

Identifying Victims of Bullying:  
Use of Counselor Interviews to Confirm Peer Nominations

Victoria I. Phillips and Dewey G. Cornell  
Programs in Clinical and School Psychology, Curry School of Education,  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

Paper presented at AERA in New Orleans, 2011

Under revision for journal submission

Author Note

March 17, 2011. Victoria I. Phillips and Dewey G. Cornell are both with the Programs in Clinical and School Psychology, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia.

We thank Michael Baly, Leslie Fendley, Peter Henning, June Jenkins, Laurie McDade, and Sharmila Mehta, as well as staff and students at the participating middle school. Correspondence should be addressed to Victoria Phillips, Programs in Clinical and School Psychology, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, Phone: (434) 924-8929. Email: vp5rq@virginia.edu

**Abstract**

Schools often rely on anonymous self-report methods to measure bullying victimization, but this method prevents school personnel from identifying those students who may require support. In contrast, this study employed peer nominations to identify student victims of bullying and used school counselor interviews to confirm the students' victim status. A sample of 1178 middle school students completed a confidential peer nomination form as part of a standard bullying survey. Students with multiple nominations were interviewed by school counselors to confirm victim status. The proportion of students confirmed as victims increased from 43% for students with two nominations to 90% for students with nine or more nominations.

*Keywords:* bullying, middle school, peer nominations,

### Identifying Victims of Bullying:

#### Use of Counselor Interviews to Confirm Peer Nominations

Anonymous self-report surveys are routinely administered as a means of assessing the prevalence of bullying. A major drawback of this method is that schools may learn the prevalence of bullying, but will not know who is being bullied (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2001; Kim, Koh, & Leventhal, 2004; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). In principle, peer nominations can be used in conjunction with self report surveys to identify those students who are victims of bullying (Branson & Cornell, 2009; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002); however, it is essential to validate peer nominations as an accurate measure of bullying victimization. The purpose of this paper is to present evidence supporting the use of peer nominations in identifying victims of bullying.

Victims of bullying experience increased rates of many social, emotional, and academic problems. These students suffer more often than their peers from anxiety, depression, and other related emotional problems (Haynie et al., 2001; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). Victims also exhibit academic difficulties including higher rates of school avoidance and truancy (Rigby, 2003; Nansel, Haynie, & Simons-Morton, 2003; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Studies have shown that students who are victims of bullying often engage in behaviors (e.g., isolating oneself, missing multiple school days) that can negatively affect social relationships and academic achievement (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001).

Recent media attention to cases of bullying in school has increased pressure on school administrators to address bullying. In addition, several court decisions (e.g., *L.W. v. Toms River Regional Schools Board of Education*, 2007; *Davis v. Monroe County*, 1999) have held school administrators accountable for severe bullying. Currently, 45 states have anti-bullying laws

(Bully Police USA, 2011). From this perspective, it is important for schools to be able to identify victims of bullying so that they can intervene promptly. Unfortunately, studies have consistently found that students are often reluctant to seek help for bullying and that school staff members are unlikely to detect bullying by direct observation (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Olweus & Limber, 2000; Unnever & Cornell, 2003). The primary method that schools use to assess the prevalence of bullying is an anonymous self-report survey such as the Youth Risk Behavior Scale (YRBS; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009) and the Revised Bully/Victim Questionnaire (BVQ; Olweus, 1996). A major drawback of these surveys is that there are no means to identify the students who self-report that they are victims of bullying. Therefore, schools need alternatives to anonymous self-report surveys that make it possible for schools to identify victims (Cornell & Mehta, in press).

