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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Bullying and the Abuse of Power

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Abstract
Dan Olweus pioneered research on school bullying and identified the importance of, and risk factors associated with, bullying and victimization. In this paper, we conduct a narrative review of the critical notion of power within bullying. Specifically, we discuss Olweus's definition of bullying and the role of a power imbalance in distinguishing bullying behavior from other forms of aggression. Next, we discuss the changing nature of research on aggression (and the adaptiveness of aggression) throughout the years, the important role of power in these changes, and how the concept of power in relationships has helped elucidate the developmental origins of bullying. We discuss bullying interventions and the potential opportunities for interventions to reduce bullying by making conditions for bullying less favorable and beneficial. Finally, we discuss bullying and the abuse of power that extends beyond the school context and emerges within families, workplaces, and governments. By recognizing and defining school bullying as an abuse of power and a violation of human rights, Olweus has laid the foundation and created the impetus for researching and addressing bullying. This review highlights the importance of examining abuses of power not only in school relationships, but across human relationships and society in general.

Keywords Bullying · Power · Dan Olweus · School · Workplace · Abuse of power

Dan Olweus was a pioneer in identifying school bullying as a form of aggressive behavior that was important to research. Contrary to public opinion, Olweus argued that being bullied at school was a harmful behavior as opposed to an acceptable right of passage (Olweus, 1978, 2013). Furthermore, he identified being victimized by bullying as a significant risk factor for child and youth development (Olweus, 1978). A recent (October, 2021) search of Google Scholar using the term "school bullying" returned almost one *million* results, indicating the paradigm-shifting importance of Olweus's classification of school bullying behavior. Bullying is not a transitory phenomenon, but rather represents a fundamental aspect of human behavior (Volk et al., 2012) that had been largely overlooked prior to Olweus's work (deliberately or not; see REF this issue). In this paper, we conduct a narrative review of relevant theory and evidence to argue that Olweus's formulation of school bullying laid the foundation for developing critical methodological tools for assessing the aggressive abuse of power, and provided a framework for studying the function of bullying for perpetrators, anti-bullying interventions, and bullying beyond schools in broader societal contexts. We begin by examining the theoretical and historical contexts underlying Olweus' emphasis on power in bullying. We then discuss how power influences anti-bullying interventions, followed by bullying and power beyond the school context. We end with a general conclusion and suggestions for future research.

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Olweus's Definition of School Bullying

Olweus did not just recognize bullying as a problem; he delineated what remains the most widely used definition of bullying (Olweus, 1993). According to one of his last papers on the topic, school bullying requires three criteria: repetitiveness, intentional harm-doing, and a power imbalance favoring the perpetrator (Olweus, 2013). These three

criteria, however, are not equally important in defining bullying. With respect to repetitiveness, Olweus (2013) said that he "never thought of this as an absolutely necessary criterion" (p.757), as its inclusion was only to help differentiate bullying from trivial, unharmful incidents. Research has shown that repetitiveness is indeed linked to a greater degree of harm (Kaufman et al., 2020; Ybarra et al., 2014). But there are also unfortunate examples of single incidents of bullying that are quite harmful (e.g., hurtful or humiliating posts online), having in extreme cases resulted in the death of the victim (Andersson, 2000). Thus, repetition may function as a moderator of harm caused by bullying rather than being a primary definitional component (Volk et al., 2014).

Olweus (1993) identified intentionality as a critical component of bullying. Intentionality was included in the definition to distinguish between incidents that could cause harm or discomfort (e.g., one child painfully, but accidentally, knocks down another child in a game), but were not intended to be harmful (Olweus, 2013). Furthermore, intentionality suggests that youths who engage in bullying actively seek out their target. This definitional component imbues bullying with hostile intent, consistent with the defining criterion of aggression in general. As intent is challenging to measure, recent research has increasingly focused on studying goals instead of intent, given that goals are the tools with which people consciously or unconsciously engage in willful behavior (Dijksterhuis & Aarts, 2010). Research has identified several goals associated with bullying (Runions et al., 2018; Volk et al., 2022b). A prominent goal is the accrual of dominance and power (Farrell & Dane, 2020; Kaufman et al., 2020; Malamut et al., 2020; Pouwels et al., 2018a, b; Pronk et al., 2017).

