Transforming Conflict and Bullying in Schools through Mythodrama

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Abstract

The growth of violence among children and adolescents has become a growing concern both in the United States and in Europe. Recent examples include the Columbine School shootings, 2008 shootings at Northern Illinois University in which a student gunman killed six and wounded 18, and a shooting in February 2009 by a teenage gunman in Frankfort, Germany that killed 15, the majority of which were girls and women and the horrific incident in Erfurt, Germany when a student shot seventeen teachers and classmates. The growth of violence among children and adolescents has reached crisis proportions as the incidence of student and teacher shootings has reached epidemic proportions. Stories of bomb threats, bullying, gang activity, harassment and shootings have populated the media.

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The growth of violence among children and adolescents has become a growing concern both in the United States and in Europe. Recent examples include the Columbine School shootings, 2008 shootings at Northern Illinois University in which a student gunman killed six and wounded 18, and a shooting in February 2009 by a teenage gunman in Frankfort, Germany that killed 15, the majority of which were girls and women and the horrific incident in Erfurt, Germany when a student shot seventeen teachers and classmates. The growth of violence among children and adolescents has reached crisis proportions as the incidence of student and teacher shootings has reached epidemic proportions. Stories of bomb threats, bullying, gang activity, harassment and shootings have populated the media.

In addition to recent shootings at Northern Illinois University and Virginia Tech, there have been shootings in other elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and universities. This is not a class phenomenon; it occurs in poor, middle income and more affluent communities. This phenomenon is international in scope as these incidents of violence have happened in Finland, Germany, the United States and other countries. The prevalence shows a problem that has not been addressed or explained adequately. A recent study by the U.S. Secret Service indicates that several myths have sprung up in the popular vernacular about the perpetrators of school violence that are false and misleading. The rise of violence in schools has outstripped the development and implementation of programs to address those issues. Paradoxically, while much of the available research on violence intervention programs focuses on programs that target children ages 6-12, the majority of the reported incidents of violence in the United States, and those that receive the greatest notice in the popular press, occur in adolescent populations, that is, among children ages 12 and up.

The purpose of this study is to explore a conflict resolution strategy that has demonstrated positive results with adolescent populations in other countries. Allan Guggenbuhl, founder of the Institute for Conflict Management in Zurich, Switzerland, has used a methodology he has named Mythodrama to work with adolescents in school settings to negotiate conflict in a non-violent manner and introduces skills they can use to successfully resolve future conflicts [1]. This methodology will be applied with a population of US adolescents to demonstrate whether this strategy would have efficacy here.

In looking at resolving conflict, we must also look at aggression, which are both a cause of and a negative reaction to conflict [2]. Aggression is variously seen as a defense to the "psychological self" and a breakdown of normal defense processes [3], a primary, innate drive tied to sexual drives rather than a defense against environmental intrusions [4], and a reawakening of problems left over from childhood [5]. A controversy that has divided the psychoanalytic world is whether aggression is a human instinct or not [6]. Mitchell writes aggression lies at both the core of the self and also on the periphery [7].

Much of the literature about aggressive behavior looks at correlations between aggression in adolescence and early childhood intervention [8]. A National Institute of Mental Health study at the University of Colorado Boulder looked at whether concern for others correlates to aggressive/disruptive behavior in pre-school children and found important links between parenting style and pro-social development as a factor in whether or not children retained concern for others as they matured [9]. Another study examined the long-term impact of two preventive interventions used with first graders: one classroom centered and the other focused on parents' interaction with the school and good parenting skills. Children in a random sample that were exposed to these interventions in first grade were revisited five years later, and the study found that later success correlated to early risk assessment and intervention [10]. Additionally a two-year study of preschool and kindergarten students show that interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills (ICPS), which are lacking in children exhibiting aggressive behavior, can be taught and mitigate maladjustment over a 5-year longitudinal study [11]. Another study looks at the efficacy of an intervention program called Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT) in violence prevention among elementary school children [12]. The results indicated that when parents participated in parent education classes, teachers learned better ways to manage inappropriate student behavior and volunteer playground monitors learned better skills for supervising and rewarding children. In addition, children who were initially targeted as aggressive became

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virtually indistinguishable from average children [13].