Previous studies support the validity of peer nominations for identifying students with a variety of emotional and behavioral characteristics (Clifton, Turkheimer, & Oltmanns, 2005; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Weiss, Harris, & Catron, 2004). Peer nominations were used to measure internalizing (anxiety, depression, somatic complaints) and externalizing (aggression, delinquency) psychopathology in a sample of over 2,000 third through sixth graders (Weiss, Harris, & Catron, 2004). Peer reports correlated with teacher ratings on the Teacher Behavior Questionnaire (TBQ; Catron & Weiss, 1994),  $r=.49$ . In another study of 2,002 middle school students (Pakaslahti & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2000), peer nominations had low correlations with teacher assessments of aggressive behaviors,  $r=.22$  to  $r=.09$ . This body of evidence supports the general validity of peer nominations, but does not demonstrate that peer nominations can be used effectively by schools to identify victims of bullying.

Peer nominations of bullying victimization have demonstrated convergent validity with other self-reports and teacher reports of bullying experiences. Cornell and Brockenbrough (2004) found that teacher and peer reports of bully victimization were moderately correlated ( $r=.52$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Pelligrini (2001) analyzed bullying and victimization among 367 sixth-graders using self-reports, peer-reports, direct monthly observations by trained research assistants, and student diaries. Peer nominations correlated significantly with self-report scales, diary entries and observations (.21 to .32). These findings demonstrate peer-reports moderately agree with other informant measures. Unfortunately, though, current research does not provide information on how many nominations are needed to identify a victim nor on the accuracy of peer nominations.

One concern with both self and peer report is that students may not understand the complex definition of bullying (e.g. Branson & Cornell, 2009; Cornell & Brockenbrough, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001) For example, the widely used definition used by Olweus (1996) states: “Bullying is defined as the use of one’s strength or popularity to injure, threaten, or embarrass another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social. It is *not bullying* when two students of about the same strength argue or fight.” Regardless of the situation, bullying is always characterized by an imbalance of power or strength between the bully and his or her victim (Olweus). Notably, students may over-report bullying if they fail to recognize the difference between bullying and other forms of peer conflict where there is no imbalance of power.

Research has shown that students tend to over report victimization on self-report measures (Baly & Cornell, 2010; Branson & Cornell, 2009; Cornell & Mehta, in press). Cornell and Mehta (in press) investigated the accuracy of self-reports of bully victimization by having trained and experienced school counselors perform follow-up interviews with middle school students who had self-reported that they were bullied. Students were classified as either

confirmed or unconfirmed as victims of bullying based on the counselor's judgment using a standard definition of bullying. Cornell and Mehta found that only 24 (56%) of 43 students who had self-identified as victims were confirmed by counselors to be actual victims. Two more students (5%) had been victims of bullying prior to the 30-day timeframe of the question. Among the 17 (44%) who were not confirmed as victims, 13 (30%) were experiencing peer conflicts that did not constitute bullying and four (9%) claimed to have marked the survey in error. This study demonstrated the potential for over-reporting in student self-reports. A comparable study is needed to investigate student nominations of their peers as victims of bullying.

Counselor judgment is not infallible and so the Cornell and Mehta (in press) study provided a check on the validity of counselor judgments by examining the consistency of student reports to other questions about bullying in the school. Confirmed victims of bullying should perceive that bullying is more pervasive and problematic in the school than unconfirmed victims. Similarly, Furlong, Chung, Bates, and Morrison (1995) found that bully victims were more likely to report a high prevalence of bullying and see school as unsafe. Finally, it can be expected that students nominated as victims of bullying by their peers should be more likely to self-report victimization on a confidential survey (Branson & Cornell, 2009).

The present study hypothesized that the number of peer nominations a student receives would be associated with increased likelihood that the school counselor would confirm his or her victimization status. Although school counselors were not able to interview all nominated students, they were able to interview students with 2, 3, or more peer nominations as victims of bullying. Based on these interviews, these counselors could confirm whether or not nominated students were victims. The validity of the counselor judgments was tested by examining the self-reports of these students on an accompanying self-report survey.

## Method

### Sample

The sample was drawn from a suburban middle school (grades 6-8) in central Virginia in four waves of surveying conducted from 2007 to 2010. In fall 2007, the enrollment was 502 students, including 4% Asian, 18% African-American, 61% Caucasian, 9% Hispanic students, and 8% students who identified themselves as other races. Approximately 23.5% of the students qualified for free or reduced priced meals. School demographics were relatively stable during these four school years.