A power imbalance is perhaps the most critical aspect of Olweus's definition of bullying (2013) and the aspect he most emphasized in differentiating bullying from other forms of aggression (2010). Olweus argued that the bully has more power than the person being victimized, which makes it difficult for victims to defend themselves (Olweus, 1993). In contrast, bullying is not an aggressive encounter between two individuals of relatively equal power. If the targeted individual can mount an effective defense against the aggressor, this would be considered general aggression rather than bullying (Olweus, 1993). Multiple aspects of the power imbalance that defines bullying can be subjective, including the size/degree, nature/type, context, and expression of the power imbalance (Olweus, 2013). Furthermore, these can change over time, further complicating the relational nature of power (Pepler et al., 2006). The power imbalance can also vary across different bullying interactions and can be related to physical power, popularity, mental acuity, number of allies, and/or localized or broader social dynamics such as classroom norms (Cheng et al., 2011; Olweus, 1997; Pepler et al., 2006; Vaillancourt et al., 2003). In cases of cyberbullying, there are even more variables that can potentially influence power imbalances (e.g., technical skills; anonymity; Kowalski et al., 2014). It is worth nothing that Olweus viewed cyberbullying as a subcategory of bullying that required greater attention to details such as how power was captured online (Olweus, 2012) in order to overcome some of the ambiguities associated with the concept (Olweus & Limber, 2018). Heterogeneity in forms of power makes assessing the power imbalance a challenge for researchers, yet its centrality to Olweus's conception of bullying (2013) makes it necessary to incorporate. Some researchers have suggested that this imbalance of power reflects changes in the likelihood of costs (e.g., retaliation) and benefits (e.g., status gains) associated with bullying in comparison to other forms of aggression (Garandeau et al., 2014; van den Berg et al., 2019; Volk et al., 2014, 2022a, b).

Why Is Power so Important?

Humans are a deeply social species who evolved large brains to both compete and cooperate with other large-brained individuals to acquire and maintain power (Maestripieri, 2012). Similar to many other species, humans have evolved dominance hierarchies that allow for the navigation of power in relationships (Johnson et al., 2012). Power plays a pivotal role not only in peer relationships at school, but also across human relationships and society in general (Keltner, 2016). In this light, Olweus's emphasis on the abuse of power captures behavior that is important beyond the school context. Abuses of power lie at the heart of the human experience. Abuses of power characterize, allow for, and can even encourage sibling bullying (Wolke et al., 2015), workplace bullying (Vredenburgh & Brender, 1998), and intimate partner abuse (Wincentak et al., 2017). The evidence is clear that the aggressive abuse of power (i.e., bullying) creates stress that is as toxic to child and adolescent health (Lambe et al., 2019) as it is to adult health (Xu et al., 2019). Thus, bullying goes beyond Olweus's assertion of it being a violation of children's human rights (Assembly, 1989; Olweus & Breivik, 2014) to being a violation of general human rights, as it also applies to broader levels of social, political, and economic bullying behavior. Illuminating and countering the deliberate abuse of power is the core focus of important recent societal movements, including #MeToo (Kende et al., 2020) and BlackLivesMatter (Clayton, 2018), as well as movements related to civil rights (Clayton, 2018), economic monopolies (Massoc, 2020), climate change (Pettenger, 2007), the COVID-19 pandemic (Smith & Judd, 2020), and growing wealth inequality (Adam Cobb, 2016; Kalleberg et al., 1981). In all these cases, the difficulty of acknowledging sometimes subjective power imbalances lies at the heart of significant injustices that can take years, if not decades, to recognize and address (Clayton, 2018).

The importance of understanding the abuse of power in these domains makes Olweus's ground-breaking work on schoolyard bullying even more salient in today's world than it was decades ago. The need to understand the developmental origins of power and its exploitation goes beyond the schoolyard and is central to solving critical social, legal, political, economic, and environmental problems today. Bullying lies at the intersection of these issues, as diverse abuses of power negatively affect the lives of people around the world in many different ways (Elgar et al., 2019). The recognition of a power imbalance being central for bullying was not only critical for the definition of bullying (Olweus, 1993); it also allowed researchers studying the development of aggression to consider the possibility that aggression is not simply maladaptive (Asarnow & Callan, 1985), but rather bullying aggression could potentially be adaptive under certain contexts (Olweus, 1993; Volk et al., 2012, 2022b). Thus, we next explore the historical and theoretical importance of Olweus's conceptions of bullying and power for the field of child and youth school aggression and how these conceptions aligned with a shifting view of the adaptiveness of aggression.