Several methodologies have been utilized to manage conflict in primary school- age populations. Brown and Jones [14] showcase a school- based intervention program called the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). This program works with children in grades 1-6 in New York City public elementary school. Across gender, race and economic categories, children whose teachers taught the program's conflict resolution methods exhibited fewer conduct problems, depressive symptoms and aggressive behaviors. Using this classical theory base, August et al.evaluated the impact of a violence prevention program called Early Risers on young children who were identified as at high risk for aggressive behavior. Early Risers is a six-week initial program with two years of follow up support. Their study found improvement in academic performance and behavioral self-regulation [15].

Longitudinal studies demonstrate the lifelong impact of childhood aggression left unaddressed. Drawing participants from the ongoing Jyvaskyla Longitudinal Study of Personality and Social Development, a study that looks at the relationship between childhood aggression and long-term unemployment in adulthood, found that maladjustment in school begins a cycle of maladjustment in adulthood that correlates to problem drinking, limited occupational choices and long-term unemployment [16].

Stuart Twemlow suggests that a dyadic relationship exists between victim and victimizer that are similar to the transference and counter-transference relationship in psychoanalytic treatment [17,18]. He suggests the importance of community psychoanalysis and building peaceful school environments with emphasis on the opportunity for group intervention by students, teacher, counselors, administrators and psychotherapists.

Twemlow et al. had some success with their intervention technique, called the CAPSLE Program, which combines psychoanalytic and Adlerian methodologies [19,20]. They applied them at an elementary school in which a second grade girl was assaulted by a group of second grade boys and found that program participation was associated with pronounced improvement in students' academic achievement scores when bullying was addressed via a low cost anti-violence intervention. Yet, their focus was on bullying behavior, not conflict resolution. One group intervention method used successfully in Europe to support conflict management is Allan Guggenbuhl's Mythodrama method, which has its origins in analytical psychology from a Jungian perspective. Because this theory is the basis for this study, a review of some Jungian literature is also warranted here.

Key to the understanding of conflict from a Jungian perspective is an understanding of Jung's concept of the Shadow. Jung identifies the shadow as the unconscious side of a human being that contains those parts of oneself that are perceived to be, at best, weak and at worst, demonic [21-34]. Miller explores the different aspects of the shadow - personal, collective and archetypal - as they influence personality development [35]. When there is a split between the shadow and the ego there is an effect on the development of the personality [36]. As Jung says, "Everything that man should, and yet cannot, be or do - be it in a positive or negative sense - lives on as a mythological figure and anticipation alongside his consciousness, either as a religious projection or - what is still more dangerous - as unconscious contents which then project themselves spontaneously into incongruous objects, e.g., hygienic and other "salvationist" doctrines or practices. All these are so many rationalized substitutes for mythology, and their unnaturalness

does more harm than good" [21-34].

Jung believed that a person cannot become conscious without the recognition of and struggle with the shadow. He referred to it as a "mortal struggle" that confronts the "ego-personality" and requires the difficult work of looking within as well as without. There are aspects of the shadow that are more difficult to assimilate because of the affective quality that tends to be projected onto the other. Jungians say that no object can stand in the sun without a shadow. When we fail to assimilate and make the shadow conscious it will always be projected out, disintegrated and dissociated. Then our world becomes a dark illusive place that emotionally drains us. Due to this, the outside world becomes a replica of our unknown side - unpredictable, scary, unstable and dangerous. Von Franz ML writes of how the shadow is projected upon others, noting that the object of projection typically shares significant characteristics with the person doing the projecting [37].

People who believe that the shadow is out in the world and is never associated with them are convinced that others are evil and bad [38]. Therefore, the other becomes the object of fear and distrust, always up to no good. Dissociation from the shadow causes people to become dangerous to themselves and others. The shadow is less dangerous to the person and the world when it is recognized as a part of the person. We can become better in the world when we recognize that evil lives within, not just without. Moreover the repression and dissociation of the shadow can cause the most helpful and good intentions of people to become misguided and oppressive.

