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What Bullying Is and What It Is Not

*What is most surprising of all is how much **fear** there is in school . . . Like good soldiers, [students] control their fears, live with them, and adjust themselves to them. But the trouble is, and here is a vital difference between school and war, that the adjustments children make to their fears are almost wholly bad, destructive of their intelligence and capacity. The scared fighter may be the best fighter, but the scared learner is always a poor learner.*

—John Holt, *How Children Fail* (1982, p. 49)

Joan (not her real name) is the mother of 12-year-old Theresa (also not her real name), a student at a small, private K–8 school who was bullied persistently by her peers. In a videotaped interview, Joan was remarkably candid about her daughter’s ordeal:

I have a 12-year-old daughter, Theresa. She had always been kind of a clown because that was what was working for her socially. In sixth grade, the kids started changing . . . from laughing and pointing when she would clown around to something that was far more negative. They started calling her names: fatso, stupid idiot. It just kept getting worse and worse. On the school grounds, Theresa would trip and fall. She’d try to get up and they’d shove her back down again. I saw footprints on her backside. It just kept escalating. When it got to that point, the children were entrenched in this behavior.

Out of a class of 28, I'd have to say that 20 of them were participating in this. There were just one or two that had that bully behavior all the time, and not just with my daughter but with others also. But there were far more of the children that would let that bully come out when it suited them, when they felt like it. . . . There was no respite for her. The teacher would try and talk to the students as a group. That would be helpful for perhaps a day or two, but by the third or the fourth day, the behavior was back.

Theresa started that sixth-grade year quite well. Then, as the bullying escalated, her grades took a nosedive. . . . She was acting out at home. She was yelling at me, calling me names, making me feel bad, and trying to insult me. . . . She started eating disorder behaviors that were very scary. . . . bingeing. It affected her grades. It affected her emotionally. And it affected how she behaved and the kind of person that she was. Her sense of self tanked. She ended up being a very depressed, disappointed, and angry little girl. (McGrath, 1998e)

There is no doubt that what Theresa experienced was bullying. Unfortunately, her experience is all too prevalent in today's K–12 schoolyards. Large schools, small schools, private schools, and public schools—no school or child is immune. This chapter will provide an overview of the behaviors that constitute bullying, their prevalence in schools, and ways to recognize bullying in both its overt and covert manifestations.

SPOTTING THE BULLY

In *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*, Barbara Coloroso (2003) writes,

Bullies come in all different sizes and shapes: some are big, some are small; some bright; some attractive and some not so attractive; some popular and some absolutely disliked by almost everybody. You can't always identify bullies by what they *look* like, but you can pick them out by what they *act* like. (p. 11)

The term "bully" is used here to describe anyone who engages in bullying behavior. This usage is a step into reality and away from the classic paradigm of the "class bully," usually viewed as the big bruiser boy. Bullying behavior pervades our classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, and school buses. We want to capture and understand the cultural and behavioral phenomenon that resulted in over 70% of the children in a sixth-grade class tormenting a 12-year-old girl until her very sense of self shattered.

How Bullies Act

There are many different definitions of bullying and peer victimization in the literature. Among the various definitions, there are certain patterns of behavior typically identified as bullying:

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M **Figure 1.1 How Bullies Act** *M*

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- Harm or hurt is intended, rather than the result of a mistake or negligence.
 - A power imbalance exists between the target and the perpetrator.
 - The perpetrator enjoys carrying out the action.
 - The perpetrator repeats the behavior, often in a systematic way.
 - The victim is hurt physically or psychologically and has a sense of being persecuted or oppressed.
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SOURCE: Olweus (1993), Davis (2004), Sullivan (2000), Coloroso (2003).

Intent to Harm

According to Stan Davis (2004), author of *Schools Where Everyone Belongs*, “bullies experience a wish for power that is stronger than their empathetic sense, so they are willing to hurt others in order to feel powerful. As Dorothea Ross (1996) points out, young people who bully enjoy the power they have over their victims and do not bully in order to receive tangible rewards such as lunch money. Instead, bullies focus on behaviors that will hurt or embarrass their targets” (p. 10).