The Development of School Bullying and Its Study

An important factor in the increase of research on child and adolescent peer relationships in the 1980s was concerns about the occurrence of aggression and antisocial behavior among youth (including conduct disorder and crime) and the fact that this behavior is almost never conducted by youths alone, but in interactions with peers. In these years, aggression was seen as the primary determinant of peer rejection (dislike), and thus associated with poor social skills and negative repercussions in the peer group (see, e.g., Asarnow et al., 1985; Asher & Coie, 1990). In the context of this work, distinctions were made between various forms and functions of aggression, most notably physical versus relational aggression and proactive versus reactive aggression (e.g., Little et al., 2003). Bullying was seen as a form of proactive aggression (Dodge & Coie, 1987) and a major cause for peer rejection, dislike, and maladjustment in various domains (Newcomb et al., 1993), most markedly, low social status. Olweus (1993) notably disagreed with what was then the dominant perception of bullies as insecure and socially unskilled. In contrast, he argued that their behavior was power-seeking, reward-driven (i.e., potentially adaptive), and sustained by average or high self-esteem as well as anxiety.

Not long after these arguments, the general picture of aggression in the study of child and adolescent peer relationships dramatically changed towards Olweus's conceptions when researchers became interested in popularity (LaFontana & Cillessen, 1998; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). Originally, in the assessment of peer relations, researchers focused on sociometrically assessing who youth "like the most" and "like the least" in their classroom or grade (Coie et al., 1982). In this era of peer relations research, high status referred to peer acceptance and low status to peer rejection. Indeed, all forms and functions of aggression correlated negatively with acceptance and positively with rejection. However, when peer relations researchers began to also ask youths who they thought were "most popular" and "least popular," the picture of the role of aggression in the peer group quickly became more nuanced. Rodkin et al. (2000) identified two types of high-status peers: those who are well-liked and prosocial ("models") and those who are seen as cool and aggressive ("toughs"). There is clear evidence that peer acceptance and popularity are not identical (see, for a meta-analysis, van den Berg et al., 2020), and a robust finding is the reversal of the correlation of measures of aggression and antisocial behavior with peer acceptance versus popularity.

As predicted by Olweus (1993), this includes measures of bullying. The consistently positive correlation between popularity and bullying at school suggests that bullying offers a degree of adaptiveness. Consistent with both sociometric findings and Olweus's early assertions (1993), Sutton and colleagues (1999) argued against the "social skills deficit" perspective of bullying and instead suggested that bullying is associated with social cognitive skills and theory of mind (Shakoor et al., 2012) that are required to manipulate and organize others, as well as to inflict harm in subtle ways while avoiding detection. This perspective has led to a more nuanced picture of bullying (particularly as practiced by "pure" bullies versus bully-victims; Volk et al., 2014) as a complex behavior that includes social skills and is associated with high status and rewards in the peer group (Berger, 2007; Pouwels et al., 2018a, b; Reijntjes et al., 2013). These same behaviors and traits often characterize cyberbullies (Kowalski et al., 2014; Olweus, 2012) and appear to persist across cultures (Smith et al., 2016). These findings are consistent with Olweus's (1993) conceptualization of bullies as ringleaders who are capable of using social power to influence the social roles played by those around them, particularly those who would assist them (O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 2010; Stellwagen & Kerig, 2013). This role-oriented approach to bullying has been validated by a separate body of peer relations research that has emphasized the importance of bullying power imbalances in promoting not only different roles among peers (e.g., reinforcing versus defending), but also in the adaptiveness of those ancillary bullying roles (Garandeau et al., 2014; Lambe et al., 2017; Spadafora et al., 2020).

