

An Ethnographic Study of Participant Roles in School Bullying

Thomas P. Gumpel^{1*}, Vered Zioni-Koren², and Zvi Bekerman³

¹The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel

²Blich High School, Tel Aviv, Israel

³The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel

.....

An ethnographic study in a 10th grade remedial class was undertaken in order to discern patterns of school bullying. Twenty 10th graders were observed over the course of one academic year as they interacted with their peers and teachers. The observations helped us identify dispositional and situational factors which influenced participant roles. In-depth interviews of students involved in school bullying showed how participants interpreted and explained their classroom behaviors. The analysis of the data gathered allowed the identification of four main actor roles recognized in the existing literature on bullying—the pure victim, the pure bully, the provocative-victim, and the bystander—as well as the differentiation between aggressive bullies and the bully managers. Most roles fluctuated according to specific circumstances and often appeared to be moderated by the teacher’s management style and contextual variables. Some pupils assumed different roles in different contexts, sometimes changing roles within or between episodes. Teacher personality and style also had an impact on the frequencies and types of aggression and victimization. The use of an ethnographic research paradigm is discussed as an important supplement to positivistic studies of school bullying. *Aggr. Behav.* 40:214–228, 2014. © 2014 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

.....

Keywords: bullying; victimization; bystanders; teachers; remedial education

INTRODUCTION

Educational anthropologists have been trained to assume that learning is responsive to a context that is interpreted by participants and is dominated by social relationships. School settings are seen as institutions that, like other institutions in a society, organize meanings and social relations in particular ways to support the social order of all the groups in that society. Thus, what is overtly and covertly taught and learned is expected to vary by group; ethnographic research focuses on describing manifestations of the social order in educational activities and developing frameworks for understanding how participants exposed to these settings come to learn their place in society. Accordingly, context has become an increasingly important focus in educational and psychological research.

The notion of context is a confusing one. Cole (1998) distinguishes between two possible metaphors that may be helpful. The first envisions context as concentric circles and is important in that it emphasizes that all phenomena are constituted by other phenomena positioned above, below, or around them. Despite the fact that context constitutes and constrains, it should never be

understood as an immutable and unchangeable background. The second metaphor envisions context as “weaving” (“text” from Latin to weave, *texere*), reminding us that when different elements, different threads, combine, they recreate and refashion the system of which they are a part: creating new patterns, in concert, unknown up to that point in time. Without an appreciation of the fact that all parts of a system help define all other parts of that same system, we lose the dialogic and intersubjective nature of human contextual activity. The ongoing constructive work of assembling the system is achieved through practices whose descriptions are becoming central in educational and psychological research (Chaiklin & Lave, 1996; Lave, 1993; Wenger, 1998).

*Correspondence to: Thomas P. Gumpel, School of Education, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 91905, Israel.
E-mail: tom.gumpel@mail.huji.ac.il

Received 19 February 2013; Accepted 12 November 2013

DOI: 10.1002/ab.21515

Published online 22 January 2014 in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com).

This concept of practice avoids the pitfalls of cognitive approaches to educational and psychological analyses, as would be the case, for example, when the student participating in school bullying is viewed as “possessing” or “being possessed by” a given participant role or character trait (Bekerman & Tatar, 2005). We thus assume that the close study of social practices in context is critically important in understanding the complexities of social activity as it is shaped in real life situations (Lave & Wenger, 1991). With the concept of practices, we address the production and reproduction of specific ways of engaging in the world and we point to the need to become concerned with the ways by which people in action coordinate their activities and relationships in real-life settings, thereby producing a variety of meanings and interpretations. It is through participation in these practices that individuals learn, become, constitute, and sustain the world we all inhabit.