The intent of the perpetrator is critical to the present discussion. Most anti-bullying laws include intent to harm in their definitions of bullying. It is this criterion that sets bullying apart from illegal harassment, which is defined (in part) by how the victim perceives the situation rather than by the intent of the perpetrator to harm. We will be discussing this distinction in depth in Chapter 5.

An Imbalance of Power

In bullying incidents, there is an imbalance of physical, psychological, and/or social power. The perpetrator has (or at least seems to have) more power than the target of the bullying. This abuse of power makes bullying just that—a form of abuse. Bullying is not a conflict between equals; it is a power play. It instills fear and, over time, terror in the mind of the recipient. Of equal importance, as John Holt (1982) points out in the opening quote in this chapter, fear negatively impacts learning.

The Perpetrator Enjoys Bullying

Those who typically enjoy bullying are called *confident bullies*. The characteristic “that the bully enjoys bullying” is not present all of the time, but it is a predominant feature for the majority of bullies, girls and boys alike.

Most bullying experts concur with the notion of multiple types of bullies. Let’s look at the three types of bullies identified in the literature. See whether you can come up with examples of each from your experience with students.

Types of Bullies

1. Confident (or Clever) Bullies—enjoy aggression, feel secure, are of average popularity, and are physically strong;*
2. Anxious (or Not-So-Clever) Bullies—are weak academically, have poor concentration, overreact to perceived threats and insults, are less popular, and are less secure; and
3. Bully/Victims—are bullies in some situations and are bullied in others, are very unpopular, and tend to have behavioral problems.

(Sullivan, 2000, Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2004)

*Note: Physical strength does not apply with social scheming or “technobullying.”

Repeated, Systematic Behavior

Unless the behavior is severe in its harm, a single incident does not typically constitute bullying. Most bullying is either persistent (happening frequently and relentlessly) or pervasive (happening everywhere) in the school environment. Often bullying is both persistent and pervasive. Bullying behavior also tends to be covert in nature, making it difficult for adults to spot patterns.

Adults in the school setting should pay attention to incidents even if they do not appear to be part of an apparent pattern. In fact, one of the deciding factors in current bullying litigation (leading to substantial awards to plaintiffs) is that school officials either missed an obvious pattern of bullying or ignored a pattern of systematic peer victimization over time. In later chapters, I will review some of these cases and discuss how to document incidents and identify patterns in a legally sound manner.

BULLYING HURTS

In 2005, Nishina, Juvonen, and Witkow of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) were in their fifth year of a long-term study of more than 1,900 sixth-grade students—predominantly minority and low-income students in two Los Angeles-area public schools. In “Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones, but Names Will Make Me Feel Sick” (2005), they report on their findings so far regarding the effects of bullying on these middle school children. In the study, students provided confidential reports and their teachers rated students’ behavior. The research supported what many have long suspected: There is a correlation between perceived psychological and physical vulnerability and student achievement.

In a press release about their report, Juvonen said,

Now we have evidence that the school environment, psychological health, physical health, and school achievement are all interrelated. . . . If kids continue to get harassed, over time they become more psychologically vulnerable. Those who get repeatedly victimized are

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most at risk for developing psychological problems. (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005a, p. 1)

The UCLA research shows that middle school students who are bullied are “more likely to feel depressed, lonely, and miserable, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to further bullying incidents” (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005a, p. 2).

The damage to victims of bullying may be physical, emotional, and/or psychological, and the resulting trauma can last a lifetime. The impact of bullying on the victim will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

Educator responsibility to provide a safe school environment for students has been upheld by the courts in numerous illegal harassment cases and is now shaping the courts’ response to bullying litigation. Protecting yourself and your school district from liability means proactively protecting students. The first steps are to increase staff, student, and parent awareness of bullying and its harm and to establish channels for everyone on campus to report alleged or suspected bullying behavior. Action steps will be presented later for increasing awareness, encouraging reports, and following up on complaints and rumors.

