

BULLYING AND THE GIFTED

Dorothy L. Espelage and Matthew T. King

Bullying among school-age youth continues to be cause for concern. In a recent U.S. national survey, approximately 28% of 12- to 18-year-old students reported they had been bullied at school during the school year, and victimization was highest among sixth graders (37%) compared to seventh or eighth graders (30% and 31% percent, respectively; Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). It is not surprising that sixth graders reported more bullying, given that this is the year that most students transition to middle school. Gifted youth are at particular risk for being targets of bullying (Peterson & Ray, 2006a, 2006b). Longitudinal data show that victims of bullying have compromised social, emotional, and academic development (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011) and even physical health (Copeland et al., 2014). Studies have documented that victims often experience depression, social anxiety, and low self-esteem, which could then contribute to academic and social challenges (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010).

From 1970 through 2014, approximately 14 peer-reviewed articles and four dissertations focused on bullying, aggression, or victimization among gifted or exceptional children. Less than five of these studies were conducted outside of the United States. In comparison to numerous studies focusing on students in general education and students with disabilities (Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok, & Benz, 2012; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001; Rose, Espelage,

Aragon, & Elliot, 2011), studies examining the rates of victimization and bullying among gifted students generally only include gifted students and lack a general education control group. However, studies including gifted students suggest that these students are bullied and victimized at similar, but not elevated, rates of other student populations, but they may experience it differently and in different forms (Peterson & Ray, 2006a, 2006b). These two studies (one quantitative, one qualitative) were drawn from the same nationally representative sample of 432 eighth graders in the United States with no control group, indicating that the findings should be viewed with caution. In this chapter, we define bullying and giftedness and review of the few studies on this topic. Promising interventions for bully prevention are described and recommendations for future research are provided.

DEFINITIONAL ISSUES: BULLYING AND GIFTEDNESS

Bullying

Considerable debate has emerged over how to define *bullying* and distinguish the behavior from aggression (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). Recently, the Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention collaborated to develop a uniform research definition of bullying. Drawing heavily from the scholarship of

Research for this chapter was supported by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (No. 1R01CE002340) to Dorothy L. Espelage.

Daniel Olweus (1978), a research definition was put forth as follows:

Bullying is any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth, or group of youths, who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm. (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014, p. 7)

It is important to recognize the repetitive nature of bullying and the presence of a power differential. An imbalance of power exists when the perpetrator or group of perpetrators have more physical, social, or intellectual power than the victim (e.g., stronger, more popular). In a recent examination of a nationally representative study, adolescents who were victimized by individuals they perceived as having more power reported greater adverse outcomes (e.g., depression) than victims who did not perceive a power differential (Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2014).

Giftedness

Definitions of *giftedness* have changed over the past two centuries because of a number of social, scientific, and political reasons, including the development of intelligence testing and the U.S. Department of Education's initiative to identify gifted and talented youth among minority groups (Abeysekera, 2014). However, like the research literature on bullying, researchers have used different operational definitions and assessments of giftedness to identify gifted youth (Carman, 2013). In a recent meta-analysis of 104 peer-reviewed research studies on gifted youth, Carman (2013) found that researchers classified youth as gifted in the following ways: 62.1% of the studies considered a youth to be gifted if the school labeled them as such, 24% of the studies assessed the youth directly, and 14.6% used a combination of school identification and their own measures. Across these three categories, there were nine sources of information used, including

intelligence tests, achievement tests, academic achievement, teacher recommendations, extracurricular activities, school/committee recommendations, and counselor recommendations (Carman, 2013). It is clear that there is great heterogeneity in the ways in which gifted youth are identified. As research continues to be conducted to understand bullying experiences among gifted youth, definitional and assessment issues will have to be addressed. An excellent resource to guide and improve methodologies for conducting research on giftedness is Thompson and Subotnik (2010).

BULLYING EXPERIENCES AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS AND OTHER STUDENT POPULATIONS

Although there is a dearth of literature that has focused on bullying experiences and gifted youth, it appears that gifted students are not exempt from being a victim or perpetrator of bullying (Peterson, 2015; Peterson & Ray, 2006b; Smith, Dempsey, Jackson, Olenchak, & Gaa, 2012). However, in the limited studies that include general education and gifted students, findings support less involvement with bullying for gifted students. For example, Estell and colleagues (2009) examined differential involvement in bullying among three groups of 5th graders, including general education students ($n = 369$), academically gifted students ($n = 74$), and students with mild disabilities ($n = 41$). Peer and teacher reports were used to assess aggression, bullying, and social standing within peer groups. Results indicated that students with mild disabilities were more likely to be viewed by peers as being bullies than were academically gifted and general education students. In addition, students with mild disabilities were more likely to be rated by their teachers as bullies and victims in comparison to the other two groups. Further, general education students were rated by teachers as bullies and victims more than academically gifted students.