One question that has intrigued researchers is whether the association between bullying and social power emerges

for the first time in adolescence or already exists at earlier ages. On the one hand, there is evidence that the associations of peer acceptance and popularity with bullying and its underlying motives change from middle childhood to early adolescence (Caravita & Cillessen, 2012). On the other hand, researchers with an evolutionary perspective have argued that the association between aggression and power has long been observed among animals, and that it is not limited to adolescence, but exists in peer groups from a very early age on, including preschool groups (Hawley, 2002, 2003; Kolbert & Crothers, 2003; Pellegrini, 2001). Indeed, among preschoolers, bullying perpetration is associated with fewer social costs than general aggressive behavior (Ostrov et al., 2019). Hence, bullying should be placed in a life-span developmental perspective, not only looking backward from adolescence into its earlier developmental roots, but also forward. The persistence of bullying into adulthood (i.e., a failure to "grow out" of the behavior) highlights the contribution of Olweus's focus on bullying and power and the need for interventions to reduce bullying by increasing the costs and diminishing the benefits for perpetrators of bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Power and Bullying Interventions

In drawing attention to bullying as a particular type of aggression characterized by an imbalance of power, Olweus identified a challenging behavior for researchers and practitioners to address through interventions. As noted earlier, the costs of bullying are lower than other types of aggression, as bullying is done selectively under favorable circumstances in which the victim is unlikely to retaliate, be defended by bystanders, or evoke sympathy from peers (Veenstra et al., 2010; Volk et al., 2014). Furthermore, although bullies are disliked by some peers and at risk for a range of antisocial behaviors, developmental research has supported Olweus's view that bullying is goal-directed aggression that can be beneficial for some individuals in some circumstances (Olweus, 1993), especially as a means to signal attractive or intimidating attributes to bystanders. This is evidenced by positive associations with popularity, number of dating and sexual partners, dominance, and access to resources (e.g., Dane et al., 2017; Reijntjes et al., 2013, 2018; Volk et al., 2022b). Reducing a behavior that affords a favorable cost–benefit ratio is, at least in the short term, a daunting task.

Nevertheless, Olweus took on this challenge by developing the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, a comprehensive whole-school approach that addressed bullying in schools with school-wide, classroom, individual, and community components (Limber et al., 2018). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) was designed to take a social ecological approach to bullying, by restructuring the school environment to shift power imbalances by reducing opportunities and rewards for bullying. The goal was to build a sense of community based on values of equity and inclusion among students and adults in the school environment (Olweus, 1993). These principles are then translated into specific interventions to promote the prosocial use of power at the individual, classroom, school, and community levels and to create a climate in which all children feel safe and included (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Specifically, teachers and other adults were encouraged to set limits on bullying, model and reinforce appropriate behavior, and provide appropriate consequences for bullying and rule violations, especially by supervising settings where bullying was likely to occur (Limber et al., 2018). The OBPP thus has a broad range of components that highlight the importance of operating at different ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is worth noting that while bullying is ubiquitous across cultures, there are cross-cultural differences in the rates of bullying, its forms, and its correlates (Smith et al., 2016). These differences demonstrate how bullying can, and does, respond to different culturally mediated costs and rewards (Volk et al., 2022b). Evaluations of OBPP have demonstrated that changing environments and addressing power imbalances among students, peer groups, and in classrooms have been associated with reductions of bullying behavior (Limber et al., 2018).

Recent meta-analytic evidence confirms that the most promising means to reduce bullying has been when interventions were able to make conditions for bullying less favorable through changes in multiple ecological contexts (Gaffney et al., 2021). Specifically, interventions that provide all members of a school community, including peers and parents, with informal opportunities to reduce the benefits that may be achieved through the exploitation of a power imbalance, had larger effects on reducing bullying and victimization than programs in which these aspects were absent (Gaffney et al., 2021). Conversely, anti-bullying programs that focused on improving individual youths' deficits in socio-emotional skills such as empathy, problem-solving skills, and self-control were less effective in reducing bullying perpetration and victimization, possibly because these programs ignored the ecological contexts that support the utility of power in bullying. These results may reflect Olweus's view of bullying as a predatory exploitation of an advantage in power (1993), which suggests that a lack of social skills may not be a contributing factor. These findings also highlight that bullying is a problem that transcends individual relationships, which Olweus noted (2014) and has been implemented in other successful socio-ecological interventions (e.g., KiVa; Gaffney et al., 2019a, b).