THREE TYPES OF BULLYING

Bullying is classified in a variety of ways in the literature. For the purposes of this book, three types of bullying are distinguished:

- **Physical Bullying:** *Harm to another’s person or property*
- **Emotional Bullying:** *Harm to another’s self-concept*
- **Relational Bullying:** *Harm to another through damage (or the threat of damage) to relationships or to feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion*

Included in these types of bullying are nonverbal, verbal, and physical behaviors. These behaviors may be perpetrated by an individual or by a group, and there may be multiple victims.

Some researchers exclude criminal or illegal behaviors from their classifications. However, given that we are looking through a legal lens, it is imperative to consider the entire range of harmful behavior in the discussion of bullying. When bullying behaviors are directed at a legally protected classification of people (because of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, or other identified characteristics), the victim’s civil rights may be violated. The bullying then constitutes illegal harassment, actionable under antidiscrimination laws. When the bullying behaviors violate the penal code, the perpetrator(s) may face criminal prosecution. Illegal harassment and criminal prosecution will be further discussed in Chapter 4, along with other categories of legal infractions.

Regardless of legal classification, bullying is typically made up of certain identified behaviors. The following chart displays the three types of bullying and the behaviors included in each category.

Figure 1.2 Three Types of Bullying

Physical Bullying	<i>Harm to another's body or property</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatening physical harm • Making threatening gestures • Starting a fight • Cornering or blocking movement • Pushing, Shoving • Pinching, Scratching • Hair pulling • Spitting • Slapping • Kicking, Tripping • Biting • Punching • Destroying or defacing property • Extortion • Theft • Sexual assault • Rape • Child sexual abuse • Assault with a weapon • Arson • Homicide
Emotional Bullying	<i>Harm to another's self-concept</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insulting gestures • Dirty looks • Insulting remarks • Name calling • Taunting • Racial, ethnic, or religious slurs or epithets • Insulting remarks related to disability, gender, or sexual orientation • Defacing or falsifying schoolwork • Insulting/degrading graffiti • Harassing and/or frightening phone calls, e-mail, text or phone messages • Unwanted sexually suggestive remarks, images, or gestures • Challenging in public • Threatening another to secure silence
Relational Bullying	<i>Harm to another through damage (or threat of damage) to relationships or to feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using negative body language or facial expressions • Gossiping • Starting/spreading rumors • Playing mean tricks • Insulting publicly • Ruining a reputation • Ignoring someone to punish or coerce • Threatening to end a relationship • Undermining other relationships • Passively not including in group • Exclusion • Ostracizing/total group rejection • Arranging public humiliation
Range of Severity		

PIERCING THE MYTHS ABOUT BULLIES AND BULLYING

Having looked at what bullying is, let's look at what it is not. Bullying in schools has become a national focus, with the likes of Dr. Phil, Oprah Winfrey, and television's "Super Nanny" chiming in. Yet almost every day, school personnel reveal fundamental misunderstandings about the nature and prevalence of bullying with comments such as "Bullies are few" and "We don't have bullying in our school." They will even say, "We have that issue under control" or "We handled bullying last year." If we are to make any real difference, we must dispel the myths and misunderstandings that pervade the school culture and justify complacency.

Myth #1: Our School Doesn't Have Bullies

Studies show that school bullying is widespread in the United States and internationally. The bullying behavior may be hidden from the view of adults, but it is there nonetheless. Estimates of the incidence and prevalence of bullying among students vary widely. Recent evidence indicates, however, that bullying is much more prevalent than the 5% to 10% reported by researchers in the 1980s and 1990s. These older studies primarily looked for overt or physical acts. Most relied on self-reporting of past events by research subjects, sometimes years after the events took place. As understanding of the nature of bullying continues to change and grow, new research methodologies are emerging, revealing startling results.

A 2001 study of 15,600 students in Grades 6 to 10 revealed that almost 16% of U.S. students are bullied regularly and 13% are initiators of bullying behavior; 6% of all these students reported both bullying and being bullied by others (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simmons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001).