Extending this work to high school students, Pfeiffer (2013) found that 72% of gifted students reported having experienced negative name calling, compared with 40% among a nongifted comparison group. Gifted students were also teased more

frequently than nongifted students (2.3 vs. 1.9 incidents, on average; $p < .05$), yielding a medium effect ($d = 0.38$).

Overall, the research on bullying experiences among gifted youth is too limited to draw any definitive conclusions at this point. There is likely to be heterogeneity among gifted students and their risk for being a victim or perpetrator of bullying. Future studies need to focus on identifying the types of characteristics of gifted youth that increase these risks.

TYPES OF BULLYING AND VICTIMIZATION AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS: SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

Peterson and Ray (2006a, 2006b) have conducted the most comprehensive examination of bullying and victimization among gifted students. They used a retrospective, descriptive analysis of actual rates of 13 different types of bullying (e.g., name-calling, knocking books, hitting) among 432 gifted eighth grade students from 16 school districts in 11 states across the United States (Peterson & Ray, 2006b). They asked students to recall their experiences with bullying perpetration and victimization at each grade level from kindergarten to eighth grade. Furthermore, students were asked to rate the emotional impact of being bullied, ranging from *not at all* to *a lot*. Overall, 67% of these gifted students reported at least one experience with bullying during the past 9 years. Peak rates of bullying occurred during sixth grade, with name-calling victimization reported by 35% of the sample: 24% reported that the name calling was focused on their appearance and 19% reported name calling on the basis of their intelligence or grades they received. Also among sixth graders, 13% reported being shoved, 12% beat up, and 11% had their books knocked down. For boys in the study, prevalence of being bullied peaked in the sixth grade (54%) and declined in seventh and eighth grade. Prevalence of victimization among gifted girls peaked and remained consistent in fifth grade through eighth grade (38% or 39%).

As far as bully perpetration, a consistent finding emerged with the highest rates of perpetration being reported when youth were in the sixth grade; 46%

of all participants engaged in bullying at least once, with 54% of boys and 14% of girls reporting bullying others more than 10 times. Similar to the rates for victimization, 35% of the sample reported calling other students names, 24% teased others about their appearance, and 13% pushed other students.

Using this same sample, Peterson and Ray (2006a) conducted in-depth interviews with 57 of the participants in the previous study (Peterson & Ray, 2006b) who had experienced victimization. The interview protocol consisted of 17 questions that assessed the students' perception of his/her giftedness, why they volunteered to be interviewed, their victimization experiences, who was involved in the bullying, duration and description of their experiences, reactions to bullying, impact of victimization experiences, and who they told about the victimization. A rigorous qualitative analysis was conducted with the interview transcription data, in which five overarching themes emerged. First, the gifted students spoke to their perceptions of how their giftedness made them vulnerable to victimization. These included other students being jealous of them, their being socially disconnected from peers because of academic demands, their being different, and generally their being unfamiliar with their peers. Second, students spoke to potential external causes underlying their victimization experiences, including trying to understand why some students engage in bullying and how it is linked to the larger school climate. Within this theme, gifted students appeared to believe that they also have to manage the victimization themselves and grappled with how they could change their behavior to stop the bullying. Third, the gifted students spoke to the extreme distress they experienced when they encountered non-physical bullying victimization. This is not surprising given that name-calling was the most prevalent form of victimization reported by this sample on survey data (Peterson & Ray, 2006b). Within this theme, the gifted students reported experiencing sexual orientation-based victimization (i.e., being called "gay"). This is consistent with the high rates of middle school youth who are targets of homophobic epithets (Espelage, Basile, & Hamburger, 2012; Poteat & Espelage, 2005, 2007). Fourth, the gifted students used coping strategies

in response to the victimization, including self-talk, calming strategies, engaging external supports (e.g., principal, teacher, parent, friend), ignoring and inaction, and waiting for things to get better. The final theme to emerge indicated that gifted youth who bully others can change and stop their bullying behavior.