In his collected works, Jung addressed the Shadow several times with a variety of examples as to what form and shape the shadow can take in an individual's unconscious as well as the collective unconscious. The core of the shadow for Jung is not that the shadow is evil as much as it is disconnected from consciousness. This disconnection causes great conflict with the other because it generates projections of primitive, fearful, hateful aspects of the psyche.

Jung writes "It is a frightening thought that man also has a shadow side to him, consisting not just of little weaknesses and foibles, but of a positively demonic dynamism. The individual seldom knows anything of this; to him, as an individual, it is incredible that he should ever in any circumstances go beyond himself. But let these harmless creatures form a mass, and there emerges a raging monster; and each individual is only one tiny cell in the monster's body, so that for better or worse he must accompany it on its bloody rampages and even assist it to the utmost. Having a dark suspicion of these grim possibilities, man turns a blind eye to the shadow-side of human nature [39]. Blindly he strives against the salutary dogma of original sin, which is yet so prodigiously true. Yes, he even hesitates to admit the conflict of which he is so painfully aware".

In this quote Jung addresses the frightening part of the unconscious; a part which appears when the shadow is collectively projected toward a minority of people or groups of people. Who have become the scapegoats in society? In the "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology" Jung writes, again, addressing the issue of the shadow as a continuous drama in human beings occurring in everyday life.

He states, "We know that the wildest and most moving dramas are played not in the theater but in the hearts of ordinary men and women who pass by without exciting attention, and who betray to the world nothing of the conflicts that rage within them except possibly by a nervous breakdown [40]. What is so difficult for the layman to grasp is the fact that in most cases the patients themselves have no suspicion whatever of the internecine war raging in their unconscious. If we

remember that there are many people who understand nothing at all about themselves. We shall be less surprised at the realization that there are also people who are utterly unaware of their actual conflicts".

When a group of people project their suspicion and anger on another group, it is very difficult for the projecting group to have empathy, or any form of identification, with the group who become the object of the projections. Thus, the groups become enemies of each other. By defining an enemy, the need for remorse or humanity is mediated. It becomes acceptable, maybe even admirable, to kill, destroy, or isolate the enemy groups. In a school setting, those defined in this way are bullied and called names that disgrace by connotation. They might be taunted with terms like "weak," "weird," "fat," "gay," "black," "poor," "stupid," "ugly," "outcast," and "foreign."

Jung says that man has always split things into two separate spheres that have opposite characteristics, suggesting that this split is a reflection of the division that existed in primitive man in the intrapsychic polarity between the conscious vs. the unconscious. Because primitive man had yet to develop the ability to evaluate his own knowledge, he saw subject and object as undifferentiated because his own internal opposition was unconscious and therefore projected onto the world.

Marie-Louise Von Franz explains that the split that occurs in the external world is a direct reflection of our inner world being projected outwardly! Jung believes that perception of the external is always a direct reflection of our internal psychology whether it is based on fact or not. Thus, when we project anger and suspicions on others it feels as real as if they actually had done something to us, even though we know nothing about them. Thus, when we go to war with other countries we vilify their people, religion and culture. We distance ourselves from any similarities that we might have with them. In schools kids are merciless towards other kids who are considered different or "outcasts."

Jung writes that over time we have been able to distinguish and recall some of our projections such that conscious knowledge developed into a form of scientific thinking, which was the first step in the "despiritualization" of the world. Thus, though now for the most part, our understanding of what constitutes "God" is less rooted in the natural world (trees, mountains, weather, etc.) and we understand more of our world (through) scientific exploration and discovery, there are still many gaps in our knowledge. We fill these in with projections, and we feel as sure of the veracity of those projections as we are of our scientific knowledge. Scientific exploration and discovery has moved our consciousness forward, yet the forces of the unconscious continue to pull us back towards the darkness.

The unknown is that part of us that wants to believe in myth and stories, not in the scientific revolution. People tell stories of our great heroes and they don't want to see those heroes at Walter Read Hospital, or in the coffins returning home. In schools, the traumatic consequences of bullying and violence leave lifetime scars on victims. Each individual is that which he cannot tolerate. Each is the same as the wounded adolescents and young soldiers who have not been given the chance to survive as heroes. And, what happens when the hero's journey ends; do they disappear or become bitter old man and women? Life in the world can be a very dark place, where we stumble and fall. We are the only ones that can turn on the lights and play the music of life.

