teachers to Bully Busters Team B. These teams were formed in an effort to conform to Olweus’s (1994) sugges-
tion of developing collegial support groups comprising 5 to 10 teachers, as well as to adhere to recommendations that psychoeducational groups include approximately seven or eight members (Gazda, Ginter, & Horne, 2001). Each team met with the instructor for 1 hour, every other week, for 8 weeks. The supervision/team meetings served as an ongoing resource for classroom teachers to (a) share their success or failure stories, (b) seek advice from other teachers and the supervisor, (c) obtain additional classroom activities, (d) dispel fears and feel supported, and (e) develop collaborative problem-solving skills.

To ensure the integrity of the bully prevention program, the instructor adhered to the training curriculum presented in the Bully Busters manual, and program integrity was maintained through weekly supervision of the instructor by the primary supervisor for the workshops and subsequent Bully Busters support team meetings, as well as through completing checklists of the requisite activities.

**Instruments**

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment program, four instruments were selected in an effort to address the research study’s questions: Teacher Inventory of Skills and Knowledge (TISK), Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES), Teacher Efficacy and Attribution Measure (TEAM), and Osiris School Administration System Activity Tracker (OAS).

**TISK (Newman et al., 2000)**. The TISK was specifically developed for this project to assess teachers’ knowledge and use of bullying intervention skills prior to and subsequent to exposure to the bully prevention program. The TISK is a 58-item self-report questionnaire with two subscales, Knowledge of bullying intervention skills and Use of bullying intervention skills, across six dimensions: (a) prevention, (b) intervention—bully, (c) intervention—victim, (d) intervention—bully/victim, (e) resource, and (f) awareness. Participants respond to each item by making one of three responses for the Knowledge scale, U (unfamiliar), S (somewhat familiar), and V (very familiar), and by making one of three responses for the Use subscale, N (never), S (sometimes), and A (always). Participants receive six scores for each of the six dimensions of the Knowledge subscale and six scores for each of the six dimensions of the Use subscale.

The TISK was constructed in sequential format:

1. Bullying intervention skills taught in the bully program were extracted from each of the seven modules.
2. Bullying intervention skills were placed into item format.
3. Items were grouped into the six categories/dimensions based on conceptual similarity.
4. Internal consistency analyses were performed for both the Knowledge and Use subscales across the six dimensions.
5. Specific items were deleted from the subscale because the excessive high means of these items left little room for improvement on the posttest measure, deletion of these items did not have a significant effect on the interitem consistency of the dimension, and the items deleted addressed interventions common to teacher training and not unique to a bully intervention program.

An analysis of internal consistency reliability was conducted on the pretest responses of the present study’s sample population (N = 30) for the six dimensions of the Knowledge subscale and the six dimensions of the Use subscale. The analysis yielded Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .79 to .92 for the six dimensions of the Knowledge subscale and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .88 for the six dimensions of the Use subscale.

**TES (Gibson & Dembo, 1984)**. The TES is a 30-item self-report survey that measures two dimensions: personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. Participants respond to each item on a 6-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) and 6 (strongly agree). High scores on the Personal Teaching Efficacy subscale indicate high personal efficacy, whereas low scores on the General Teaching Efficacy subscale indicate high teaching efficacy.

Factor analysis of the original 30 items on the TES resulted in 16 items significantly loading on two factors: personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. Personal Teaching Efficacy reflects the teacher’s sense of personal responsibility for students’ learning and/or behavior and represents the “belief that one has the skills and abilities to bring about student learning” (Gibson & Dembo, 1984, p. 573). This factor is analogous to Bandura’s (1977, 1986) self-efficacy dimension, measuring the extent of the belief that one has the skills to bring about the desired outcome. The factor of General Teacher Efficacy represents the “belief that any teacher’s ability to bring about change is significantly limited by factors external to the teacher, such as the home environment, family background, and parental influences” (Gibson & Dembo, 1984, p. 574). This second factor corresponds to Bandura’s (1977, 1986) dimension of outcome expectancy, measuring the belief that one’s behavior will lead to the desired outcome.

