

What Causes Bullies and Bully Behavior?

By Albert Gonzales
albert@DifferenceMakers.com

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Home

Clearly the home environment is a major factor in creating bullies. A home where violence is accepted and used as a means for solving disputes is one that helps raise bullies.

Homes in which bullies live will most likely be:

- void of consistent adult supervision.
- hostile.
- supportive of aggression as a way of solving conflicts.
- in neighborhoods where violence is commonplace.
- run by adults who model bully behavior (either consciously or not).

School

More than 80% of students report being the victim of bullying at school. Students forced into competition and social interactions tend to polarize into groups. Grouping can lead to feelings of acceptance or non-acceptance, and breed bullying behavior. Schools which have no clear definition, policy and plan for bullies tend to contribute to the problem.

Schools in which bullies reign will most likely:

- be crowded.
- not have a clear and consistent policy regarding harassment or bullying.
- not have adequate adult supervision.
- not have a staff trained in identifying bullies.
- have an administrative staff overwhelmed with discipline problems.
- treat every student conflict as mutual combat.
- not take the time to track violent behavior on campus.
- not have an intervention team who can share the discipline workload.
- be unaware of vulnerable areas on campus where students can be victimized outside supervised areas.
- trade bullies with other schools as a means of discipline.

Community

Much of the learned behavior depends upon the social norms of the neighborhood. Lower socioeconomic neighborhoods tend to be problematic for a few reasons. First, they usually have more people per capita than affluent communities, and crowding can lead to frustration and "acting out." Second, the educational levels in those communities are generally lower and the social skills for dealing with stress are more prone to be violent. Third, supervision of children tends to be looser and children are more often victimized in poor neighborhoods. Finally, gangs in a community contribute to learned bullying behavior and accepted patterns of violence. Communities that spawn bullies usually:

- are crowded because of poor housing conditions.
- have a greater number of impoverished families.
- have few or no positive recreational opportunities for kids.
- have few or no positive connections with police or city resources.
- allow gangs to be the primary influence of children in the streets.

PERSONAL RISK FACTORS

Young bullies are usually children:

- without adequate supervision.
- who were once victims of other bullies.
- who are without positive role models.
- who are fascinated or obsessed with video violence (i.e. television, video games, etc.).
- whose physical or psychological attributes allow them to dominate other children.