Jung provides some insight into the theoretical underpinnings of the Mythodrama method when he states:

"The individual ego could be conceived as the commander of a small army in the struggle with his environments war not infrequently on two fronts, before him the struggle for existence, in the rear the struggle against his own rebellious instinctual nature. Even to those of us who are not pessimists our existence feels more like a struggle than anything else. The state of peace is a desideratum, and when a man has found peace with himself and the world it is indeed a noteworthy event".

Guggenbuhl utilizes the work of counseling and psychotherapy from a Jungian perspective and transforms it into a method for resolving conflict in schools. He adapts and applies Jungian theory using both developmental and remedial methods with students, teachers and school counselors. Writing from his experiences as a psychologist in Swiss Canton Schools, he has gathered material to analyze what makes children behave violently toward each other. Guggenbuhl reexamines many assumptions about violence and childhood and has devised a methodology which he calls Mythodrama. This technique is a resource for finding alternative strategies for violence prevention and dealing with violence among school children.

This study uses Guggenbuhl-Jungian Mythodrama as a theoretical framework for conflict resolution and investigates this methodology from an Analytical Psychology perspective. Mythodrama is defined as a conflict resolution approach, the purpose of which is to help people in an unbearable or a very difficult situation [41]. It is a method of intervention that aims to produce concrete solutions and answers to conflict by providing new perspectives to the people involved. By facilitating the creation of novel ideas and anticipating different consequences in complex situations, the method both illuminates the darkness and respects the chaos that exists.

A defining principle in Mythodrama is the understanding that the irrational cannot always be explained away and must be respected for its power. Mythodrama does not dismiss the unconscious and respects the process that people go through. It tries to provide new ways of explaining and unpacking the entanglements of the group. In this context, conflict is not viewed as misunderstanding or as something avoidable; rather, it is viewed as necessary for growth and change. In conflict it is not necessary to state the obvious, but it is important to dare or challenge conscious thought in order to perceive the issues from a deeper psychological perspective.

Guggenbuhl writes: Mythodrama is a conflict resolution approach, which is applied in crisis intervention in problematic school classes, in group and trauma therapy and in team development. Mythodrama works with the myths/cryptodogmas which dominate a specific group unconsciously. (e.g., "we are victims," "we are the lonely heroes," etc.) These myths or cryptodogmas influence the thinking patterns of groups and induce their emotional condition. During conflicts, when hostility, hatred or violence predominates, the participants abandon the rational point of view. Their cognitive structures, perceptions and emotions are affected by these instinctual forces, which take over during conflicts. When we want to deal effectively with conflict, be it violence or bullying, we have to take into consideration these unconscious forces. Mythodrama addresses this archetypal dynamism inert in the psyche of man, by choosing a story, legend, tale or metaphor, which reflects the respective myth. If the myth is made conscious, the group can proceed to work on it. The myths not only influence our conflict behavior, they can also be the source of new ideas and solutions. In Mythodrama specially trained practitioners use specific techniques, to work with the mythic patterns of a group of people. After having carried out the program, the clinician initiates concrete solutions or changes within the group or the system to which the group belongs. The solutions have to be answers to the problems, which were defined before starting the program. The solutions are evaluated after a certain time period (follow

up). The aim of Mythodrama is to use the group's own imagination to disclose hidden resources and initiate concrete steps, with which to solve the particular problem, from which the group is suffering.

Mythodrama is based on two psychological assumptions:

1. People are all against the need for conflict and when they are calmer, more attuned with emotional states, there is a greater ability and willingness to resolve conflict.

2. Problems occur because of conflict that transforms personality. This causes a cessation in thinking and generates action in accordance with the rational part of the self as a defense against hidden parts of personality. We start to show a crazy aspect of our personality.