The school administered surveys each fall and spring as a routine part of its bullying prevention program. The study sample consisted of surveys from 1,178 students who completed their first survey during one or more of seven semesters (from fall 2007 to fall 2010). The survey was administered to all students present in the school, excluding students with any handicapping condition that prevented them from reading and completing the form. Approximately 92% of the students completed the survey each semester. Of the 1178 students, 4% identified themselves as Asian, 18% as African American, 56% as Caucasian, 10% as Hispanic, and 12% identified themselves as Other. Additionally, 605 (51.4%) students were male and 573 (48.6%) were female.

The sample was based on the first survey that each student took during the study period. Most students completed their first survey when they began attending the school in the sixth grade, but some seventh and eighth grade students were already in the school at the time of the initial survey and other seventh and eighth grade students transferred to the school in later years. As a result, 58% of students completed their first survey while in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 23% while in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 19% while in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Measures

**Self-report of bullying.** The School Climate Bullying Survey (SCBS; Cornell & Sheras, 2003) is a 45-item self-report measure that includes a series of questions about bullying others or being bullied by others, as well as some additional questions about school climate that are not included in this study. The Olweus (1996) definition of bullying was adapted for the SCBS to use language more familiar for American students. The SCBS definition was presented at the beginning of the survey:

“Bullying is defined as the use of one’s strength or popularity to injure, threaten, or embarrass another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal or social. It is *not bullying* when two students of about the same strength argue or fight.”

After reading the definition, students answered a series of questions about bullying using a 4-point scale (*never, once or twice, about once a week, several times per a week*). First, they responded to the statement, “By this definition, I have *been bullied* at school in the past month.” Subsequent items inquired about physical, verbal, social, and cyber types of bullying. Each type of bullying was defined as indicated in Table 1. Previous studies have supported the validity of these items by demonstrating their correspondence with independent measures of bullying from both peer and teacher nominations (Branson & Cornell, 2009; Cornell & Brockenbrough, 2004).

**Bullying prevalence items.** The SCBS asked students, “Does bullying take place anywhere at school?” Students can respond either *yes* or *no* to this question. Another item states “Bullying is a problem at this school.” The four response choices for this item were: *strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree*.

**Peer nominations.** At the end of the survey, students nominated peers whom they perceived to be victims of bullying in the past month. In order to aid the students, the definition of bullying was repeated and they were given a roster of all students in the school. Previous studies have supported the validity of this measure (Branson & Cornell, 2009; Cornell & Brockenbrough, 2004). Branson and Cornell found a .32 correlation between self-reports of victimization and peer-nominated victims of bullying; a Receiver Operating Characteristic analysis demonstrated that self-report of victimization predicted peer-nominated status with an effect size (Area Under Curve index) of .71.

**School counselor interviews.** Two experienced and state-licensed school counselors conducted follow-up interviews with students who received multiple peer nominations as victims. These interviews were conducted primarily as a professional school intervention rather than as a research procedure. This increased the ecological validity of the study, but placed some constraints on the methodology. The counselors interviewed the student nominated as a potential victim of bullying and, when other parties to the bullying were identified, also interviewed classmates or peers who might have witnessed or participated in the bullying.

The school counselors used interview guidelines that encouraged them to be sensitive to the possibility that a student might deny being bullied out of embarrassment or fear of retaliation. They were instructed to be persistent in their investigation until they were confident that they had an adequate explanation for the peer nomination. After completing their interviews, the counselors completed a rating form based on the definition of bullying. This form required counselors to distinguish bullying from other forms of peer conflict based on the relative status or power of the two parties. They excluded isolated incidents of teasing or horseplay that were not bullying, as well as acts that occurred more than 30 days prior to the survey.

At the time of this study, the two counselors had been conducting these kinds of interviews for at least five years as part of their general work as school counselors and their leadership of school-based bullying prevention efforts in their school. Prior to data collection for this study, we assessed the inter-rater reliability of the two school counselors by having them independently review and classify 20 written case examples. The counselors demonstrated 100% agreement for these cases.