These findings are particularly meaningful given gifted students' potential hypersensitivity (Bouchet & Falk, 2001) and unique vulnerability to bullying as derived from follow-up qualitative inquiry (Peterson & Ray, 2006a). Educators should recognize that gifted students generally do not speak with anyone about their experiences with bullying (Crozier & Skliopideou, 2002). Peterson and Ray (2006b) asked students how often they spoke with someone about their worries, and found that 51% of all gifted students in their study endorsed either *never* (28%) or *not often* (23%). Some researchers have argued that the experiences of gifted students make them particularly vulnerable to the occurrence and effects of bullying and victimization (T. L. Cross, 2001; Peterson & Ray, 2006a).

These papers (Peterson & Ray, 2006a, 2006b) call attention to the rates of bully perpetration and victimization experiences among gifted youth and identify some potential avenues for future research. However, it is important to examine these rates and qualitative themes among a comparative sample of students who are not gifted.

BULLYING PREVALENCE AMONG GIFTED AND HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

In a step to address gaps in the literature, some studies have compared bullying involvement differences between gifted youth and high-achieving (HA) students. For example, Peters and Bain (2011) conducted a comparative study of 90 gifted and HA high school students to determine how their experiences with bullying differed. HA students in this study ($n = 43$) were students enrolled in advanced placement (AP) courses, but did not receive additional services outside of these courses. Gifted students ($n = 47$) were enrolled in the same AP courses, but were identified as gifted on the basis of educational performance, creativity,

and cognitive criteria. Additionally, gifted students received special education services outside of the classroom. Results indicated that the gifted and HA students scored in the normal range on bully perpetration and victimization subscales and did not differ significantly from one another. These results support Estell et al.'s (2009) findings that gifted students are not at an elevated risk for victimization in comparison to other student populations; however, future studies should continue to examine the rates with a consistent definition of giftedness and use a comparison group of students in general education.

PREDICTORS OF BULLYING AND VICTIMIZATION AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS

Much of the etiological research in the area of bullying and peer victimization has attempted to explain these phenomena through a social-ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Espelage, 2014; Hong & Espelage, 2012). Bronfenbrenner (1977) introduced the ecology of human development model where attitudes and behaviors emerge from interactions between individual characteristics of youth and other environmental contexts or systems. These structures or locations where children have direct contact are referred to as the *microsystem*, which includes peers, family, community, and schools. Interactions between components of the microsystem refer to the *mesosystem* (e.g., parent-teacher interactions). The *exosystem* is the social context with which the child does not have direct contact, but which affects him or her indirectly through the microsystem (e.g., teacher or staff perceptions of the school environment; opportunities for professional development around bullying, school violence, or school climate). A social-ecological perspective also guides prevention and intervention efforts to reduce bullying and peer victimization, including gifted students. Interventions to address bullying among gifted students, like those with general education students, need to target risk and protective factors at each level of the social-ecology, including individuals, classrooms, schools, families, and communities.

INDIVIDUAL AND PEER RISK/PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Gifted students may be susceptible to bullying and victimization because of asynchronous development from typically developing peers, making it difficult to form peer relationships (J. R. Cross, 2012). *Asynchrony* is the term used to describe the mismatch between cognitive, emotional, and physical development of gifted individuals. For example, although their intellectual abilities are highly developed, some gifted students may have limited social skill development in comparison to their peers, causing them difficulty with regulating emotions and an increased likelihood of being rejected by their peers (Pfeiffer, 2013). Additionally, intense emotional experiences and heightened levels of perfectionism in comparison to their peers (Bouchet & Falk, 2001; Speirs Neumeister, Williams, & Cross, 2009) may cause gifted students to struggle with peer interactions. However, personality traits as a predictive factor of gifted students' involvement in bullying and victimization are debated and speculative, as studies have shown advanced intellectual development as a protective factor as well (Cohen, Duncan, & Cohen, 1994; Estell et al., 2009).

Although gifted students experience many of the same problems as other students, they may experience bullying and victimization in different ways (T. L. Cross, 2001; Peterson, 2009). A connection between emotional sensitivity as a predictor of intense emotional reactions to bullying is still speculative, but Peterson and Ray (2006a) suggested that personality traits such as advanced intellectual ability may allow for these intense reactions. Because gifted students can describe the intense emotions related to bullying, they explained the feelings as more than just "feeling bad" and internalized these experiences as life-changing and profound. However, it is also possible that these traits may also help students make sense of their experiences and diffuse intense emotions. For example, in the same qualitative interviews conducted by Peterson and Ray (2006a), most gifted victims were able to generate possible motivations for why others engaging in bullying, as well as offer explanations for their own behavior as a bully. Indeed, much more

research needs to be conducted with gifted youth to understand how the attributes associated with their exceptionality serve as either risk factors for bullying involvement or protective factors against being targets of peer victimization.