School Bullying

Recent research has refined our understanding of the school bully–victim dyad, widening it to include different participants (Gumpel & Sutherland, 2010; Salmivalli, 2010; Schwartz, 2000) in a dynamic group process where these roles (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003; Salmivalli, 2010) function within different situations and contexts (Rose, Espelage, Aragon, & Elliott, 2011), with different goals (Farmer, Lane, Lee, Hamm, & Lambert, 2012), and different motivations (Rose & Espelage, 2012). Bullying is differentiated from generalized aggression and defined by three specific characteristics (Olweus, 2013): it is intentional, repetitive, and includes a power imbalance. Participant roles are multi-dimensional constructs, intersecting with dispositional and situational factors which may include one’s propensity to be a bully or victim (Gumpel & Sutherland, 2010), one’s social status and isolation (Coie & Dodge, 1983; Coie, Dodge, & Kupersmidt, 1990; Farmer & Hollowell, 1994), one’s ability to be empathic (Gini, 2006; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoè, 2007), one’s level of emotional arousal (Spielberger, 1988), one’s Belief in a Just World (BJW, Lipkus, 1991), and the degree to which one’s behavior is moderated by moral engagement (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Situational factors also influence participant roles. On the structural level, organizational health (Hoy & Barnes, 1997) and classroom management techniques (Roland & Galloway, 2002) all influence the social structure of the class and school and hence the frequency and nature of school bullying. On the classroom social level, social norms and cohesion can exacerbate or depress bullying and aggression (Pellegrini et al., 2010; Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012; Salmivalli, 2010). Situational determinants of behavior

may be global and fixed (such as school structures, Hoy & Barnes, 1997), but may also be highly situationally specific and dependent on the vagaries of specific social interactions (Zimbardo, 2004, 2006).

Research has found a strong link between social status, aggression and bullying (Farmer, 2000). Schools, as primary vehicles for youth to construct their social identities vis-à-vis their peers, are socially dynamic environments where students jockey to achieve and maintain social status through their affiliations and peer alliances and avoid low status and peer rejection and the myriad of risk factors associated with such rejection (Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, & Williams, 1990; Coie, 1990). Life in the classroom can contribute to aggressive and disruptive behaviors as a result of the constant struggle to achieve and maintain status (Roland & Galloway, 2002). For instance, primarily among boys, social status has been linked to rebelliousness, power, and coercion (Coie, 1990; Pepler, Jiang, Craig, & Connolly, 2008) and bullies have been associated with social dominance (Olweus, 1993; Pepler et al., 2008; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999).

Aggression and academic achievement are also linked (Nirel & Saltzman, 1999); delinquent behaviors, peer affiliations, and academic failure correlate with other salient risk factors in adolescence to explain school failure (Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2002; Burkard & Knox, 2004; Hinshaw & Melnick, 1992) and may cause, and be caused by, poor social status as a result of chronic academic underachievement (Gini et al., 2007). Risk associated with low academic achievement coupled with behavioral problems also correlates with a variety of related developmental and behavioral sequelae such as anti-social behaviors, psychiatric disorders, and school drop-out (Olweus, 1978), often leading to long-term pathology.

Participant Roles

Four basic participant roles have been identified as being involved in physical and relational bullying (Gumpel, 2008; Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009): pure bullies, pure victims, provocative-victims, and bystanders. Salmivalli and colleagues (Salmivalli, 1999, 2010; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996) expanded these to seven roles, through the addition of the bully assistant, the bully reinforcer, and the defender (Salmivalli, 2010). The amount of overlap between these roles remains unclear. It appears that children are able to fulfill multiple roles in the bully/victim dynamic, with some roles being clear and easily distinguishable and other roles being less clear (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). However, little is known regarding whether these roles are stable or fluid over time.

Bully characteristics. Much of the research on school bullies has focused on direct physical or relational bullying and aggression involving between 7% and 15% of the school population (Dodge & Schwartz, 1997; Gumpel, 2008). These children exhibit “pure” instrumental and externalizing behaviors and are “pure bullies,” “pure aggressors,” or “nonvictimized bullies” (Salmivalli, 2010), are at-risk for delinquency and later incarceration (Olweus, 1993), and generally are characterized by anti-social behaviors often directed towards other children. Aggressors who are bullies are commonly characterized by their physical (primarily among boys) or social dominance (primarily among girls).

Victim characteristics. “Pure” victims comprise between 10% and 20% of children in schools (Gumpel, 2008) and are at risk for a myriad of internalizing problems, specifically for depression and suicidal ideation (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997). The typical “passive,” “pure,” or “non-bullying” victim (Champion, Vernberg, & Shipman, 2003; Griffin & Gross, 2004) is generally physically weak and anxious (Olweus, 1993), seldom if ever attempts to dominate others, has low self-esteem (Slee & Rigby, 1993), is unassertive and typically withdraws or feels distressed when bullied (Olweus, 1991; Perry, Perry, & Boldizar, 1990). These victims perceive themselves as failures, unintelligent, shy, and unattractive (O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001) and often possess low social status and are lonely and rejected (Olweus, 1993; Twemlow, Sacco, & Williams, 1996); they have a negative opinion regarding the use of physically or socially coercive methods to achieve their aims (Olweus, 1993) and often project their physical and social inferiority and unwillingness to defend themselves (Hanish & Guerra, 2000).