Although interventions that focus on changing contexts to make the results of bullying less favorable have had some success, research has revealed several challenges and limitations. Despite being beneficial overall, anti-bullying

interventions have only been modestly effective, on average, reducing perpetration by 19–20% and victimization by 15–16% (Gaffney et al., 2019a, b), and some have proven to be ineffective or iatrogenic (Merrell et al., 2008). Anti-bullying interventions are generally less effective with adolescents, who may value some of the social benefits of bullying more than children, such as attracting dating partners and gaining popularity (e.g., Yeager et al., 2015). These programs have also been less effective with popular youth (Garandeau et al., 2014), who may be unwilling to forego the benefits they can receive by exploiting a power advantage derived from high status. In addition, interventions that encourage bystanders to defend victims from bullies are less effective in reducing victimization than programs in which this is absent (Gaffney et al., 2021), which may demonstrate the challenge of confronting powerful perpetrators. Furthermore, anti-bullying interventions for cyberbullying, though effective, produce even more modest reductions in bullying perpetration (10–15%) and victimization (14%) than programs targeting traditional bullying (Gaffney et al., 2019a, b). The results with cyberbullying interventions identify a new challenge—adapting anti-bullying approaches inspired by Olweus's work to bullying in a cyber context in which anonymity, disinhibition due to a lack of face-to-face interactions, and obstacles to parental monitoring limit opportunities to make online conditions for bullying less favorable (Kowalski et al., 2014).

In addition, a failure to acknowledge the power imbalance inherent in bullying can facilitate the common harmful recommendation by adults and clinical practitioners: victims should fight back (see, for further discussion, Lochman et al., 2012). This lack of awareness about the role of power may also explain why it is the most common strategy reported by children and an approach they believe will be successful (Black et al., 2010). Unfortunately, while direct retaliation might protect an individual, it does not remove the bully's option of finding another potentially weaker victim who lacks protection or the strength to defend themselves (Veenstra et al., 2010), or of retaliating when the power is once again back in the bully's favor (e.g., when the victim's friends are gone; Spadafora et al., 2020). Moreover, it is not always a feasible option for a victim to fight back or contact an adult or other appropriate authority figure. In fact, research demonstrates that fighting back can make the problem worse, as it may motivate the bully to avoid losing face or protect their power (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Sulkowski et al., 2014; Volk et al., 2014) and thus retaliation can become iatrogenic. Among adults, a failure to recognize power imbalances can lead to blaming victims for not helping themselves (Gupta et al., 2020; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Finally, a belief that fighting back is all that is required to eliminate it reinforces the idea of bullying as a harmless right of passage—the very antithesis of Olweus's message (1993).

Recent innovations in anti-bullying intervention research have sought to address the challenges that limit effectiveness by not only focusing on preventing bullying, but on fostering prosocial behavior (Ellis et al., 2016), in line with Olweus's emphasis on modeling and reinforcing appropriate behavior in the OBPP anti-bullying intervention (Limber et al., 2018). Rather than discouraging bullies from pursuing valued benefits (e.g., popularity, romantic partners), this intervention acknowledges the goal-directed nature of bullying and provides structured opportunities for youth to experience using prosocial behavior as an equally effective means to obtain desired goals (Ellis et al., 2016). When combined with existing intervention components that are known to be effective (see above), such innovations offer a roadmap for diverting students' behavior away from exploiting power through bullying to achieve personal gains and instead encouraging prosocial conduct that can yield similar but mutual benefits to those who cooperate with one another. Thus, Olweus's discussion of bullying and power has had important implications for the way that bullying has not only been studied, but in how bullying interventions have been designed. Critically though, we view Olweus's ideas about bullying and power as having an important impact above and beyond schools.