SCHOOL-RELATED RISK/PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Transitions

School transitions place all youth at risk for involvement in bullying, but it is not clear if this is true for gifted youth, although scholars have suggested developmental challenges are exacerbated for gifted youth across transitions (Pelchar & Bain, 2014; Peterson, 2001; Peterson & Ray, 2006b). Often, gifted students are placed in advanced courses with intellectually advanced peers at the transition to middle school, and again at the transition to high school, where they take more integrated classes with high achieving peers. As evidenced in Peterson and Ray (2006b), this transition from enriched and pull-out programs to some courses with regular education students may lead to adjustment difficulties and increased experiences with bullying and victimization. In a recent study, Pelchar and Bain (2014) evaluated the levels of distress from students associated with bullying and victimization during the transition from elementary to middle school. Although students in this study made this transition to middle school in the fifth grade (one year earlier than most students included in the study by Peterson & Ray, 2006b), Pelchar and Bain reported significantly higher rates of bullying before the transition to middle school. Bullying was associated with levels of externalizing distress, whereas victimization was related to internalizing distress. Consistent with the general bullying literature (for a review, see Espelage, 2015), the percentage of students who participated in this dynamic as a bully peaked after the transition to middle school (Peterson & Ray, 2006b). Gifted students may worry about the transition and experience difficulties adjusting afterward, resulting in high levels of bullying. Understanding gifted students' early subjective experiences with bullying and victimization would be critical to develop strategies to help students manage the transition to middle school.

Pull-Out and Enrichment Programs

Pull-out and enrichment programs may influence gifted students' level of bullying and victimization in comparison to other student populations. Research in special education has shown an elevated risk for bullying and victimization for students in self-contained educational settings (Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009). However, for gifted students, pull-out enrichment programs have received limited attention, especially as it relates to bullying. In a comparative study of 53 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in an enrichment pull-out program, Cohen, Duncan, and Cohen (1994) compared these students to their general education peers ($n = 149$) on measures of sociometric status (e.g., mutual friendships, popularity, etc.). Gifted students, identified according to the Tennessee Department of Education's gifted criteria, in the academically enriched Creative Learning in a Unique Environment (CLUE) program were rated by their peers as high on social acceptability and social competence, and were less often perceived as an aggressor or victim in comparison to general education students. Additionally, CLUE students received more mutual friendship nominations than their general education peers. Indeed, the educational opportunities afforded in enrichment programs for gifted students might be a protective factor:

The noncompetitive, non-evaluative nature of the program may serve to reduce potential attacks on self-esteem sometimes reported for gifted children in special programs who are not accustomed to sharing leadership roles. In addition, the frequent discussions of appropriate behaviors, the analyses of relationships, and opportunities to role play, all in a supportive environment, would seem to be critical aspects of CLUE which would be associated with peer relations outside the program. (Cohen, Duncan, & Cohen, 1994, p. 37)

Although not all gifted students are afforded the opportunity to participate in a pull-out or enriched program, and these programs are not self-contained to the same extent as special education programs,

enriched pull-out programs appear to serve as a protective factor. Given that these programs are only typically afforded for a brief part of the day or week, this serves as an intervention deserving further research.

SCHOOL-BASED BULLY PREVENTION APPROACHES

Almost every state in the United States requires some type of bully prevention policy and/or intervention. Therefore, bully prevention programs are being evaluated to determine their efficacy to reduce bullying and peer victimization. No studies have yet examined the efficacy of these programs with gifted students, so it is difficult to evaluate whether programs need to be tailored to the unique needs of gifted youth. However, it is important to understand what generally is working in bully prevention. To date, Ttofi and Farrington (2011) conducted the most comprehensive meta-analysis of bullying prevention programs. After reviewing 44 program evaluations and randomized clinical trials, Ttofi and Farrington found these programs yielded a 20% to 23% decrease in bullying perpetration and a 17% to 20% decrease in victimization.