The ways conflict alters our perceptions and the way we would like to deal with situations is skewed. We find ourselves as emotional beings showing our anger and rage. The perspective from which we view others becomes narrow. The person starts to destroy everything that walks in path; it confronts what does not conform to our ideas and views. Thus, the person who cuts one off in traffic is an idiot, not a person that just made us aware that we are not paying attention to the road. In conflict we also become aware of our bodies, our heartbeat, sweating hands, our voice cracking and our muscles tightening. The emotions force us to hear our bodies, thus our innate response becomes primitive and "fight or flight" responses become more acceptable. Conflicts also create stories; these stories are psychological insights to the way we view the world and how we think the world views us.

Mythodrama is the approach that takes all of these different issues and psychological phenomena into consideration toward forming a solution. Mythodrama is based on the ideas of Analytical Psychology developed by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl G. Jung. Analytical Psychology suggests that we are beings that are driven by unconscious forces not just by cognitive ideas and behaviors. These unconscious drives need to be addressed and understood and they can be part symbols, stories and metaphors.

Hübner and Singer say that, "Mythodrama is a group therapy procedure and a conflict resolution methodology which was developed by Guggenbühl (www.ikm.ch, Guggenbühl in 1999). It marries the ideas of the psychodrama of Jakob Levis Morenos and the analytic psychology Jung. Mythodrama springs from the notion that the behavior of the person is steered by collective processes as well as his personal biography, his will or expression of his personality. In group psychotherapy, conflict presentation or teamwork, the method must consider the collective dynamic. Mythodramas manifest themselves above all in the groups with which we identify emotionally. At a deep level of the psyche, the collective unconscious connects the members of such groups. Therefore, what the one perceives and feels is often also expression of a collective process. We must integrate the collective dimension into the individual psychological analysis and we need special metaphors and concepts to recognize these group mechanisms. Often the statements and actions of individual become clear only after we understand the parallel collective depth processes.

Complexes or archetypes control not only the psychological setting of the individual, but can also take hold of a group such that the individual then adopts the psychic complex which dominates the group. These complexes or archetypes express themselves in suitable myths, stories which are produced or are selected by the archetypal constellation of the group. For group members these myths have a heightened plausibility. They are cited when the group must master new challenges, is threatened or must process a trauma. In the group they

have the function of axiomatic explanations. They are valid enough for the group members to be seen as grounds for an action or problem. Such myths hide behind many catchwords that are part of the group's collective vernacular and belief system.

Guggenbuhl writes, three important catchwords that have their own intra-group definitions are "communication," "knowledge" and "power." Archetypal underpinnings behind such catchwords show up in group-suitable stories. Behind communication, for example, the Hermes/Aphrodite Mythos may be hidden; behind education, Apollo and with the subject Power we look to the group to identify its archetypal stories. Those stories that are agreed to be plausible to the group must be understood as myths, which reflect the archetypal structure of the group.

Guggenbühl Mythodrama intervention distinguishes itself by a methodology that respects this deep psychological structure. In contrast to a method such as psychodrama it focuses not on the individual's situation, but rather on the central myth of the group. Guggenbühl Mythodrama intervention also distinguishes itself by an exact finite process: Problem definition, mood- setting, history/myth, imagination, representation or treatment, reflection and, finally, concrete conversion or measure. First the group participants must identify the personal problem of an individual in the group or that of the group itself that is the focus of the Mythodrama work. In the second phase the group leader organizes a mood-setting exercise to help the group to experience itself as a community using play, music, etc. Next the group leader tells a history that is selected according to the previously identified myth. The identification of the myth occurs intuitively, without preliminary talks or special questionnaires.

The history of the group interaction is embodied in the myth and group members and changes the mood of the group. In this context the group history serves as a medium of the contact rather than as a pedagogical modality. The group leader fortifies the history story with what are called mental movers, which are small unlikely, weird or illogical details which are inserted into the history myth and should work as irritants. With the Mythodrama the history is not told to a conclusion, but is left open-ended. Each listener is asked to imagine the end independently.

