



NEWS RELEASE

Evaluating community-based efforts to reduce bully-victim problems: It takes a whole village to raise a child.

Dr. Shelley Hymel, a professor in the University of British Columbia Department of Educational & Counseling Psychology & Special Education has been awarded a \$23,770 grant to evaluate community-based efforts to reduce bully-victim problems in North Shore schools.

This is a proposal to conduct 3 studies. The first study involves end of school year follow-up assessment of the incidence of bully-victim problems via anonymous questionnaires in three North Shore schools. The investigator has already collected beginning of year data as part of a partnership with each school as they adapt provincially mandated anti-bullying interventions in their schools. Because each school implements their program in slightly different ways, this enables the investigator to conduct externally valid evaluations of the effectiveness of these different applications of anti-bullying interventions. The investigator has close and long standing partnership relationships with each school. Because pre-intervention data already exist, the grant moneys will support primarily end of year data collection, materials, data entry, analyses, and write up.

The second study involves analysis of pre- and post-summer camp data on measures of social adjustment and other bully-victim related behaviours in the summer camp she has run for some years in collaboration with a Vancouver elementary school. The camp is situated on the North Shore and is an innovative summer day camp lasting 2 weeks that involves a diversity of social skill development training in at risk children. The data already exists and so grant moneys will be used for data entry, analyses, and write up.

These investigations are justified by the investigator based on the high prevalence of bullying episodes in school children, the substantial social and mental health costs accrued by both victims and bullies, the evidence that some interventions work, but the absence of any empirical evaluation of locally developed and Ministry of Education-mandated anti-bullying interventions.

The third study is a small pilot project involving the use of focus group discussions among volunteer adolescents and the use of moral development dilemmas posed to the students but with bully-victim scenarios as the content. This pilot project is justified on the following grounds. 1. Most bullying evidently occurs outside the awareness of responsible adults but within the observation and knowledge of similar-aged peers. Thus, peers are very aware of this phenomenon and have greater ability to intervene in some way. 2. Peers appear to behave in either a neutral or supportive manner toward bullies and a relatively negative manner toward victims. 3. Little empirical work has been conducted with anti-bullying interventions with adolescents. 4. Early adolescents

tend to be focused more on peer approval than on adult approval or principle-guided morality in moral dilemmas but evolve into the latter in later adolescence. 5. Research involving moral development has not been used in any manner in clinical interventions with respect to the bully-victim issue. Thus, this pilot project is intended to evaluate the potential utility of using adolescent group focus group discussions regarding moral dilemmas inherent in bullying behaviour to determine if such adolescents can make attitudinal shifts that will influence them to behave differently when faced with a bully-victim interaction.

The Lions Gate Healthcare Research Foundation is a independent North Shore community-based volunteer organization that builds better communities through research and education. For more information about the foundation go to our website at www.healthcareresearch.ca.

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