Provocative-victim characteristics. The literature also presents a different type of victim: the reactive provocative-victim (Griffin & Gross, 2004) or the bully-victim (Salmivalli, 2010). This group is typically smaller than the pure victim group (Gumpel, 2008), and its members are characterized as both anxious and having a propensity for reactive aggressive behavior, while being at risk for a variety of externalizing behaviors (Bukowski & Sippola, 2001; Pellegrini, 1998) and present qualitatively different behaviors from either pure aggressors or pure victims (Unnever, 2005). The provocative-victim’s reactive aggression is a response to real or perceived provocations and is characterized by high emotional arousal and lessened self-control. These children often exhibit provocative behaviors and set their immediate social environment “on edge,” and they tend to be impulsive (Bukowski & Sippola, 2001; Schwartz, 2000) and provoke aggressive responses from others (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Olweus, 1993). Similarly to other victims,

their social status is low and their social networks are shallow and are composed primarily of other similarly aggressive children (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Schwartz, 2000).

Bystander/outsider. Not all of the participants in the bully/victim dynamic take an agentic role in the persecution of a victim. The literature identifies the heterogeneous group of bystanders, observers, or outsiders which may encompass as much as 85% of children (Gumpel, 2008; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Little is known about this group; however, the large number of youth in this category belies the supposition that there are several subgroups of bystanders. For instance, Stueve et al. (2006) differentiated between bystanders and the uninvolved (i.e., between children who know about bullying and decline to be involved, either as an assistant or defender, and those who are unaware of the occurrence of bullying interactions).

Other participant roles have been identified as well. Salmivalli (1999, 2010) has identified the bully assistant, the bully reinforcer, and the defender, with each fulfilling a supporting role in the bully/victim dynamic. It appears that these roles may be fluid with different participants fulfilling different roles at different times, and that this fluidity may influence the bully/victim encounters and their outcomes. Dispositional factors can explain some individual or group aggressive or submissive behavior; however, situational determinants (Zimbardo, 2004) appear also to be salient in explaining and predicting how these dispositional factors are activated or suppressed. As each person has differing goals and motivations, different contexts may have different activating potentials to induce either aggressive or defending behavior (Staub, 2003).

The increasing focus in the literature on differing participant roles sees these roles as primarily stable (Salmivalli, 2010). By relying on positivist research paradigms and survey data to take a static “snapshot” of participant roles, they do appear, indeed, to be quite stable. Bullying and aggression have received increased attention among qualitative researchers (Aasebø, 2011; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003; Thornberg, 2011; Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson, 2012) where the focus shifts from findings which are generalized to a larger sample or population, to an in-depth understanding based on individual contexts. Research methodologies have varied from observational studies using behavioral coding (e.g., Boulton, 1999; Menesini, Melan, & Pignatti, 2000) to interview data (Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003) to an ethnography (Aasebø, 2011). Recent research suggests that suppositions of the stability of participant roles may not be supported (Dempsey, Fireman, & Wang, 2006). Situational influences may cause different typologies to vary contextually in

accordance with rapidly shifting social goals, risks, and motivations. For instance, it may be that bystanders and outsiders also assume the role of the bully's assistant or reinforcer by their unwillingness to get involved or that some bully assistants may assume the role of the bystander while at other times they may participate as bully reinforcers or even victim defenders. Social interactions are dynamic and change rapidly, where each interaction has its own actors with multiple covert and overt motivations and goals. These rapidly changing interactions appear to interact with dispositional variables to predict pro- and anti-social behavior.

In this ethnography, we had four primary aims. We attempted to ascertain whether we could identify and expand our understanding of participant roles through observational analysis (Aim I). We were interested in understanding how participants understood these different participant roles and their causes, and how they relate to the social and organizational structure of the group (Aim II). Through the examination of classroom social and organizational structures, we were interested in further understanding how dispositional (i.e., personality traits) interact with situational variables (i.e., groupings and teachers) to exacerbate or depress bullying episodes (Aim III). Further, through extended observations, we attempted to investigate how stable these participant roles are between and within bullying episodes (Aim IV). We approached these aims using a combination of inductive (bottom-up) and deductive (top-down) approaches. Our analyses were based on previous positivistic research on participant roles; however, we allowed the data to lead us to create new meanings based on our observations and interviews. Qualitative research is appropriate for studying these global processes where a positivist approach may not yield sufficient information on the dynamic interpersonal relationships.