### **Procedure**

An important context for this study is that it was conducted in a school that had previously implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus & Limber, 2000). The OBPP is designed to reduce bullying through interventions at the school-wide, classroom, and individual levels. As part of the program, the school adopted school-wide rules against bullying with appropriate consequences. In the classroom, teachers reinforced rules and worked to increase student knowledge and empathy regarding bullying. Counselors met with individual students identified as victims or bullies.

All students in attendance on the day of survey administration participated in the SCBS. Students completed a paper and pencil version (fall 2007 to spring 2009) or a computer version (fall 2009 to fall 2010) of the SCBS. Because the survey was administered as a routine part of the school's bullying prevention program, active parental consent was not required. The school offered parents the option to withhold permission for their children to participate in the survey, but no parents did so.

The survey was administered in classrooms during regularly scheduled advisory periods. Teachers supervised the administration and followed a standard set of instructions. For students who were absent on the survey day, an additional make-up session was arranged.

School counselors reviewed the peer nomination section of the survey and counted how many nominations each student received. Consistent with previous research (Branson & Cornell, 2009; Cornell & Brockenbrough, 2004), students with two or more nominations were interviewed by school counselors during the first two semesters of the study. In the third semester, however, the school counselors began limiting interviews to students who had three or more nominations. This change was due to workload limitations and the observation that many students with two nominations were not confirmed as victims in the previous interviews.

Survey data were sent to the researchers using code numbers rather than names to identify surveys. A single staff member at the school served as the code master who had the key linking code numbers to student names. Counselors also submitted forms with their determination of students as victims of bullying to the code master, who in turn replaced student names with their matching code numbers. In this way the researchers had no means of identifying students, but could link student self-report results (which were withheld from counselors) to the counselor findings.

### **Data Analyses**

*Counselor-confirmed* victims of bullying are those students who were peer-nominated as victims and identified as victims by counselors after interviewing. When counselors felt that an interviewed student was not a victim of bullying, a student was classified as an *unconfirmed* victim. The unconfirmed victims were further divided into three subgroups: (1) students who were involved in *peer conflict* that did not meet the definitional criteria for bullying because there was no power differential between the student and his or her adversary; (2) students who were *past victims* of bullying but not victims within the past 30 days; and (3) students who were not involved in any form of peer conflict or bullying and therefore classified as *non-victims*. The

latter group included students who may have been nominated as a prank or for other unknown reasons. The students who were past victims of bullying were omitted from subsequent analyses because they could be expected to have characteristics that overlapped with both victims and nonvictims.

The next set of analyses compared confirmed victims with unconfirmed victims (classified as involved in peer conflict or non-victims) using one-tailed *t*-tests with a *p*-value of .05. The groups were compared on four questions of the SCBS asking whether students had been physically, verbally, socially, or cyber bullied. It was hypothesized that confirmed victims would self-report victimization on all four questions. Groups were then compared on the SCBS items “Does bullying take place anywhere at school?” and “Bullying is a problem at this school.” It was hypothesized that confirmed victims would report higher prevalence rates of bullying at school than unconfirmed victims.

### **Results**

As hypothesized, students with more nominations were more likely to be confirmed as victims of bullying by school counselors. Analyses were conducted to determine the positive predictive value or proportion of students confirmed as victims for each level of peer nominations (two or more, three or more, four or more, five or more, etc.). As reported in Table 3, the proportion of students confirmed as victims increased from 43% of those with two or more peer nominations to 90% of those with nine or more nominations. Students confirmed as victims had an average of 5.51 nominations ( $SD = 6.58$ ) versus 2.86 nominations ( $SD = 1.32$ ) for unconfirmed victims,  $t(164) = -3.70$ ,  $p = .00$ ,  $D = -.56$ .