A 2004 UCLA study paints a graphic picture of the extent of bullying. The field part of the study was conducted over a two-week span with a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse group of 192 sixth graders from two urban Los Angeles schools. In school #1, 46% of the sixth graders reported that they experienced peer harassment on at least one day of the survey cycle; in school #2, the incidence was 47%. In school #1, 42% reported witnessing peer harassment at least once; in school #2, 66% reported witnessing this behavior (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005b).

In a press release about the study, Juvonen remarked, "Bullying is a problem that large numbers of kids confront on a daily basis at school; it's not just an issue of the few unfortunate ones. We knew a small group gets picked on regularly, but we were surprised how many kids reported at least one incident" (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005a).

Researchers have also concluded that school size and class size are irrelevant. So far, no one has proven the theory that smaller schools have less bullying (Olweus, 1993, pp. 24–25). Remember the story at the beginning of this chapter about "Theresa," a student at a small private school? No school is immune.

Myth #2: Other Safety Issues Are a Bigger Concern for Kids

The findings from the 2001 *Talking With Kids* survey, a joint project of the Kaiser Family Foundation, Nickelodeon, and Children Now, reveal that bullying is a serious concern for students. In the study, a national sample of 863 children between the ages of 8 and 15 were interviewed. Fifty-five percent of 8- to 11-year-olds and 68% of 12- to 15-year-olds said that bullying is a “big problem” at school. In the study, bullying outranked discrimination, violence, pressure to have sex, alcohol and drugs, racism, and HIV/AIDS as a concern among these students (Nickelodeon & Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001). This is not to say that the other issues are not important, or perhaps more severe or life threatening. Rather, the results emphasize that bullying directly affects the majority of students and it is foremost on their minds.

Results of the 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that 4% to 7% of students missed at least one day of school during the 30 days preceding the survey because they felt unsafe at school or traveling to and from school. Extrapolated, that’s as many as 160,000 children a day who miss school out of fear for their personal safety (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1998, p. 8).

The National Center for Education Statistics Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2005 reports similar findings regarding students’ perceptions of personal safety at school and away from school: In 2003, 6% of students aged 12–18 reported that they had been afraid of attack at school or on the way to and from school during the previous six months. Ten percent of urban students reported being fearful, compared to 5% each of suburban and rural students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005b).

Myth #3: Schools Should Not Encourage Complaints

Over the years, my colleagues and I have found that when bullying-awareness training is conducted with staff and students, there is usually a rise in student complaints. That may sound like bad news, but actually it is not. If implementation of an anti-bullying policy is conducted in a thorough, consistent manner, school districts often report to us that over time, there are fewer incidents and complaints in which to intervene. Even more important, as students see that adults in the school can be trusted to intervene fairly and effectively, incidents are likely to be reported at earlier stages, and the severity of the incidents at the time of first report is likely to decrease (McGrath, 2006b).

Myth #4: Teachers See Everything and Respond When Bullying Takes Place

When asked whether they are aware of the bullying incidents that occur in their classrooms, teachers will generally say “yes.” They think that they are in tune with their students and that they don’t miss much. Studies show, however, that the mythical “teacher with eyes in the back of her head” is just

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that—a myth—and that most teachers are not as aware of what is happening as they could be. In a Toronto survey, Ziegler and Pepler (1993) found that although 71% of teachers indicated that they almost always intervene in incidents of bullying, only 25% of students surveyed indicated this to be the case (p. 30).

Dr. Pepler and her associates, who study bullying by direct observation, report that teachers intervene in 18% of classroom episodes and only 4% of playground episodes of bullying. Pepler speculates that low teacher intervention may occur because (1) the majority of episodes are verbal, (2) episodes are brief (in a 1998 study of bullying in classrooms, the average incident lasted 26 seconds), (3) bullying occurs when monitoring is low, and (4) the behavior is covert (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Pepler & Craig, 2000). If we are going to protect children, we must close the gap between what children experience and what adults in our schools perceive.

Myth #5: It's the Outcasts Who Bully Others

Studies indicate that bullies' popularity among peers ranges from above average to slightly below average. Earlier in this chapter, the three types of bullies were reviewed. The work of Dan Olweus (1993) appears to focus mainly on the confident bullies.