Analysis of internal consistency reliabilities yielded Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .78 for the Personal Teaching Efficacy factor, .75 for the General Teaching Efficacy factor, and .79 for the 16 items that loaded on each factor. A multitrait-multimethod analysis supported both convergent and discriminant validity of the TES (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

**TEAM (Horne, Socherman, & Dagley, 1998)**. The TEAM is a vignette-driven survey that describes seven children consistent with descriptions of the seven dimensions of the child behavior clusters of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC; Huberty, DiStefano, & Kamphaus, 1996; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992): (a) Well-Adapted, (b) Average, (c) Disruptive Behavior Disorder, (d) Learning Disorder, (e) Physical Complaints and Worry, (f) Severe Psychopathology, and (g) Mildly Disruptive. The TEAM was designed to assess the degree to which teachers feel efficacious when working with each of the seven types of student.

Prior to the present study, there were no published psychometric data presented by the authors revealing the reliability and validity of this instrument. The interitem consistency of
the teacher efficacy dimension of the present study was assessed. An analysis of internal consistency yielded Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .84, .94, .89, .88, .91, .95, and .93 for the seven clusters, respectively.

OAS (McGraw-Hill School Systems, 1994). The OAS is a computerized system that preserves a running inventory of students in the school and their disciplinary offenses. After a problem behavior is observed by a teacher in the classroom, hallway, lunchroom, bus area, restroom, and/or the physical education field/court, and a disciplinary referral is completed, the teacher’s name, the name of the disciplinary offender, the type of offense, and the date of the offense are entered into the OAS database. The disciplinary offenses are entered using a code number followed by a brief description of the infraction. For the purpose of this study, only those offenses that denoted verbal and/or physical infractions were counted as disciplinary referrals. Examples of these infractions include verbal threats, harassment, intimidation, striking, slapping, pushing, tripping, instigating/provoking a fight, battery, fighting, verbal abuse, profanity, racial slurs, insults, and disrespectful comments. The OAS program allowed for the tracking of the number of each of the control and treatment teachers’ disciplinary referrals in order to determine the change in the amount of student bullying behavior before, during, and after the implementation of the bully prevention psychoeducational training program.

**Research Design**

A quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control group design was implemented (see Table 1). Prior to the initial commencement of the Bully Busters psychoeducational treatment program, all participants, treatment and control, signed an informed consent agreement and completed a demographic information questionnaire. Additionally, all participants completed the TISK, TES, and TEAM, and 2 weeks prior to the implementation of the bully prevention intervention, the number of disciplinary referrals made by each of the participating teachers was traced via the OAS.

Subsequent to the completion of the pretest assessments, the treatment group participated in the Bully Busters program 1 day per week for 3 consecutive weeks. For the following 8 weeks, the treatment group members participated in bi-monthly Bully Busters support team and supervision meetings. The control group received no treatment or supervision.

After completion of the Bully Busters program and supervision/team meetings, both treatment and control teachers completed the postassessment measures; the OAS was used to assess the number of student disciplinary referrals by all participating teachers during the 3 weeks of the bully prevention psychoeducational workshop and the 8 weeks of the supervision/bully busters team meetings.

**RESULTS**

Four research questions with 22 null hypotheses were addressed in this study. The statistical procedures for each were trifold: (a) independent samples t test of pretest group means, (b) test for homogeneity of slopes, and (c) one-way ANCOVA. The following is a summary of the research questions, null hypotheses, and their respective ANCOVA results.

**Research Question 1**

*Does a psychoeducational intervention for middle school teachers affect teachers’ knowledge of bullying intervention skills?*

For Research Question 1, all of the ANCOVAs were significant, resulting in the rejection of Null Hypotheses 1a through 1f. On each of the dimensions of the Knowledge subscale of the TISK, the treatment group demonstrated significantly higher knowledge of the interventions than did the control group. Null Hypotheses 1a through 1f, corresponding means and standard deviations, and respective ANCOVA results are reported in Table 2.