Meta-analysis is a technique that helps to identify the components of programs that are driving these reductions. To reach the level of decrease in victimization that Ttofi and Farrington (2011) found, the following program elements should be present: disciplinary (nonpunitive) methods, parent training and meetings, use of videos, and cooperative group work where teachers are taught how to run cooperative exercises with the students. Of importance is the finding that the use of peer mediation leads to an increase in victimization; thus, peer mediation should not be used for a true bullying incident. In relation to reducing bully perpetration, successful programs included parent training/meetings, improved playground supervision, disciplinary (nonpunitive) methods, classroom management, teacher training, classroom rules, a whole-school anti-bullying policy, school conferences, information for parents (ranging from information in newsletter to suggestions for helping children with bullying situations),

and cooperative group work where teachers learn to teach students how to work in cooperative groups. Future efficacy studies of bully prevention programs should assess the differential impact of these programs on gifted youth.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

A growing area of bullying prevention programs is the use of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs to reduce peer victimization and increase peer acceptance (Espelage, 2014). SEL programs involve teaching youth emotional regulation, organizational, and interpersonal skills to promote academic and social success. The model is based on many well-established theories, including theories of emotional intelligence, social and emotional competence promotion, a social developmental model, social information processing, and self-management. It also integrates important aspects of several other behavior change models, including the health belief model, the theory of reasoned action, the problem behavior theory, and the social-cognitive theory.

Given the interpersonal sensitivity of gifted youth (Bouchet & Falk, 2001), it is likely they would benefit from these types of programs. SEL programs are grounded in a risk and protective framework where youth are taught a wide range of skills to prevent conflicts and prevent escalation of conflicts. More specifically, these programs target emotion identification, emotion management, listening and communication skills, problem-solving strategies, empathy and perspective-taking, use of external supports, etc. School-based SEL programs that address interpersonal conflict and teach emotion management have succeeded in reducing youth violence, including bullying, fighting, and disruptive behaviors in classrooms (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Espelage, Low, Polanin, & Brown, 2013, 2015; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). Further, SEL has shown some promising effects with students with disabilities (Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, 2015). Future studies need to consider how SEL programs benefit gifted students.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK AND BULLYING PREVENTION

Many schools have systems in place to manage and set expectations for behavior. One example is positive behavioral supports (PBS; Sugai & Horner, 2006). PBS is a framework that focuses on universal school-wide programs to prevent problematic behaviors and promote a positive school climate. This framework lends itself well to bullying prevention campaigns. Ross and Horner (2009) created Bullying Prevention-Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS) to integrate bully prevention within the PBS framework. It is designed specifically to (a) define and teach the concept of being respectful to all students in a school, (b) teach all students a three-step response (stop, walk, talk) that minimizes potential social reinforcement when they encounter disrespectful behavior, (c) precorrect the three-step response prior to entering activities likely to include problematic behavior, (d) teach an appropriate reply when the three-step response is used, and (e) train staff on a universal strategy for responding when students report incidents of problem behavior (Ross & Horner, 2009). Research supports the addition of BP-PBS to a school's system of PBS as it was related to a reduction in the number of incidents, variability, and trend of problem behavior in a targeted sample (Ross & Horner, 2009). These effects were coupled with an increase in appropriate bystander and victim responses, which may have reduced the likelihood that aggression resulted in peer reinforcement (Ross & Horner, 2009). Again, gifted youth need to be included in large-scale evaluations of PBS.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although much more research needs to be conducted with gifted students to more completely understand their objective and subjective experiences, some insights can be gained from the extant literature. It appears that gifted youth may have very similar experiences with bullying as victims and perpetrators when compared to their nongifted peers. However, they might process their experiences differently than other students. Peterson and Ray

(2006a) revealed that some gifted youth engage in internal (e.g., self-blame), external (e.g., why bullies bully), and behavioral (e.g., how they can change their behavior to prevent risk for victimization) strategies. Attribution theory, therefore, should be considered more completely for these youth in basic research and potential for intervention. Weiner's (1986) attribution theory is concerned with the ways in which individuals explain the causes of their own and others' behaviors. Attributions, or grants of responsibility, tend to vary along three dimensions: locus, stability, and controllability. Locus refers to whether the cause of a behavior is internal or external to the person, stability refers to whether the cause is constant or varying over time, and controllability is concerned with whether the cause is subject to volitional influence. Research has largely focused on how bully perpetrators attribute others' actions and their own negative behaviors (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigbee, 2002), and more recently, on how victims attribute the causes of their victimization. For instance, Graham and colleagues (see Graham, Bellmore, & Mize, 2006; Graham, Bellmore, Nishina, & Juvonen, 2009) have shown that victims tend to possess an internalizing attribution that is usually stable and uncontrollable, known as *characterological self-blame* (e.g., "It's something about me"). In contrast, *behavioral self-blame* involves an internalizing attribution that is unstable and controllable (e.g., "It's something I did in this situation"), whereas an externalizing attribution is usually unstable and uncontrollable (e.g., "That kid picks on everybody"). As practitioners work with gifted youth, it would be important to assess these attributions and attempt to move youth from internal attributions (e.g., self-blame) to external attributions (e.g., youth bullies for attention) to prevent adverse outcomes.