They are often surrounded by a small group of two or three friends who support them and who seem to like them. . . . The popularity of the bullies decreases in Grade 9. . . . Nevertheless, the bullies do not seem to reach the low level of popularity that characterizes the victims. (p. 35)

Coloroso (2003) identifies two types of bullies who may be popular with adults: the *confident bully*, often admired for his or her powerful personality; and the *social bully*, typically a popular girl who manipulates and ostracizes her targets while charming others (p. 18). Some of the most malicious and covert bullies are students who are popular with adults. They will encourage other children to taunt the victim and then “play innocent.” When a victim reports being bullied by a popular student, adults in authority often respond with disbelief, inaction, or even retaliatory behavior toward the complainant (McGrath, 2006g). Being popular, likeable, athletic, or academically gifted does not automatically indicate that a child is a bully, but it also does not mean that the child is *not* capable of such behavior.

Myth #6: Bullies Appear Tough, but They Are All Actually Anxious and Insecure

The commonly held assumption that bullies only appear tough but are really anxious and insecure is incorrect. Studies of bullies as a group indicate the opposite: Most bullies have little anxiety and insecurity or are average in this area, and they do not have poor self-esteem. In fact, bullies often have a very positive self-image (Olweus, 1993).

If insecurity isn't the source of most bullying, then what is? Olweus's (1993) research indicates four possible psychological sources underlying bullying:

- a strong need for power and dominance,
- family conditions,
- benefits and rewards (extorting victim's money, cigarettes, or other valuables), and
- prestige.

Does that mean that bullies are never insecure? No. Anxious bullies tend to struggle academically, have poor social skills and low self-esteem, and do not read social cues accurately. According to Coloroso (2003), this type of bully "often reads hostile intent into other kids' innocent actions, reacts aggressively to even slight provocation, and justifies his aggressive response by placing blame outside himself" (p. 19). However, this is just one type of bully. If you are looking for insecurity or anxiety to identify all bullies, you will miss the confident, secure students who are engaging in bullying behavior.

Figure 1.3 Distinctive Characteristics of Bullies

- Aggressive toward peers (and sometimes adults)
- Lack empathy for their victims
- Have an atypical positive attitude toward violence
- Are impulsive, lack foresight
- Have a sense of entitlement
- Are self-absorbed
- Crave attention
- Are manipulative, use others
- Are predatory (view weaker peers as "prey")
- Tend to hurt other children when adults are not around
- Refuse to take responsibility, blame others
- Are intolerant of differences
- Have a strong need to dominate others

SOURCE: Olweus (1993), Coloroso (2003).

Myth #7: The "Class Bully" Is Easy to Identify

The misconception that bullying is limited to a few, obvious "class bullies" is dispelled by the four findings addressed earlier: (1) the high percentage of children who report in anonymous research studies that they have been bullied or have bullied others, (2) the tendency of bullies to operate "behind the backs" of teachers, (3) reports by children that their teachers did not intervene in incidents of bullying when they were present during the incident, and (4) teachers studied who consistently underestimated the level of bullying that students identified as occurring. Like other

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forms of abuse, bullying often remains hidden and goes unreported by the victim. Identifying persistent, repetitive patterns of bullying in the school setting is not easy, but it can be done. Later in this book, practical tools and techniques for identifying and investigating bullying behavior will be discussed.

Myth #8: It Is Impossible to Catch the Early Warning Signs

Bullying occurs in stages and there are warning signs. In *The Anti-Bullying Handbook*, Keith Sullivan identifies what he terms the “downward spiral of bullying” and presents stages of that spiral (Sullivan, 2000). Bullying is a power imbalance. As such, it is similar to other types of abuse. Over the course of my 30 years of law practice, investigating complaints of both employee and student-to-student misconduct and abuse of power, I have identified three fundamental stages of abuse (McGrath, 1994).