**Research Question 2**

*Does a psychoeducational intervention for middle school teachers affect teacher’s use of bullying intervention skills?*

For Research Question 2, all of the ANCOVAs were significant, resulting in the rejection of Null Hypotheses 2a through 2f. On each of the dimensions of the Use subscale of the TISK, the treatment group demonstrated significantly higher use of bully interventions as indicated by the TISK. Null Hypotheses 2a

---

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Weeks 1–3</td>
<td>Weeks 4–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bully Busters</td>
<td>Supervision/team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TISK</td>
<td>intervention</td>
<td>meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TEAM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td>No intervention</td>
<td>No supervision/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TISK</td>
<td></td>
<td>team meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TEAM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OAS*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* TISK = Teacher Inventory of Skills and Knowledge; TEAM = Teacher Efficacy and Attribution Measure; TES = Teacher Efficacy Scale; OAS = Osiris School Administration System Activity Tracker.

*Disciplinary referral data collected over 2 weeks. **Disciplinary referral data collected over 11 weeks.
Research Question 3

Does a psychoeducational intervention for middle school teachers affect teachers' self-efficacy? For Research Question 3, six of the nine ANCOVAs were significant, resulting in the rejection of Null Hypotheses 3a, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3h, and 3i and confirmation of Null Hypotheses 3b, 3c, and 3g. The treatment group demonstrated significantly higher Personal Teaching Efficacy, as measured by the TES, and significantly higher Teaching Efficacy, as measured by the TEAM–Well-Adapted Typology (General Teaching Efficacy), 3c (Teaching Efficacy dimension of TEAM–Well Adapted Typology), and 3g (Teaching Efficacy dimension of TEAM–Severe Psychopathology Typology). No significant differences were found between groups on the General Teaching Efficacy dimension of the TES for the Well-Adapted and the Physical Complaints/Worry child typologies of the Teaching Efficacy dimension of the TEAM. Null Hypotheses 3a through 3i, means and standard deviations, and respective ANCOVA results are reported in Table 2.

Research Question 4

Does a psychoeducational intervention for middle school teachers have an effect on the number of student disciplinary referrals? For Research Question 4, the ANCOVA was significant, resulting in the rejection of Null Hypothesis 4. On the disciplinary referral dimension of the OAS, the treatment group demonstrated a significant decrease in bullying as measured by disciplinary referrals on the OAS. Null Hypothesis 4, mean and standard deviation, and respective ANCOVA result are reported in Table 2.

In general, the results of the present study indicated that the bully prevention treatment program for middle school teachers Bully Busters: A Teacher’s Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders (Newman et al., 2000) was an effective intervention for increasing teachers’ knowledge of bullying intervention skills, use of bullying intervention skills, teachers’ personal self-efficacy and teachers’ self-efficacy related to working with specific types of children, as well as reducing the amount of bullying in the classroom as measured by teachers’ disciplinary referrals. Findings demonstrated significant results in favor of the treatment group across all null hypotheses with the exception of Null Hypothesis 3b (General Teaching Efficacy), 3c (Teaching Efficacy dimension of TEAM–Well-Adapted Typology), and 3g (Teaching Efficacy dimension of TEAM–Physical Complaints and Worry Typology).

The findings of this study indicate that the bully prevention treatment program for middle school teachers was an effective intervention for increasing teachers’ knowledge of bullying intervention skills, use of bullying intervention skills, teachers’ personal self-efficacy and teachers’ self-efficacy related to working with specific types of children, as well as reducing the amount of bullying in the classroom. Of the 22 null hypotheses tested, 19 were rejected in favor of the treatment group.

**DISCUSSION**

The literature encompassing the arena of bully prevention and antibully programs suggested the need for continuing
teacher education pertaining to student bullying (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985; Stephenson & Smith, 1989) and has suggested the components of a curriculum to increase teachers’ skills and awareness of bullying (Johnstone et al., 1991; Kikkawa, 1987; Olweus, 1978). Bully Busters: A Teacher’s Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders (Newman et al., 2000) was developed in response to the need for an empirically validated approach that increases teacher knowledge and use of bully intervention skills, teacher self-efficacy, and the reduction and elimination of classroom bullying behaviors.

Teachers who participated in the bully prevention program gained additional knowledge of antibullying intervention skills designed specifically for preventing bullying, intervening with the bully, aiding the victim, assisting the bully and the victim, using resource-related interventions, and increasing students’ awareness of bullying and victimization. The present study supports prior recommendations to implement a continuing education teacher-training curriculum designed to educate teachers on the components of bully awareness, prevention, and interventions (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). The conclusion confirms the suggestions that the components of teacher awareness, knowledge, and skills are integral components of a teacher training program (Johnstone et al., 1991; Kikkawa, 1987; Olweus, 1978), and the findings provide validation of these components as intertwined parts of an effective bully prevention psychoeducational training program for teachers.