Next, there is some indication that gifted youth may struggle with school transitions, especially during early adolescence. Early adolescence is a period in which youth explore their new social roles and pursue social status, as they make a transition from elementary to middle school. Youth at this stage are exposed to a new and unfamiliar environment, with larger classrooms in a larger building, where they interact with unfamiliar peers

(Bukowski, Sippola, & Newcomb, 2000; Espelage, Hong, Rao, & Thornberg, 2015). This transition is often a time when youth report increases in bully perpetration and victimization (Espelage, Hong, et al., 2015). This might be particularly salient for gifted youth who may go from some pull-out enrichment programming during elementary school to predominantly integrated classrooms with other high-achieving students in middle school and high school. Pull-out enrichment programs during elementary school might be protective for gifted youth, but when they are required to integrate with all youth, their heightened interpersonal sensitivity and limited interaction with nongifted youth might place them at risk for peer rejection and subsequent peer victimization (Cohen et al., 1994). On the other hand, gifted youth may also resort to bullying tactics to establish dominance within peer groups (Peterson & Ray, 2006a); it would be important to not assume that gifted youth are only victims. Future research is needed to understand the potential protective factors of pull-out and enrichment programming and gifted students' role in the bullying dynamic.

Gifted youth do report being targeted for being smart or getting good grades, which might be a form of victimization that is unique to these youth; however, gifted youth also report being called names motivated by other reasons. For example, research suggests that gifted youth are not immune to being targets of sexual orientation-based victimization during early adolescence. Gifted youth in Peterson and Ray (2006a) reported homophobic epithets on a daily basis, which is not surprising given that the majority of name-calling during early adolescence includes sexual orientation-based commentary (Espelage et al., 2012; Poteat & Espelage, 2007). This finding points to the importance of addressing sexual orientation-based aggression and sexual harassment among all students.

Perhaps what is most evident about the review of bullying experiences among gifted youth is the need to infuse much more rigor into the scientific investigation of these phenomena. It is clear that more research is needed; however, rather than focusing on just increasing the number of studies addressing bullying among gifted youth, future

studies should be designed to overcome limitations. First, the research field needs to work toward a consistent definition of giftedness and should use uniform assessments to classify these youth (see Thompson & Subotnik, 2010). Second, studies need to include a comparison group rather than just comparing gifted youth to special education populations. Estell and colleagues (2009) conducted the most rigorous, multi-informant investigation of gifted youth and compared them to general education and special education students, but their gifted sample was very small. Third, with the exception of Estell and colleagues, comparative studies with gifted youth have been limited to self-report measures of bullying and peer victimization, future studies should include observational measures and peer assessments. Finally, it would be critical to examine the intersectionality of gifted status with other demographics, such as gender, sex, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and disability status to understand multiple risk factors for victimization.

In summary, bullying among school-age youth continues to be cause for concern; however, less than 15 studies have examined bullying and victimization among gifted students. Gifted youth experience bullying, as perpetrators and victims, at similar rates as general education students and students with disabilities, but more research needs to be conducted to confirm these findings.