Phase One Is *Trolling*. In this stage, the perpetrator is looking for a victim. Trolling behavior is characterized by single, subtle acts of bullying behavior aimed at different individuals. The perpetrator is looking for easy targets, kids with low self-esteem and low physical strength, kids who are easily intimidated, and kids who don’t resist or fight back. The perpetrator will test potential victims’ boundaries by invading their personal space and test their reactions with quick comments, threats, or taunts.

Phase Two Is the *Campaign Phase*. In this phase, the perpetrator escalates the behavior. The victim is still hoping for relief and trying to fit in. He experiences guilt, self-blame, and shame at not being able to stop the behavior or stand up for himself. Bullying becomes more frequent and more pervasive. The bully will often enlist the cooperation of bystanders. This phase includes threats and intimidation should the victim “tattle.”

Phase Three Is the *Bully-Victim Relationship*. The victim sees no way out. What started on the school bus every morning is now occurring in the classroom, in the cafeteria, on the playground, to and from school every day, and even on the telephone or via e-mail at home. The victim experiences a growing sense of despair. Without intervention, the victim may even attempt suicide or turn violent in response. Without intervention, the bully gets an unrealistic sense of his power and may take greater risks (McGrath, 2006e).

In fact, the bully may extend the antisocial behavior into other arenas, often committing criminal offenses that result in incarceration (Sullivan, 2000). Because this escalation is predictable, it is imperative to recognize the warning signs and intervene early.

Myth #9: There Is No Correlation Between Bullying and Cases of Extreme Violence

At its most extreme, the impact of bullying can be deadly. In England they call it *Bullycide*. The term was coined by the media to describe children who

commit suicide in reaction to severe, persistent, or pervasive acts of bullying at school.

In 2004, the Anchorage Alaska School District paid out \$4.5 million to settle a lawsuit with the family of Tom, an eighth-grade boy who attempted suicide after being bullied at school. According to court documents and depositions in the case, Tom was gifted in math and science but socially awkward. According to an article in the Anchorage Daily News, "On November 6, 1998, Tom tried to hang himself at home. He had no pulse when paramedics arrived, and they started CPR. Fifteen minutes later they got his heart going. He had already suffered extensive, irreversible brain damage. Tom's condition today is unchanged. He wears diapers, is fed through a tube, and knows only a few words" (Pesznecker, 2004). It may not seem logical to a fully functioning adult, but to a 13-year-old, suicide may seem like the only way out. Then there are the ones who are determined to take others with them.

The 1999 tragedy at Columbine High School left 15 people dead, including the two perpetrators, and 21 more wounded. Oddly enough, this murderous horror was a wake-up call for America, forcing us to pay attention to the plight of bullied children in U.S. schools. In the wake of the Columbine massacre, classmates and other teens across the nation suggested that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were reacting to years of bullying, rejection, and abuse by their peers. These theories were soon borne out in the journals, videos, and Web logs the two student gunmen left behind. An anonymous teen posted the following message to the *Seventeen* magazine Web site: "Because of my own experiences with vicious in-crowd members, my sympathies lay with Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. I know that what they did was wrong, but in my gut I know I'm more like them than the jocks and cheerleaders they targeted."

On March 5, 2001, 15-year-old Charles Andrew Williams of Santee, California told at least 12 people that he was going "to do a Columbine." No one reported what he or she had been told. Andy took his 22-caliber handgun to school and fired over 30 shots, killing two students and wounding 13 others. It would later be revealed that Andy had been the subject of extreme cruelty at the hands of his peers, including being burned on the neck with a cigarette lighter, having his head dunked in a toilet containing human waste, being punched in the face, being called derogatory names, and even being subjected to an unsuccessful attempt by students to set him on fire. He was sentenced to 50 years to life for his actions (Moran, 2002; Roth, 2001).