The representation or treatment phase follows this imagination phase. This occurs differently in each different intervention and is determined according to the challenges of each group. Teams or families are brought together to devise an end to the history and to play it out afterwards. The end of the history can also be shown in drawings. In the last phase of the intervention, the group's Mythodramas are acted out in the form of a play or symbolically interpreted in pictures and on the source question addressed. Thus the problem or the question identified by the group or by the individuals at the beginning of the meeting is seen in a new light with the help of the material produced by the group processes. These spontaneous dramas and drawings help the individual to find his or her own resources for reframing the myth. The play can also be used by the group to critically review the myth and creatively succeed in exposing it and reframing it in a more productive and positive way. If the Mythodrama is used as a conflict presentation technology, concrete changes should be decided upon as the final outcome of the intervention. This can occur at an individual level or be initiated by the entire group and must be concrete and measurable enough to be recognized by those outside the group.

This project was designed to assess the efficacy of the Mythodrama crisis intervention method that was developed by Dr. Allan Guggenbuhl.

Of the 11 hypotheses tested, only one (Exclusion) resulted in a statistically significant difference. However, it is important to note two observations about the present study: (a) the frequency of most types of bullying and conflict were generally low prior to the start of the intervention, and (b) even though frequency was low, improvements were experienced in all categories moving in the desired clinical direction. In addition, participants reported that post-intervention, the classroom environment improved in a very practically significant way. Thus, while most of the hypotheses were rejected, there was still some evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the Mythodrama intervention

Interestingly there were minor differences in the amount of bullying and violence experienced depending on level of information processing ability. Although the variation is not statistically significant, students with lower levels of processing ability were likely to report experiencing more verbal and physical bullying whereas students with higher ability reported fewer incidences of both types of bullying.

During the 3 months of the intervention, the process became important to the students and they were eager to participate. The intervention seemed to give a voice to the frustrations that students have regarding the expression of their opinions. Their interest is demonstrated not only anecdotally but statistically. Regarding items in the survey that assessed students' mood and general disposition about their school, on average students reported that they had less fear and felt better about their school during the post intervention survey than they had during the pre-intervention survey. Students reported improved relationships with their teachers and with other students. They also provided a higher ranking for how they saw their class working at the post-intervention survey.

In written comments, students shared their thoughts about violence and their fascination with it; how violence stirs their imaginations and how it was exciting to watch. At the outset of the study they could not make the psychological connection between violent actions they witness occurring to others and the notion that, if they are not intervening in bullying, they are in some way tacitly supporting it. Students who participated in the intervention came to understand that allowing or ignoring bullying helped to foster its continuation.

Discussion in the intervention began with the participating students focused on the ways differentiation occurs between those in the "in-group" and those in the "out- group." Students talked about cleanliness, grooming and fashion as differentiators. Being well groomed and fashionable was seen as an "in-group" characteristic, whereas paying too much attention to the dress code (e.g., boys wearing their pants high at the waist) is an "out-group" signifier. Caring about one's grades was seen as an "in-group" signifier. Other "out-group" signifiers were related to attitude. The use of words like "goofy," "weird" or "yelling at people's faces" are considered attitude-related signifiers of "out-group" status. Having friends and/or girlfriends/boyfriends signified "in-group" status.

During the intervention the facilitator explained that, because conforming to one's peers is privileged in this age range, those who develop more slowly, or who come later to an enhanced awareness of what it takes to conform, become targets of those who are more aware of their surroundings and their peers. Because disapproval can cause loss of status, when "in-group" members feel uncomfortable with how they look, feel, or think, they must protect themselves. Their tendency is to project that perceived flaw in themselves onto an "out-group" member, then chastise that scapegoat. Various cases of scapegoating

were identified by the participants, ranging from localized school bullying incidents (when people are ostracized, jokes told at a student's expense, pranks played on one student by another) to more extreme cases of genocide (Holocaust, Rwanda) followed by the notion that whole groups affect the thinking of the individual.

During the intervention, the facilitator increased student awareness about the powerful influence that they have as a group. Looking at the ratio of students to teachers, as well as the ratio of bullying peers to non-bullying peers, students recognized that their "inside" perspective enabled them to see more of what is going on than teachers or administrators. Students observed that rules change over time based on how well they work and whether students follow them or not. Using the example of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent efforts that drove the British Empire from India was of particular interest to this group. Students learned that if they want a school that is more welcoming and agreeable, one with less violence, they have the ability to unite for the purpose of making that change.