References

- Abeysekera, I. (2014). Giftedness and talent in university education: A review of issues and perspectives. *Gifted and Talented International*, 29, 137–146. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15332276.2014.11678436>
- Blake, J. J., Lund, E. M., Zhou, Q., Kwok, O. M., & Benz, M. R. (2012). National prevalence rates of bully victimization among students with disabilities in the United States. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 27, 210–222. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000008>
- Bouchet, N., & Falk, R. F. (2001). The relationship among giftedness, gender, and overexcitability. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 45, 260–267. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001698620104500404>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32, 513–531. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513>
- Bukowski, W. M., Sippola, L. K., & Newcomb, A. F. (2000). Variations in patterns of attraction to same- and other-sex peers during early adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 36, 147–154. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.36.2.147>
- Carman, C. A. (2013). Comparing apples and oranges: Fifteen years of definitions of giftedness in research. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 24, 52–70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1932202X12472602>
- Cohen, R., Duncan, M., & Cohen, S. (1994). Classroom peer relations of children participating in a pull-out enrichment program. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 37, 33–38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001698629403800105>
- Coie, J. D., & Dodge, K. A. (1998). Aggression and antisocial behavior. In N. Eisenberg & W. Damon (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3. Social, emotional and personality development* (5th ed., pp. 779–862). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Cook, C. R., Williams, K. R., Guerra, N. G., Kim, T. E., & Sadek, S. (2010). Predictors of bullying and victimization in childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic investigation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 25, 65–83. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0020149>
- Copeland, W. E., Wolke, D., Lereya, S. T., Shanahan, L., Worthman, C., & Costello, E. J. (2014). Childhood bullying involvement predicts low-grade systemic inflammation into adulthood. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA*, 111, 7570–7575. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1323641111>
- Crick, N. R., Grotpeter, J. K., & Bigbee, M. A. (2002). Relationally and physically aggressive children's intent attributions and feelings of distress for relational and instrumental peer provocations. *Child Development*, 73, 1134–1142. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00462>
- Cross, J. R. (2012). Peer relations. In T. L. Cross & J. R. Cross (Eds.), *Handbook for counselors serving students with gifts and talents* (pp. 409–426). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Cross, T. L. (2001). Social/emotional needs: The rage of gifted students. *Gifted Child Today*, 24(2), 43–45.
- Crozier, W. R., & Skliopideou, E. (2002). Adult recollections of name-calling at school. *Educational Psychology*, 22, 113–124. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01443410120101288>
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82, 405–432. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- Espelage, D. L. (2014). Ecological theory: Preventing youth bullying, aggression, & victimization. *Theory Into Practice*, 53, 257–264. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2014.947216>

- Espelage, D. L. (2015). Emerging issues in school bullying research & prevention science. In E. T. Emmer & E. Sabornie (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 76–93). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Espelage, D. L., Basile, K. C., & Hamburger, M. E. (2012). Bullying perpetration and subsequent sexual violence perpetration among middle school students. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 50*, 60–65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2011.07.015>
- Espelage, D. L., Hong, J. S., Rao, M., & Thornberg, R. (2015). Understanding ecological factors associated with bullying across the elementary to middle school transition in the United States. *Violence and Victims, 30*, 470–487. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-14-00046>
- Espelage, D. L., Low, S., Polanin, J. R., & Brown, E. C. (2013). The impact of a middle school program to reduce aggression, victimization, and sexual violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 53*, 180–186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.02.021>
- Espelage, D. L., Low, S., Polanin, J. R., & Brown, E. C. (2015). Clinical trial of Second Step middle-school program: Impact on aggression & victimization. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 37*, 52–151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2014.11.007>
- Espelage, D. L., Rose, C. A., & Polanin, J. R. (2015). Social-emotional learning program to reduce bullying, fighting, & victimization among middle school students with disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 36*, 299–311. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0741932514564564>
- Estell, D. B., Farmer, T. W., Irvin, M. J., Crowther, A., Akos, P., & Boudah, D. J. (2009). Students with exceptionalities and the peer group context of bullying and victimization in late elementary school. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 18*, 136–150. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10826-008-9214-1>
- Gladden, R. M., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Hamburger, M. E., & Lumpkin, C. D. (2014). *Bullying surveillance among youths: Uniform definitions for public health and recommended data elements*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and U.S. Department of Education.
- Graham, S., Bellmore, A., Nishina, A., & Juvonen, J. (2009). “It must be me”: Ethnic diversity and attributions for peer victimization in middle school. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*, 487–499. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9386-4>
- Graham, S., Bellmore, A. D., & Mize, J. (2006). Peer victimization, aggression, and their co-occurrence in middle school: Pathways to adjustment problems. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 34*, 349–378. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10802-006-9030-2>
- Hong, J. S., & Espelage, D. L. (2012). A review of research on bullying and peer victimization in school: An ecological systems analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 17*, 311–322. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.03.003>
- Hymel, S., & Swearer, S. M. (2015). Four decades of research on school bullying: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 70*, 293–299. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038928>
- Juvonen, J., Graham, S., & Schuster, M. A. (2003). Bullying among young adolescents: The strong, the weak, and the troubled. *Pediatrics, 112*, 1231–1237. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.112.6.1231>
- Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among U.S. youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association, 285*, 2094–2100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/jama.285.16.2094>
- Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in school: Bullies and whipping boys*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere.
- Pelchar, T. K., & Bain, S. K. (2014). Bullying and victimization among gifted children in school-level transitions. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 37*, 319–336. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0162353214552566>
- Peters, M. P., & Bain, S. K. (2011). Bullying and victimization rates among gifted and high-achieving students. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 34*, 624–643. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/016235321103400405>
- Peterson, J. S. (2001). Gifted and at risk: Four longitudinal case studies of post-high school development. *Roeper Review: A Journal on Gifted Education, 24*, 31–39. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02783190109554123>
- Peterson, J. S. (2009). Myth 17: Gifted and talented individuals do not have unique social and emotional needs. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 53*, 280–282. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0016986209346946>
- Peterson, J. S. (2015). Gifted children and bullying. In M. Neihart, S. I. Pfeiffer, & T. Cross (Eds.) *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* (2nd ed., pp. 131 – 142). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Peterson, J. S., & Ray, K. (2006a). Bullying among the gifted: The subjective experience. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 50*, 252–269. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001698620605000305>
- Peterson, J. S., & Ray, K. (2006b). Bullying and the gifted: Victims, perpetrators, prevalence, and effects. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 50*, 148–168. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/001698620605000206>