Bullying and Power Beyond the School

School bullying thus remains a serious issue, but it is likely to remain an unsolvable issue if children continue to see successful examples of bullying modeled in homes, relationships, workplaces, and governments. Bullying is a developmental phenomenon that extends beyond the school years. As individuals age, other forms of developmentally relevant aggressive behaviors emerge (dating violence, sexual harassment, workplace bullying) and are implemented to exert power, harm, and influence (Farrel & Vaillancourt, 2021; Pepler et al., 2006). A developmental perspective shows that bullying behavior, and the rewards associated with it, do not stop in adolescence but persist into the social contexts of adults. Furthermore, the social ecological perspective highlights the importance of external ecological impacts, such as parents, communities, and governments, and how bullying and the abuse of power are an issue that deeply involves, but also transcends, the school setting. For example, when consistent efforts towards altering the power structure were abandoned at higher ecological levels (e.g., government and community support), the Norwegian OBPP failed to have significant effects and bullying returned to pre-intervention levels (Roland, 2011). These multiple layers of factors that can influence and promote imbalances of power and bullying beyond schools and into many other aspects of child and adult life reveal an important reason why bullying has proven so challenging to eliminate.

It is thus no mistake that Olweus called on adults to actively participate in bullying interventions (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Bullying behaviors modeled by persons in positions of leadership show how school bullying is a complex ecological issue that also involves adults' behavior. We take his message that school bullying is harmful and use it to encourage school bullying researchers to take steps towards a broader understanding of the abuse of power not only among children, but in diverse settings and individuals across the lifespan. For example, in a longitudinal study of a purple (mixed Republican and Democrat) state before and after Trump's election, Huang and Cornell (2019) found an increase in students' reports of being bullied, as well as teasing about racial ethnicity in schools, following Trump's victory in 2016. Interestingly, this increase was found only in parts of the state with a Republican (Trump) voter preference in the 2016 election, presumably due to youths emulating their locally popular President. The societal rewards of bullying continue across the lifespan, including financial, business, and political power for adults (e.g., our previous list of modern injustices).

The nursing profession, for example, has perhaps been more active than any other in identifying internal and external issues of professional bullying (Wilson, 2016). Using Olweus's conceptualization of bullying, researchers have identified how nurses face serious mental, physical, and financial risks from bullying by fellow nurses, doctors, and even patients (Wilson, 2016). Bullying is found in many other workplaces, leading to the creation of anti-bullying interventions that aim to reduce it. These adult interventions are often modeled on principles discovered in school bullying research, suggesting that work done with children can also apply to adults, and vice versa (Gupta et al., 2020). As noted earlier, there has been a growing outcry against abuses of power in the adult world that parallel the calls for action against bullying in schools, albeit with less broad support (Klein, 2014). The resistance to change in the adult abuse of power in many ways mirrors the stubborn resistance to decreasing school bullying through intervention efforts (Gaffney et al., 2019a, b, 2021). It is likely that some of the resistance among adults is similar to that among children—groups and individuals who have power are often loath to share it because of the benefits it affords. That selfish lack of support by those with power is perhaps one of the reasons that adults have failed to address their own abuses of power, alongside a lack of determination to vigorously fight against school bullying (Roland, 2011).

On the other hand, evidence is now clear how bullying research, as inspired by Olweus's work, has been received by the broader public. As noted, a Google Scholar search of "bullying" returned one million results, but a general Google search of "bullying" returned 4.75 *billion* results (October, 2021). Bullying has clearly captured the attention of both academics and the general public. We argue that the reason for this attention to bullying is that, although humans can show a capacity for bullying and the abuse of power (Pellegrini, 2001), they can also show a deeply egalitarian, negative response to the abuse of power imbalances (Klein, 2014).

This bias towards the fair use of power appears to be both biologically predisposed and culturally reinforced. From a biological perspective, even infants appear to tell the difference between a respectful leader versus an abusive, bullying, leader (Margoni et al., 2018). In every hunter-gatherer culture observed, social leveling and/or egalitarian mechanisms exist to minimize power imbalances (e.g., Briggs, 1970; Marlowe, 2010; Marshall, 2013). Cross-culturally, there is wide support for underdogs, particularly in the context of promoting equal contests (Goldschmied et al., 2018). This universality, combined with its appearance early in development, has led researchers to suggest that a bias against power imbalances, and in favor of egalitarian or leveling mechanisms, is partly due to an evolved adaptation (Cheng, 2020; Klein, 2014). Thus, we argue that bullying research has been extremely effective in drawing attention to issues of exploiting an imbalance of power because many individuals across cultures have a strong bias against inequality, particularly in the context of aggressive competition.