Two days later and across country, in Williamsport, PA, Elizabeth Catherine Bush, 14, took her father's revolver into the school cafeteria and shot head cheerleader Kimberly Marchese in the shoulder, wounding her. Bush was the first female in over three decades to become a school shooter. In a *Time* magazine article, Jodie Morse (Morse, Barnes, & Rivera, 2001) describes Bush:

Elizabeth Catherine Bush was no Charles Andrew Williams. She didn't shoplift, booze or boast of pulling a Columbine. Bush was a quiet eighth-grader. . . . A stickler for safety, Bush lectured the school bus driver for speeding through railroad crossings. She tacked posters of Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King Jr. to her bedroom walls and affixed pictures of the Columbine victims to the bulletin board over her desk. Her parents say she wanted to be a human rights activist—or a nun.

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Bush was reportedly threatened and teased mercilessly at her old school in Jersey Shore and had transferred to a smaller Roman Catholic school, hoping for a fresh start, but the teasing did not stop and she reacted with violence.

A 2001 study by Anderson and associates, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, examined "all known school-associated violent deaths from 1994 to 1999." During this period, there were 220 reported cases resulting in 253 deaths in U.S. elementary and secondary schools (private and public), occurring either on campus, while the victim was traveling to or from school, or while the victim was traveling to or from or attending a school-sponsored event (172 homicides, 30 suicides, 11 homicide-suicides, 5 legal intervention deaths, 2 unintentional firearm-related deaths). The intent of the study was to distinguish the common features of these events and the students involved and compare homicide perpetrators to homicide victims.

While the rate of single-student homicides declined over this period, the number of multiple-victim homicides increased. Fifty percent of these events took place during school activities, most often during class or afterschool activities. The authors emphasized that these are "rare but complex events" with "no simple solutions." They found that homicide perpetrators at school were twice as likely as homicide victims to have been bullied by peers. Perpetrators were also more likely than homicide victims to be reported to the principal's office for disobeying an authority figure or fighting with peers, and they were less likely to have participated in extracurricular activities. In addition, perpetrators were "far more likely than homicide victims to have expressed suicidal behaviors" (Anderson, Kaufman, Simon, Barrios, Paulozzi, Ryan, Hammond, Modzeleski, Feucht, Potter, & School-Associated Violent Deaths Study Group, 2001).

An investigation by the U.S. Secret Service of 37 school shootings from 1974 to 2000 revealed that 71% of the attackers "felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others prior to the incident. In several cases individual attackers had experienced bullying and harassment that was long-standing and severe. In some of these cases, the experience of bullying seemed to have [had] a significant impact on the attacker and appeared to have been a factor in his decision to mount an attack at the school" (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzelski, 2002).

The implications of the U.S. Secret Service report are clear: While not all children who bully will become school shooters, the report's findings underscore the need to combat bullying in our schools. "Educators can play an important role in ensuring that students are not bullied in schools and that schools not only do not permit bullying but also empower other students to let adults in the school know if students are being bullied" (Vossekuil et al., 2002, p. 36).

While the U.S. Secret Service study also found that there is "no accurate or useful 'profile' of students who engage in targeted school violence," their findings suggest "some future attacks may be preventable" (Vossekuil et al., 2002, pp. 21, 41). One approach that they consider highly promising is threat assessment—"a fact-based investigative and analytical approach that focuses on what a particular student is doing or saying" (p. 41). The U.S. Secret Service has compiled *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*. The guide includes procedures for implementing, conducting, and managing threat assessment

and threatening situations in the school setting and can be downloaded along with the aforementioned report from their Web site (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzelski, & Reddy, 2002).

Myth #10: Bullying Is Not a Legal Issue, It's a Character Issue

Bullying often crosses the line into illegal harassment or criminal behavior. In addition, more and more states are enacting statutes that prohibit bullying in schools and hold educators accountable for prevention and intervention in regard to bullying behavior. While there are many programs, books, and resources that deal with the socioemotional aspects of bullying and encourage character education, a comprehensive anti-bullying campaign must include training for staff, educators, and administrators that combines legal fitness with human dynamics.

SUMMARY

This chapter included a survey of bullying behavior, highlighting both what it is and what it is not. The five common characteristics of bullying behavior and the legal implications of each were examined. The types of bullying and the behaviors that constitute each type were looked at and 10 myths were debunked. The impact on the victim is next.