- Pfeiffer, S. I. (2013). *Serving the gifted: Evidence-based clinical and psychoeducational practice (school-based practice in action)*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Poteat, V. P., & Espelage, D. L. (2005). Exploring the relation between bullying and homophobic verbal content: The Homophobic Content Agent Target (HCAT) scale. *Violence and Victims, 20*, 513–528. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/vivi.2005.20.5.513>
- Poteat, V. P., & Espelage, D. L. (2007). Predicting psychosocial consequences of homophobic victimization in middle school students. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 27*, 175–191. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0272431606294839>
- Robers, S., Kemp, J., & Truman, J. (2013). *Indicators of school crime and safety: 2012*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Rodkin, P. C., Espelage, D. L., & Hanish, L. D. (2015). A relational framework for understanding bullying: Developmental antecedents and outcomes. *American Psychologist, 70*, 311–321. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038658>
- Rose, C. A., Espelage, D. L., Aragon, S. R., & Elliot, J. (2011). Bullying and victimization among students in general education and special education curricula. *Exceptionality Education International, 21*(2), 2–14.
- Rose, C. A., Espelage, D. L., & Monda-Amaya, L. E. (2009). Bullying and victimization rates among students in special education: A comparative analysis. *Educational Psychology, 29*, 761–776. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01443410903254864>
- Ross, S. W., & Horner, R. H. (2009). Bully prevention in positive behavior support. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 42*, 747–759. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1901/jaba.2009.42-747>
- Smith, B. W., Dempsey, A. G., Jackson, S. E., Olenchak, F. R., & Gaa, J. (2012). Cyberbullying among gifted children. *Gifted Education International, 28*, 112–126. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0261429411427652>
- Speirs Neumeister, K. L., Williams, K. K., & Cross, T. L. (2009). Gifted high-school students' perspectives on the development of perfectionism. *Roeper Review: A Journal on Gifted Education, 31*, 198–206. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02783190903177564>
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2006). A promising approach for expanding and sustaining school-wide positive behavior support. *School Psychology Review, 35*, 245–259.
- Thompson, B., & Subotnik, R. F. (Eds.). (2010). *Methodologies for conducting research on giftedness*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/12079-000>
- Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2011). Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology, 7*, 27–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11292-010-9109-1>
- Ttofi, M. M., Farrington, D. P., Lösel, F., & Loeber, R. (2011). Do the victims of school bullies tend to become depressed later in life? A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 3*, 63–73. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17596591111132873>
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *Digest of education statistics, 2013*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Weiner, B. (1986). *An attributional theory of motivation and emotion*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Wilson, S. J., & Lipsey, M. W. (2007). School-based interventions for aggressive and disruptive behavior: Update of a meta-analysis. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 33*, S130–S143. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2007.04.011>
- Ybarra, M. L., Espelage, D. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2014). Differentiating youth who are bullied from other victims of peer-aggression: The importance of differential power and repetition. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 55*, 293–300. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.02.009>