An interest in power in relation to human behavior is not unique to bullying research. Researchers and theorists from a wide range of fields have been interested in power for decades, including philosophy, political science, sociology, feminist studies, and psychology (Allen, 1998; Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Dahl, 1957; Emerson, 1962; Foucault, 1982; Galinsky et al., 2003; Keltner et al., 2003; Lukes, 1986). In many of these works, power is considered ubiquitous and fundamental to human behavior (Adler, 1966; Dahl, 1957; Emerson, 1962; Foucault, 1982; Keltner et al., 2003), and the pursuit of power is seen as a "recurrent and pervasive challenge faced by individuals in all human societies" (Cheng et al., 2013, p. 103). In these various disciplines, power has been defined slightly differently, though there are general themes. Power refers to the ability or capacity to control and modify others' states, or to control resources (both their own and others') without interference (Dahl, 1957; Galinsky et al., 2003; Keltner et al., 2003; Lukes, 1986). Furthermore, power is understood as a property of relationships, rather than individuals; power is always relative to whom one has power over (Dahl, 1957; Emerson, 1962). Finally, power is multidimensional. This means that there are various dimensions upon which one can hold or exemplify power (Adler, 1966; Pratto & Espinoza, 2001; Rodkin et al., 2015; Volk et al., 2014). Even a brief search of these disparate literatures reveals the pervasive influence of Olweus's descriptions of power (e.g., its subjectivity) as well as its use in bullying (e.g., controlling others; Olweus, 1993, 2010, 2014).

In addition, these literatures agree with Olweus (2014) that there are different ways of using power that include both prosocial (e.g., defending) and antisocial (e.g., bullying) behaviors. As such, there are different ways to gain power or wield one's power. Individuals can gain power using altruistic means, building coalitions, gaining allies, being positive leaders, and supporting group cooperation (Cheng, 2020; Cheng et al., 2013; Farrell & Dane, 2020; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Johnson et al., 2012; O'Gorman et al., 2009). For example, while Foucault discussed pathological forms of power, he contrasted them with pastoral power that emphasizes the needs of others, thus promoting the community as a whole (Foucault, 1982). Thus, different literatures describe individuals with power as using it in both prosocial ways (e.g., defenders, liked peers, prestigious individuals, positive leaders) and/or antisocial ways (e.g., bullies, popular-aggressive peers, dominant individuals, feared tyrants). This reveals that power itself is not inherently good or bad. Instead, it may be our use of power that best illustrates the importance of bullying research and the need to understand and promote the prosocial uses of power. In this light, Olweus et al. (2018) emphasized that intervention and its aims should be seen as "principles, procedures and mechanisms designed to create a safe and humane school environment where bully-victim problems are systematically addressed, handled and prevented" (p.115).

Conclusions

Despite the importance of understanding power in school bullying, we acknowledge the difficulties of measuring and assessing power in schools and beyond. Because power is multidimensional, relational (i.e., relative to the person one has power over) and systemic (certain individuals are privileged in society), it is extremely complex to assess at all these levels. Yet, if we can develop accurate and reliable measures of relational power in children and adolescence and beyond, we have the potential to better understand and ameliorate human relationships at every level.

By repeatedly calling attention to the importance of power in school bullying, Olweus identified the means and motive for humanity to address the toxic abuses of power not only towards school children, but in society at large. This abuse of power has crucial implications for a vast array of interdisciplinary (and transdisciplinary) research and practices. We therefore urgently call for our colleagues studying school bullying and power to consider not only how that knowledge can be applied beyond the school, but also how knowledge of power and bullying beyond the school can help to prevent it within schools. We believe that Olweus himself was moving towards (2014) this recommendation. As scholars of bullying and power, it is critical to work with schools and communities to facilitate change and ensure that all children and youth are safe from peer abuse where they live, learn, and play. Future bullying research must connect with other areas of research on human behavior to foster a greater understanding of how to ameliorate the abuse of power in our schools and our societies.

Declarations

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