METHODS

The findings reported here are based on data gathered in the context of an ethnographic study undertaken in 2011 in one classroom within a general education comprehensive (middle and high school) school. The "Aviv" school is a recognized state school under the auspices of the Israeli Ministry of Education and is located in the heart of a major metropolitan area in a large population center in Israel and whose catchment area includes upper-, middle-, and low-income areas (the name of the school, pupils, and teachers are pseudonyms). Approximately 1,050 students attend the school, divided into six grade levels (7th to 12th, ages 13–18), with classrooms of approximately 35 students per class or approximately 175 students per grade level. Additionally, in the Aviv school, there are four remedial or special

education classrooms, with approximately 20 students per class.

We explored what was happening in our target class by observing who students interacted with, about what, in which ways, for what purposes, and with which outcomes (Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, & Green, 2000). In the context of this study, and in line with traditional ethnographic approaches, we examined the classroom activities in general, focusing on what participants see as bullying, victimization, and the risk factors associated with these roles, while trying to anchor these understandings in actual classroom events. In particular, we examined what is constructed in the moment-by-moment interactions among members of the classroom; and the ways in which social understanding were linked to students' bullying and victimization in subsequent events.

Sources of Observations

The setting was a remedial 10th grade classroom (aged 15–16 years) of 20 students (12 boys and 8 girls) for under-achieving high school students. In the Israeli school system, this system is known as the "Mabar" track (Mabar is an acronym in Hebrew for "Regular Matriculation Track," or *Maslul Bagrut Ragi*) and is designed for students who experience difficulty in the larger general education framework and are at-risk for dropping-out or not completing their high school matriculation; all students in this program receive extensive remedial support. Tenth grade is an important age in mid-adolescence where youth are typically reflective and verbal. The first and second authors are experienced middle and high school teachers; the second author is a teacher in a similar remedial classroom of 10th graders in a different school. Struggling students may or may not have been diagnosed with learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders. In this setting, as is standard practice in the Israeli educational system, pupils remain together throughout the school day, with teachers changing according to the subject matter. Each class has a homeroom teacher who is in charge of all bureaucratic aspects of the class and two to three teachers throughout the day; during all lessons, only one teacher is present in the classroom. Three principal teachers were observed; all three teachers had secondary school teaching credentials and at least a BA in their respective field. Mr. Danny was the homeroom and civics teacher, Ms. Dina taught literature and language arts, and Ms. Karen taught history and social studies.

We focused on this type of remedial class for two reasons. First, researchers have described the link between academic achievement and aggression; these

remedial classes are characterized by high frequencies of aggressive and bullying behaviors (Farmer, 2000; Farmer et al., 2003; Farmer & Hollowell, 1994). Secondly, the smaller number of students in this type of class would allow us to observe and comprehensively map class interactions as they move and shift. After receiving permission from the university IRB, permission was received from the Ministry of Education, the principal of the participating school, the teachers and parents of each participating student, and each student. Active informed consent was solicited via a series of letters sent home with the pupils. Consent was received for all participants. Participants received no compensation for their participation, and could cease their participation at any time without consequence; none chose to do so.

Data Collection Procedures

After exploratory observations were conducted in several classes, the specific remedial class was chosen because it satisfied four conditions: (a) a clear baseline of frequent bullying and coercive behavior was observable, (b) the age range of the participants was appropriate to conduct semi-structured and in-depth interviews, (c) the students enrolled in this classroom did not exhibit pathological destructive behavior disorders, and (d) the teaching staff allowed the ethnographer free access to all formal and informal classroom events. This open access allowed the researcher to conduct many serendipitous discussions with the participants. After identifying the class, the primary data collection phase commenced and lasted for 6 months. Observations were conducted on different days, at different times, in and out of the classroom, in different classrooms and with different teachers.