Exposing teachers to the psychoeducational program significantly changes their belief in their skills and ability to influence their students. Those who participated in the bully prevention psychoeducational program demonstrated a significant increase in their sense of personal responsibility for their students’ learning and/or behavior. This conclusion coincides with Bandura’s (1986) efficacy expectation dimension, suggesting that the psychoeducational intervention is an effective method for increasing teachers’ beliefs that they have the skills to bring about a desired outcome.

However, exposing teachers to a bully prevention program did not significantly affect the teachers’ belief in their ability to bring about change when their students’ behavior is limited by factors external to themselves, which include the student’s home environment, family background, and parental influences. This suggests that the psychoeducational intervention is not an effective means for changing teacher outcome expectancy, that is, the teachers’ belief that their behavior will lead to desirable outcomes when external factors are considered (Bandura, 1986). This conclusion is likely to be a function of the Bully Busters training program curriculum, because the program underscored personal teaching efficacy and teaching efficacy related to working with specific child typologies (i.e., bullies and victims). The program’s intent was to place strong emphasis on providing teachers with the requisite bully intervention skills to increase their belief in their ability to bring about positive changes in their students (personal teaching efficacy). However, the program placed less emphasis on addressing teachers’ abilities to alter factors external to themselves (general teaching efficacy), such as students’ family background, parental influences, and socioeconomic status.

The Bully Busters program for middle school teachers appears to be an effective method for changing teacher self-efficacy related to working with specific child typologies of Average, Disruptive Behavior Disorder, Learning Disorder, Severe Psychopathology, and Mildly Disruptive students. The teachers’ exposure to the program significantly affected the degree to which they felt efficacious about their skills to effectively work with and manage the behaviors of students with these typologies. This conclusion empirically verifies suggestions made by Horne et al. (1998) to provide teachers with the requisite skills and knowledge to work effectively with diverse student populations, thereby enhancing their belief in their ability to work with these students.

The training, though, was not effective for changing teacher self-efficacy related to working with the specific child typologies of Well-Adapted and Physical Complaints and Worry. It is likely that teachers in both control and treatment groups fail to differ in their self-efficacy associated with working with the Well-Adapted Child because teachers’ general didactic training adequately prepares them to work well with this typology.

The psychoeducational intervention was not an effective means for increasing teachers’ beliefs in their abilities to work with children who exhibit characteristics of the Physical Complaints and Worry typology. This may be linked to the likelihood that the teachers did not recognize the children’s somatic complaints as possible secondary signs or warning signals associated with victimization. This finding is consistent with the literature, which indicates that victimization may be overlooked or disregarded when only secondary signs are present, because a more detailed exploration of the victimization is needed before conclusions may be drawn (Horne et al., 1992; Olweus, 1993; Ross, 1996). The Bully Busters program may not have placed enough emphasis on educating teachers not to simply accept children’s physical complaints at face value, but rather to delve into the possible underlying roots of the physical complaints.

Finally, exposing teachers to the psychoeducational program significantly reduced the amount of bullying behaviors exhibited by their students. This suggests that a psychoeducational program may be a successful intervention for reducing the amount of student bullying behaviors.

This study contradicts the proponents of a whole school community approach who suggest that unless the whole school community is involved in the intervention program, efforts to reduce bullying behavior will be ineffective (Garrity et al., 1995; Olweus, 1994; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Tattum, 1994). Findings from the present study differ from prior studies that have implemented a student-based classroom curriculum intervention (Newman et al., 2000; Turpeau, 1998) in which results of a student-based intervention yielded nonsignificant reductions in bullying behavior.
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

To date, there has been a paucity of research on programs designed to reduce bullying and victimization in middle schools. Of the studies completed, the only interventions that have yielded empirical support have been those that implement schoolwide interventions (Olweus, 1978; Whitney et al., 1994). These studies, however, were unable to attribute a reduction in bullying to specific aspects of an intervention program (Olweus, 1994). In an effort to determine which components may be the effective aspects of a program, some prior studies have focused on student training, which yielded nonsignificant results (Newman et al., 2000; Turpeau, 1998). Little empirical data have been available that look solely at a bully prevention teacher training curriculum.