Confirmed victims were more likely to self-report being a victim of bullying than unconfirmed victims (students classified by counselors as either nonvictims or involved in peer

conflict that was not bullying),  $t(162) = -2.55, p = .01$ . Confirmed victims were significantly more likely than unconfirmed victims to endorse being verbally and socially bullied ( $t(162) = -1.36, p = .00$ , and  $t(161) = -2.81, p = .00$ , respectively). The two groups did not differ significantly in their reports of being physically bullied,  $t(162) = -1.36, p = .09$ , or cyber bullied,  $t(162) = -.57, p = .29$ . See Table 2.

Confirmed victims did not differ significantly from unconfirmed victims ( $t(128) = -.26, p = .40$ ) in answering the SCBS item “Does bullying take place anywhere at school?” Additionally, the two groups did not differ significantly in answers to the item “Bullying is a problem at this school,” with  $t(162) = -1.56, p = .06$ .

Additional analyses were conducted to identify potential confounding variables of gender, grade, or race. The association between group and gender was not statistically significant,  $\chi^2 = .127, p = .26$ . Similarly, there was no statistically significant association between group and race (African-American, Caucasian, and Other),  $\chi^2 = 4.74$  with  $p = .093$ . However, grade level (6, 7, or 8) was associated with group status,  $\chi^2 = 8.81$  and  $p = .01$ . It was observed that 2.6% of all confirmed victims were in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 97.4% were students from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. When analyzing the unconfirmed victim group, 16.1% of the students were from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade while 83.9% were students in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. In order to rule out the possibility that the statistically significant group comparisons were an artifact of the relatively few number of 8<sup>th</sup> grade victims of bullying, all t-tests were repeated after omitting 8<sup>th</sup> graders from the sample. There was no change in the pattern of statistically significant results.

### **Discussion**

Results from this study provide new evidence that peer nominations can be used to identify victims of bullying. Previous studies have used peer nominations as a method for

identifying students who are experiencing bullying (Branson & Cornell, 2008; Chan, 2006; Chan, Myron, & Crawshaw, 2005) but have not examined how many nominations are needed to confirm that a student is an actual victim of bullying. This study made use of counselor interviews to confirm or disconfirm the peer nomination results and in this way was able to assess the positive predictive value of having two or more peer nominations. Previous studies (Cornell & Brockenbrough, 2004; Branson & Cornell, 2009) suggested that two or three peer nominations could be used to identify victims of bullying, but the present study found that only 43% of students with two nominations and 56% of those with three nominations were confirmed by counselors as victims of bullying. At four nominations, the confirmation rate was notably higher at 73%. Invariably, school counselors must decide how many students to interview based on practical considerations such as the time they have available to devote to a screening procedure. They also might find that peer nominations can be used in combination with other sources of information to identify students who are most at-risk for bullying.

Another consideration in the use of peer nominations is that students may identify peers who are embroiled in a peer conflict that is not bullying, but still worthy of investigation and intervention. When the category of confirmed victims of bullying is enlarged to include other forms of peer conflict in which there is no power imbalance between antagonists, the PPV results are substantially higher. The majority (59%) of students with two nominations and nearly three-quarters (73%) of those with four nominations are identified by counselors as involved in some form of peer conflict.

Previous studies have used peer nominations on the classroom level, typically in elementary schools where children are in the same classroom for a majority of the day (Chan, 2006; Chan, Myron, & Crawshaw, 2005). In secondary schools, such as the middle school used

in this study, students change classes throughout the day and interact with a much larger group of students. A survey limited to classmates would be too narrow, because so much bullying takes place on buses, playgrounds, cafeterias, and other areas outside of class. A student might be in a class with no one who knows about the bullying he or she is experiencing outside of the classroom. A schoolwide assessment can capture bullying that might be overlooked in traditional classroom-based assessments.