The discussion gained momentum when the classroom teacher joined by offering her own behavior for examination:

Teacher: "Why do you think kids are picked on here? Raise your hand if you've ever been picked on before!"

Facilitator: (prompting responses) "None of these kids have ever been picked on before..."

Teacher: "I know more than that because I've picked on some of you myself! Student to Teacher: "You slapped me on the back of my head but I wasn't listening." Teacher: "So that makes it ok?"

Student: "Well, I wasn't listening...but it was a Cheap Shot!" Teacher: "It was a cheap shot! So, why do people get picked on?"

Using this example as a launching point, classroom discussion shifted to the subject of that which people are consciously aware of concerning their own behaviors and reactions to the experience or witnessing of bullying and violence. The new focus enabled students to explore the idea of developing greater consciousness of their own attitudes and behaviors. They became aware of the tendency to become increasingly desensitized to violence over time.

The teacher related another story of a student who did not like what another student wrote in a paper. The first student expressed his displeasure by grabbing the paper out of the writer's hand, crumpling it up, and tossing it across the room. In the teacher's view this was a violent act. The group expanded the discussion by observing how laughter can be a weapon and why witnessing an act without stopping it is tantamount to approval.

Facilitator: "OK, so in defining violence, we get desensitized. Unless somebody shoots somebody, we don't think of it as violence. Because of this desensitization, somebody might kick somebody else or push them into the wall saying, "Oops! My fault. I was just kidding!"

Male Student: "Would it be ok to laugh at the kid who came up and showed you the kid that fell and tripped on their face?"

Facilitator: "It's generally okay to laugh. The only problem with it is that sometimes laughing encourages bad behavior."

Male Student continues: "No, wait...it's..."

Facilitator: "A comedian can make jokes and people can laugh. As long as you know you're going to a show and you're seeing a comedian. If somebody's running down the stairs and the kid in front of them puts

out their leg, and they fall down the stairs, it might look funny"

Male student interrupts: "You know it's really sad, but funny."

Facilitator: "It might look funny that this kid crumbled on the floor, but let's think of it another way. You could have been the person who was running in the front..."

Female Student: "Ok, so if you laugh at the guy, but you go and help him up, is that ok?"

Facilitator: "What I'm asking is, are you encouraging that person who kicked or tripped the guy? Is this behavior that should be discouraged?"

Facilitator: [mugs] "Oh, yeah that's pretty funny!" If you make two kids fall at the same time, I'll laugh even harder!' Now you're participating and you're no longer being a passive observer. What if you're coming around and you saw somebody...you laughed and then you went to help them up and said, "Sorry that was funny but are you ok?' There's a problem with that, yes?"

Male student: "So is it okay to laugh if you don't laugh until you ask them if they're ok...and then if they start laughing...is it ok to laugh with them?"

Facilitator: "I said it's always ok to laugh as long as you know what you are doing. I'm saying be conscious of what you are doing. Ok? So, if I slapped you and everybody laughed [students begin to laugh and giggle] did my behavior make me look big because you looked silly? Maybe it was uncalled for.

Some people take behavior that embarrasses them as someone wanting them to fall; like they want you to get hurt because they are entertaining everybody. I mean Jim Carey does it all the time, but that's the movies. But, what happens at school is that kids take advantage of other kids and they become the butt of the jokes. Right?

[A single "Uh huh" is heard from one of the students.]

Story and myth are used prominently in this segment of the intervention as a way to frame or make conscious a problem with which students may struggle to come to consciousness. Discomfort with acknowledging these self-reflections make it difficult to bring to light even more subtle forms of intimidation. Part of generating this recognition includes awareness that those who are thriving in the system are unlikely to want things to change and are often those who are doing the bullying. Expanding the understanding of the students helps them to comprehend the social complexities. Even understanding how calling someone a "snitch" when they threaten to out a bully is another way of using power and retains the status quo.