We conducted our research using a variety of qualitative methods, including observations and in-depth interviews. Throughout our research, we gathered over 250 hr of classroom observations recorded extensively in detailed field notes and approximately 40 hr of audio-recorded interviews with teachers and students; as well, we recorded dozens of curricular and extracurricular special school events—ceremonies, outings, and so on. All data were collected by the second author; debriefing with the first and third author took place two to three times each week during the observation stage and daily during the interview phase of data collection. For audio recordings, we placed a small digital recorder on a chair next to the interviewer. Interviewees were selected based on their frequent involvement in a variety of high-risk behaviors as bullies, victims, provocative-victims, or bystanders (Gumpel, 2008), by their participation in secondary roles (outsiders, bully assistants, or bully reinforcers), and by their presence in one of the two

sub-types of bullying behaviors (physical and relational). The semi-structured interviews adhered to principles of ethnographic and qualitative research in which the interviewer focused on salient and relevant events while allowing the interviewee to tell and expand upon his or her story without being obligated to link the interviews with a research agenda. All interviews began with a series of general questions (e.g., “what’s your favorite subject at school?”), followed by a series of focused questions on the participants’ social life at school (e.g., “do you have friends at school? Tell me about them”). After developing a rapport with the interviewee, students were asked about specific events in which they were involved (e.g., “do you remember the incident when ...”). Participants were encouraged to discuss themselves as well as their fellow classmates. Interviews were conducted during class time (with the teacher’s permission) and averaged approximately 90 min in length and were conducted in a separate room. Participants were given the option to decline to be interviewed, or to stop the interview at any time; none did. Follow-up interviews were held with those participants who wished to continue to discuss these events or when the researchers realized more information was needed. All audio recordings were transcribed for analysis. Because of the attempt to preserve the authenticity of the language, in the extracts, the translation contains some phrases which may seem awkward in English.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed according to conventional qualitative methods (Mason, 1996; Silverman, 2006). We monitored our interpretative efforts through peer debriefing, paying special attention to the ways in which, we as researchers, allowed or did not allow for the coding to be influenced by our prior expectations or theoretical inclinations, and negative case analysis was used to verify the proposed hypotheses. We analyzed the data using an iterative process of coding and code refinement while looking for patterns and thematic issues of relevance using data-driven inductive reasoning in our search for patterns of behaviors as well as theory-driven deductive reasoning as we attempted to identify and understand participant roles previously identified in the literature.

Data analysis was conducted on three levels. The first level of analysis involved a daily analysis of the extensive field notes and analysis of the recorded events and central themes as well as the rhetorical features (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004) of the social interactions between participants. Field notes included detailed descriptions of salient events alongside initial interpretations of those events analyzed. Events were further analyzed at the

conclusion of the observation and organized into units of “understanding” (units converging into unified concepts) and “explanation” (understanding of those units in their context). Data analysis was initially performed on overt content which was recorded during observations, and later on meaning based in the social context. The second level of analysis involved sorting and interpreting central themes of interviews and identifying the different voices apparent in each interview. Analyzing the interviews focused on meaningful schemata and themes which were relevant to this research; schemata and themes were coded to allow for analysis at a later date. The third level of analysis entailed the analysis of each of the “stories” which surfaced during the second part of the research (i.e., the behavioral observations and the interviews) as larger major themes (Spradley, 1980).

In cases in which interpretations were not well aligned, consensus was reached following thorough discussions (Glassner & Loughlin, 1987). Moreover, and in line with naturalistic critical perspectives (Carspecken, 1995), the final coding scheme was further checked for validity and reliability through member checks (presenting interpretations to participants). For example, a comparison of two separate incidents involving Yuval’s (female) participation in teasing was interpreted by one observer as a byproduct of the different participants present (i.e., whether or not there was an audience present and who was in that audience) and by the other ethnographer as being a result of Yuval’s belief in a just world (Fox, Elder, Gater, & Johnson, 2010; Lipkus, 1991). Following this debate between the researchers, Yuval was consulted and it was found that she teased Gilad because she thought that he could control his behavior, yet refused to do so, and so should be “punished.” In the second incident, Yuval felt that Gilad’s learning difficulties precluded his understanding, and hence his questions, and so it would be “unfair” to punish him for something over which he had no control (Correia & Dalbert, 2008; Correia, Vala, & Aguiar, 2007). By using Yuval’s interpretation of events, we were able to further ensure the validity of our interpretations of events.