This study relied on counselor judgments about whether a student was bullied. Student self-reports were used as an external criterion to check counselor judgments, although it should be noted that students are not an infallible criterion, either. Nevertheless, follow-up analyses comparing differences between confirmed and unconfirmed victims provide some support for the validity of counselor judgments. As expected, confirmed victims were more likely than unconfirmed victims to report being victims of general, verbal, and social bullying. Reports of physical and cyber bullying did not significantly differ between the two groups. Perhaps these differences were not significant because physical and cyber bullying were the least frequent forms of bullying and rates were low for all students. The two groups did not differ in their perceptions of the prevalence or seriousness of bullying, either. It may be useful for future studies to examine additional criteria for confirming that a student is truly a victim of bullying.

The measurement of bullying victimization presents some challenges because many students who are nominated as victims were not found by counselors to be victims. Students, whether reporting via self-report or peer nomination, may inflate reports of bullying if they fail to distinguish it from other forms of peer conflict (Cornell & Mehta, in press). They may also inflate bullying rates if they give frivolous answers about themselves or their classmates. Future studies should investigate the factors that might inflate (or deflate) prevalence rates using self

and peer reports. Baly and Cornell (in press) have demonstrated that students who watch an educational video about bullying prior to taking a self-report survey will be less likely to report some types of bullying. Perhaps educational efforts both about the concept of bullying and the importance of taking the survey seriously, will produce more accurate results.

Increased efforts to educate students regarding the definition of bullying may improve the accuracy of student reports. The use of multiple informants, such as a peer nomination form in addition to the use of a self-report survey, may also help gauge the level of student understanding of the bullying definition by observing any significant differences between self reports and peer nominations. Students who fail to self-report victimization, but are peer nominated, may have an unclear understanding of the bullying definition or may not be able to look objectively at their own situation.

Peer nominations offer some important advantages over self-report methods. First of all, a student is identified by multiple informants rather than a single self-report. Multiple informants should in principle produce more reliable and valid results, except perhaps in the unusual case that a victim is being bullied secretly and peers are not aware of it. A second important advantage is that victims are identified by name with peer nominations so that they can be interviewed by counselors. As a result, school authorities are able to identify victims and intervene more promptly with peer nominations than if they only have anonymous self-reports. Even in those cases where a nominated student is not a victim of bullying, there may be a peer conflict that merits school counseling attention.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Study**

The school counselors were not able to interview all students in the school, so it is possible that some victims of bullying were not detected by the peer nomination process. A

related consequence of this design limitation is that it was not possible to calculate the negative predictive power (accuracy of not being nominated) of the peer nominations.

Another limitation in this study was that not all students with two nominations were interviewed by counselors. In the first two waves of surveying, all students with two or more nominations were interviewed, but the counselors limited their interviews to students with three or more nominations in subsequent semesters. This unanticipated change in study design reflects a common practical problem in schools, which is the limited resources that make it difficult to provide services to every student in need of counseling. However, there is increasing pressure on schools to respond to the problem of bullying, and anonymous self-report surveys will not give school counselors the information they need to take action. The results of this study suggest that peer nominations might be an effective screening procedure to identify victims of bullying, recognizing that the students with the greatest number of nominations are most likely to be confirmed as victims. Future research may be able to determine whether students with the greatest number of nominations are experiencing the most severe form of bullying or are identified for other reasons, such as the student's popularity or a highly visible location for the bullying.

Some students may have been nominated as prank or for other unknown reasons by their classmates. The school where this study took place has an established bullying prevention program (the OBPP) and the students at this school should have taken the survey seriously due to this exposure to anti-bullying efforts. Future studies could determine what level of inappropriate or prank responding is typical across schools (as well as gender and grade levels) and what factors might be associated with higher levels of serious survey completion.

Students may be reluctant to inform on their peers because of the social stigma associated with being labeled a snitch (Oliver & Candappa, 2007). This study asked students to report the names of victims rather than bullies in part because of this concern. Several studies have suggested that improvements in school climate and teacher support for students could increase student willingness to seek help for bullying (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010). Student education on the value and outcomes of peer nominations may be helpful in encouraging students to use this method appropriately.