The intervention begins by using myths and stories much more iconic and removed from the students' day-to-day reality, but eventually uses material that brings them closer to the experience of people they know well. In one instance, the teacher, told a story of her own experience. She told the students about being bullied in high school, what occurred, how she handled it, and what the long term consequences have been for her as an adult.

The teacher explained that she'd been singled out and ostracized by a group of popular girls who taped chocolate covered dog biscuits to her locker and began referring to her as "bitch." Not only did other kids, join in the teasing, but her best friend, concerned that she would become a target as well, chose to stop spending time with her... The teacher shared that, while taunting was hard, losing her best friend was devastating.

Clearly, the students were able to relate to their teacher's experience and began sharing some stories of their own. The stories they related and the discussions that followed indicated a beginning awareness of the power of the by-stander or the power of the group to exert influence. In the small group format, students demonstrated an understanding of the teacher's experience by talking about their experiences of being bullied and shunned. Others in the group were able to see the power they had to they relieved the situation. Not allowing the "shunning," for example, might have been accomplished by inviting the person to sit with friends at lunch. The discussions made the students aware of the feelings of both victim and bully. The guided discussion that followed made conscious the conclusion that their power lies not in exclusion but in the ability to unite around a common cause. Coming to comprehend the strength of the group to negate the effectiveness of bullies brought to awareness the recognition that with power comes responsibility. The authority that is the result of using power to evoke respect could be clearly differentiated from using violence for purposes of intimidation.

Next the discussion turned to the kinds of changes that the students wanted. They focused on serious substantive changes (e.g., how to deal with grievances rather than how high or low one can wear one's pants). Ultimately, students identified that substantive problems exist, planned to address them, and discussed recommendations to bring to the faculty and administration in order to help address those issues. The facilitator passed these ideas to the administration and faculty hoping to spark a dialogue about mutually addressing these issues.

Toward the end of the intervention, participants wrote critiques of both the research and the researcher. The majority of complaints were centered on classmates who were perceived as either participating too much, or not at all. Several participants indicated that the researcher interrupted students too often during the intervention.

There were limitations inherent in the study that also bears mention. Ideally an intervention like this one would occur over the course of an entire school year, in all classrooms, and in several different schools. This particular study included 106 students who volunteered for the study and it took place over an eight week period. There were a total of 16 sessions. The students came from their regular classes or lunch and would leave the project to go to other classes. The principal popped in a few times to say hi and demonstrate interest, but otherwise never interfered with the groups. Despite the interest shown in the project by most everyone, the counseling department proved to be an exception. In the three months I was at the school neither the counselors nor the school social worker introduced themselves. Their lack of interest may have been another limitation because the lines of communication were obstructed so that findings and feedback could not be transmitted.

The primary reason that the mythodrama method has been successful is that it provides a vehicle for students to confront and address aspects of their unconscious, reflecting a darker part of the self (what Jung would call "the shadow") in the context of story within a group setting. These darker aspects of the adolescent psyche are not typically allowed to be expressed in a school setting. According to Jung, "all psychic content of which we are not yet conscious appears in projected form as the supposed properties of outer objects" (1959). The more adolescents' shadow aspects are repressed, the more these aspects are attributed to "the other" and acted out among their peers and with the adults in their lives. It is this addressing of the shadow in the mythodrama method that helps bring into the conscious mind darker aspects adolescents might otherwise project onto their peers.

According to Marie Louise Von Franz, "In this process, the unconscious of the projector does not as a rule pick just any object at all, but rather one that has some or even a great deal of the character of the projected property" (1993). This means that adolescents view their peers as projected aspects of themselves. An adolescent projects the shadow into other adolescents, who are in many ways like himself. This explains why those who bully their peers see themselves as victims rather than as victimizers. The mythodrama method reveals the fantasy behind the reality, forcing the adolescent to look in the mirror and recollect the projection.

Despite the time frame for the intervention in this study being short, it is possible that the statistical improvements are the result of actual reductions in bullying and/or harassment in school. However, given that the category "Never" on the Likert scale of the intervention was selected more often post –intervention than pre-intervention, one might also conclude that a benefit of the intervention was to provide clarity about what actions constitute harassment and bullying. Students may have developed more ability to determine whether they were indeed victims of harassment.

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