



TERMS FOR BULLYING RESEARCH

Bullying – Bullying refers to a systematic exposure over an extended period of time to efforts to humiliate or physically injure an individual. The act is intentional. To be true bullying, a power differential must exist between bully and victim. Bullying behaviors include illegal acts such as extortion and battery, but the term includes any behaviors meant to damage others.

Bystander – In bullying research, bystanders are those students who observe a bullying incident. Some experts consider this group to be of extreme importance in understanding bullying. If bystanders see that bullying is accepted or at least not dealt with in a school, they may conclude that the school is a dangerous place, and that in disputes they should side with the more aggressive children.

Dehumanization – This term from the field of sociology refers to actions taken to render an individual or group less than human in the eyes of another person or group. This is often a precursor to bullying, as people are often unwilling to harass someone whom they see as a person.

In the context of an entire society, propaganda is often employed to convince the population that a subgroup is less than human and can justifiably suffer discrimination. In the case of bullying, it is possible that a similar process must take place. That is, the potential victim's stigma must be established and made public.

Hazing – Hazing refers to what anthropologists call "aggressive conversion." Hazing includes actions taken, either formally or informally, but usually as a function of tradition, that serve as a gate to belonging to an organization. Hazing is related to bullying because, though initiates frequently (though not always) enter into it voluntarily, they often do not know ahead of time how serious or dehumanizing the actions may be. In addition, school officials who do not interfere with athletic and club hazing out of a sense of tradition may, without realizing it, be encouraging bullying by teaching that similar actions are acceptable.

Henchmen – In some instances of mobbing, a strong bully will possess a cohort of sidekicks who may not initiate bullying, but who encourage and participate in the bullying under some circumstances. Olweus (1996) referred to these individuals as henchmen. In situations where bullying is tacitly approved or not actively discouraged by adults, simple bystanders may join in as henchmen.

Hidden Curriculum – This term was introduced in education to refer to attitudes and information passed along incidentally or accidentally (i.e., unintentionally) as lessons are undertaken. For example, an elementary teacher who is squeamish about handling animals may inculcate this attitude unintentionally while teaching a unit on mammals. The concept is important in a discussion of bullying because when adults in a building do not intervene or take aggression seriously, they may be passing along the unintentional message that such behavior is acceptable.

Humiliation – Refers to actions taken to humiliate or the feeling(s) thus engendered, such as embarrassment and debasement—undesirable aspects of the related root "humble."

Humiliation Ritual – This term refers to actions taken by students to formally single out a student as “fair game” for abuse and to communicate this debased status to others. Writers have noted many such behaviors including: Directly informing others that a student is to be shunned; spreading rumors or revealing undesirable information; public, unfriendly use of teasing and humor; physical attacks that publicly reveal the victim’s defenselessness; and name calling.

Mobbing – Pikas (1989) argued that when several individuals bully one weak victim, the term mobbing should be employed to distinguish the situation from simple bullying. His argument was that treatment implications are different for mobbing as compared to bullying. The term is borrowed from the field of ethology (comparative psychology).

Passive Submissive Victim – Perry (et al.) used this term to describe the great majority of bully victims. These were children who were passive (rather than assertive) in the face of bullying.

Provocative Victims – Most victims of peer abuse do not bully others or perform actions that elicit abuse. In fact, most chronic scapegoats behave in such a way as to avoid bullies. However, in rare instances (less than 5%) of cases according to one source, victims perform annoying verbal and physical behaviors consistently and seem to elicit bullying from others. Olweus (1996) referred to these individuals as provocative victims.

Scapegoat – A scapegoat is one who takes on the “guilt” of a large group. The term is related to the practice of sacrifices (goats) and is commonly used to denote one who is frequently bullied by peers.

Sexual Harassment – Sexual harassment is said to occur when an environment is hostile and inimical to learning based on bias associated with one’s gender. Repeated, unwelcome sexual advances; unwanted touches; and sexual innuendo and humor in the face of repeated requests to stop are behaviors included under the rubric of sexual harassment.