In summary, peer nominations offer a promising strategy for schools to use in meeting the need to identify victims of bullying. They can be used to supplement other measures and offer the advantage of giving school staff names for follow up interviews and more directed interventions. The current study identified some limitations as well as strengths of the peer nomination method and suggested some directions for future study, including more research on efficient cut-off points and strategies to improve student accuracy and honesty in identifying victims of bullying.

## References

- Baly, M.W. & Cornell, D.G.(in press). Effects of an educational video on the measurement of bullying by self-report. *Journal of School Violence*.
- Bradshaw, C.P., Sawyer, A.L., & O'Brennan, L.M. (2007). Bullying and peer victimization at school: Perceptual differences between students and school staff. *School Psychology Review, 36*, 361-382.
- Branson, C., & Cornell, D. (2009). A comparison of self and peer reports in the assessment of middle school bullying. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 25*, 5-27.
- Bully Police USA (2011, February 14). *Bully police USA: A watch-dog organization – Advocating for bullied children and reporting on state anti bullying laws*. Retrieved from <http://www.bullypolice.org/>.
- Catron, T., & Weiss, B. (1994). The Vanderbilt school-based counseling program. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 2*, 247-263.
- Chan, H.F.J. (2006). Systematic patterns in bullying and victimization. *School Psychology International, 27*, 352-369.
- Chan, H.F.J., Myron, R., Crawshaw, M. (2005). The efficacy of non-anonymous measures of bullying. *School Psychology International, 26*, 443-458.
- Clifton, A., Turkheimer, E., & Oltmanns, T.F. (2005). Self- and peer perspectives on pathological personality traits and interpersonal problems. *Psychological Assessment, 17*, 123-131.
- Cornell, D.G., & Brockenbrough, K. (2004). Identification of bullies and victims: A comparison of methods. *Journal of School Violence, 3*, 63-87.

- Cornell, D., & Mehta, S. (in press). Counselor confirmation of middle school student self-reports of bullying victimization. *Professional School Counseling*.
- Cornell, D.G., & Sheras, P.L. (2003). School Climate Bullying Survey. Charlottesville: University of Virginia, Virginia Youth Violence Project.
- Crick, N., & Bigbee, M. (1998). Relational and overt forms of peer victimization: A multi-informant approach. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 66*, 337-347.
- Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education, 526 U.S. 629 (1999).
- Eliot, M., Cornell, D., Gregory, A., & Fan, X. (2010). Supportive school climate and student willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence. *Journal of School Psychology, 48*, 533-553.
- Haynie, D. L., Nansel, T., Eitel, P., Crump, A. D., Saylor, K. Yu, K., Simons-Morton, B. (2001). Bullies, victims, and bully/victims: Distinct groups of at-risk youth. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 21*, 29-49.
- Juvonen, J., Graham, S., & Schuster, M.A. (2003). Bullying among young adolescents: The strong, the weak, and the troubled. *Pediatrics, 112*, 1231-1237.
- Kim, Y.S., Koh, Y.J., & Leventhal, B.L. (2004). Prevalence of school bullying in Korean middle school students. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine, 158*, 737-741.
- Ladd, G.W., & Kochenderfer-Ladd, B. (2002). Identifying victims of peer aggression from early to middle childhood: Analysis of cross-informant data from concordance, estimation of relational adjustment, prevalence of victimization, and characteristics of identified victims. *Psychological Assessment, 14*, 74-96.
- L.W. v. Toms River Regional Schools Board of Education, 189 N.J. 381, (2007).