The findings from the present study infer that the bullying prevention treatment program is an effective intervention for increasing teachers’ knowledge of bullying intervention skills, use of bullying intervention skills, and teachers’ personal self-efficacy and teachers’ self-efficacy related to working with specific types of children, as well as reducing the amount of bullying in the classroom as measured by teacher disciplinary referrals. These findings contradict the proponents of a whole school community approach, suggesting that efforts to reduce bullying behavior will be effective only if a whole school community approach is the intervention program of choice. Perhaps the teacher-training component of Olweus’s (1994) program is the effective component of his work. Therefore, implementing a teacher-targeted psychoeducational program, as opposed to a schoolwide bullying prevention program, may be more precise, cost-effective, and time efficient. This suggests that exposing teachers to a bully prevention training program may be an efficient and effective means not only to reduce and prevent bullying but, more important, to create a safer learning environment for students and teachers.

During the Bully Busters support team meetings, teacher participants suggested reasons that bullying behaviors in their classroom may have decreased. A majority of the teachers admitted that, prior to their participation in the continuing education workshop, referring their students to either the school counselor or the principal commonly took precedence over their taking the responsibility to deal with the students’ problematic behaviors themselves. They disclosed that as they gained awareness of the bullying problems and the accompanying knowledge and skills of how to intervene in such situations, they also gained greater confidence in their ability to tackle the issues at hand. These disclosures lend support to the following implications: (a) Teachers who believe they have the skills and ability to deal with bullying problems on their own refrain from referring the problem to the principal or the school counselor and (b) teachers who intervene in bullying situations early, before the student’s behavior turns problematic, prevent the need for making a disciplinary referral.

The teacher in-service training workshop was experimental in nature, providing practice for teachers with their peers. During the Bully Busters support team meetings, the teachers disclosed insecurities related to implementing the interventions with a student population. They expressed a desire to observe the workshop leader performing the interventions with student populations. Future research needs to examine differing leadership roles.

Often victims are the forgotten group (Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999); however, this study demonstrated that a psychoeducational intervention is an effective means for increasing teacher’s knowledge and use of intervention skills.

The overall effectiveness of the bully prevention staff development training curriculum for teachers empirically verified prior recommendations to implement a continuing education teacher training curriculum designed to educate the teacher on the components of bully awareness, prevention, and interventions (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1985; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). These findings appear to validate the effectiveness of a continuing education curriculum and also support the finding of Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski (2001) that comprehensive counseling programs that include having counselors doing outreach and training in classrooms and with teachers lead to more effective relationships with students and then to reduced aggression in schools.

In the present study, post-in-service training (Shapiro et al., 1996) was implemented in the form of the Bully Busting support teams. The support teams were an outgrowth of Olweus’s (1994) program that recommended collegial support groups for teachers that are designed as a forum for teachers to discuss bullying dilemmas, to share experiences, and to learn from their successes or failures.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Unanswered is the question about effectiveness of the bully prevention staff development training workshops: Should they be offered as a combination of the in-service training workshops and the follow-up Bully Busting support groups? The literature stresses the effectiveness of combining the two. Prior findings have revealed that in-service training with teachers to address classroom management issues was insufficient to produce lasting changes in teachers’ knowledge and intervention skills. Rather, in-service training that was combined with follow-up consultation was effective in producing significant changes (Shapiro et al., 1996). Generalizing these results to the present study’s findings would indicate that the significant effects of the bully prevention psychoeducational program stemmed from the combined effects of the continuing education workshops and the follow-up support.

Regarding this study’s limitations, although the majority of the study’s findings were significant, these results may be attributed to the fact that we (the authors) undertook multiple roles on the project, which included developing the treatment program, training teachers, conducting the teacher support team groups, and collecting and analyzing data. These multiple roles may have affected the study’s outcome. This suggests the need for research to assess the effectiveness of the program across instructors.
REFERENCES


JOURNAL OF COUNSELING & DEVELOPMENT • SUMMER 2004 • VOLUME 82