- Nansel, T. R., Haynie, D. L., and Simons-Morton, B. G. (2003). The association of bullying and victimization with middle school adjustment. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 11*, 45 – 61.
- Nansel, T., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R., Ruan, W., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *American Medical Association, 285*, 2094-2100.
- Olweus, D. (1995). Bullying or peer abuse at school: Facts and intervention. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 4*, 196-200.
- Oliver, C., & Candappa, M. (2007). Bullying and the politics of ‘telling.’ *Oxford Review of Education, 33*, 71-86.
- Olweus, D. (1996). The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire. Bergen, Norway: Mimeo, Research Center for Health Promotion (HEMIL), University of Bergen.
- Olweus, D., & Limber, S. (2000). *Blueprints for violence prevention, book nine: Bullying prevention program*. Golden, CO: Venture Publishing and Denver, CO: C & M Press.
- Pakaslahti, L., & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, L. (2002). Comparison of peer, teacher and self-assessments on adolescent direct and indirect aggression. *Educational Psychology, 20*, 177-190.
- Pelligrini, A.D. (2001). Sampling instances of victimization in middle school: A methodological comparison. In J. Juvonen & S. Graham (Eds.), *Peer harassment in school: The plight of the vulnerable and victimized* (pp. 125-146). New York: Guilford.
- Rigby, K. (2003). Consequences of bullying in schools. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 48*, 583-590.

- Unnever, J.D., & Cornell, D.G. (2003). The culture of bullying in middle school. *Journal of School Violence, 2*, 5-27.
- Wang, J., Iannotti, R.J., & Nansel, T.R. (2009). School bullying among adolescents in the United States: Physical, verbal, relational and cyber. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 45*, 368-375.
- Weiss, B., Harris, V., & Catron, T. (2004). Development and initial validation of the peer-report measure of internalizing and externalizing behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 30*, 285-294.
- Whitted, K. S., & Dupper, D. R. (2005). Best practices for preventing or reducing bullying in schools. *Children & Schools, 27*, 167-175.

Table 1

*Survey items*

## Definition and Item

**Bullying** is defined as the use of one's strength or popularity to injure, threaten, or embarrass another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal or social. It is *not bullying* when students of about the same strength argue or fight. By this definition, I have *been bullied* at school in the past month

**Physical Bullying** involves repeatedly hitting, kicking, or shoving someone weaker on purpose. During the past month (30 days) at school: I have been physically bullied or threatened with physical bullying.

**Verbal Bullying** involves repeatedly teasing, putting down, or insulting someone on purpose. During the past month (30 days) at school: I have been verbally bullied

**Social Bullying** involves getting others repeatedly to ignore or leave someone out on purpose. During the past month (30 days) at school: I have been socially bullied.

**Cyber Bullying** bullying involves using the Internet (email, IM, etc.) to tease or put down someone. During the past month (30 days) at school or home: I have been cyber bullied.

Table 2

*Comparisons of Confirmed and Unconfirmed Victims*

Item	N Confirmed Victims	M (SD) Confirmed Victims	N Unconfirmed Victims	M(SD) Unconfirmed Victims	df	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
I have been bullied at school in the past month.	76	1.36 (.48)	88	1.18 (.39)	162	-2.55	.01*	.197
I have been physically bullied or threatened with physical bullying.	76	1.13 (.34)	88	1.07 (.25)	162	-1.36	.09	
I have been verbally bullied.	76	1.45 (.50)	88	1.19 (.40)	162	-3.62	.00*	.274
I have been socially bullied.	76	1.24 (.43)	87	1.08 (.27)	161	-2.81	.00*	.217
I have been cyber bullied.	76	1.07 (.25)	88	1.05 (.21)	162	-.56	.29	
Does bullying take place anywhere <i>at school?</i>	76	1.70 (.46)	88	1.58 (.50)	128	-.26	.39	
Bullying is a problem at this school.	57	1.54 (.50)	73	1.52 (.50)	162	-1.56	.06	

\* $p < .05$

Table 3

*Positive Predictive Value (PPV) of Peer Nominations*

Number of Nominations	<i>N</i>	Number of confirmed bullying victims	PPV for bully victimization	Students involved in bullying or peer conflict	PPV for students involved in bullying or peer conflict
Two or more	182	78	.429	107	.588
Three or more	117	66	.564	85	.726
Four or more	61	43	.730	50	.820
Five or more	37	27	.760	30	.811
Six or more	25	19	.760	21	.840
Seven or more	17	14	.824	16	.941
Nine or more	10	9	.900	9	.900

*Note.* No students received eight nominations.