RESULTS

We present, herein, an analysis of participant roles (Aim I) as well as their meaning as described by the participants (Aim II). An analysis of some structural components (Aim III) will be used to describe and analyze the fluidity of participant roles (Aim IV).

Participant Roles (Aim I and II)

Aggressive bully. Almost immediately after beginning observations in the classroom, the school yard, and during free periods, it was possible to identify Roy

and Doron (males) as pure bullies, albeit of different types. They used physical and relational aggression systematically against weaker students in their class and at no time in our observations did we see Roy or Doron as victims of another pupil’s directed aggression. One of the most common victims of Roy’s wrath was Benny, a young male in the same class. Roy would often terrorize and humiliate Benny, sometimes in group settings, and sometimes when alone with him.

During one observation, before the beginning of class, Benny was sitting alone in the room. Roy entered the classroom and walked directly up to Benny and head-butted him. It was apparent to the observer that this was painful for Benny; however, he smiled sheepishly. Roy reached out and grabbed Benny’s water bottle from his desk and took a long gulp, much to Benny’s dismay. Benny attempted to meekly wrest the bottle away from Roy, to no avail. Finally, Benny meekly said: “Take a last gulp, and that’s it.”

During an interview, Doron described himself using terms indicative of being a pure bully.

Interviewer: *Who in the class routinely hits or slaps you?*

Doron: *Me??* [speaking in elevated tones]

Interviewer: *Yes*

Doron: *Nobody*

Interviewer: *And who do you routinely hit?*

Doron: *Benny, I hit him a lot and all the time.*

It was clear that Roy and Doron were the absolute and undisputed leaders of the class as well as the primary decision makers and managers of group events. Roy was in charge of managing many social interactions, he initiated them, decided when they would begin and end, and decided who would participate or be excluded. As a “successful bully,” Roy was able to get others to do his bidding. Roy explained:

What happens in class is, I decide who to make fun of in that lesson. It can be anyone who pissed me off during the last break, or simply someone that just generally pisses me off. And then I make a sign to Assaf [male] or to Doron, and then they flow with me and cooperate with me in teasing a specific kid. They do what I tell them.

During an interview, Doron was very clear regarding his role as the undisputed leader and the heightened status it supplies. In describing why Benny must put up with his constant tormenting, Doron explains: “the respect I get is greater than his [in an increasingly loud voice]—get it? And also my self-confidence, so he can’t just come up to me and say to me ... get it?”

It was apparent that Roy was concerned with his social status, had a positive attitude toward the use of physical violence to enhance or protect it, and had a clear understanding of how to manipulate a social situation to increase his status. Roy's need to defend his social status is evident in the two following examples. In the first example, Roy was laughed at by a fellow student of lower social status; in the second case, Roy defended his honor after his girlfriend was "stolen" from him. Despite the fact that in both cases Roy was, ostensibly, reacting to others' lack of deference to his dominance, he reacted quickly, instrumentally, and violently in order to (re) assert his power and status. In the first typical event, Roy defends his status during an incident in a lesson when the students received their graded exams, Roy received a 36.

Roy crumbles up the exam and throws it on the floor, kicking a chair.

Assaf to Roy [sarcastically]: *Don't worry, next time [laughs]*

Roy to Assaf: *Shut your mouth or I'll shut it for you [Assaf continues to laugh]*

Roy gets up and starts punching Assaf, who fights back. Roy picks up a chair to throw at Assaf. The teacher (Ms. Dina) stands between them, Roy storms out of the room with a torn shirt and red-faced.

In the second example, Roy described his willingness to use physical coercion to achieve his aims. In describing how he took revenge on another boy who "stole" his girlfriend, Roy describes how he invited the other boy to a club at night in order to "bury the hatchet"

I led him to the bathroom in the club, pretending that I wanted to make amends. He knew that I was angry because he took Shirley [his girlfriend]. As soon as we entered the bathroom, I slammed my fist in his face with a set of brass knuckles I hid in my pants. There was so much blood, you wouldn't believe it.

Both Roy and Doron justified their violent behavior, often using expressions such as: "he deserves it," "it was just a joke," or "that's just the way the world is."

Bully manager. Aside from his role as a pure bully, we also observed the bully's secondary role as class manager; we introduce the term "bully-manager" to define this extended role. Roy not only managed social activities, but managed academic activities as well. At times he even ran lessons or parts of them. Often, Roy would decide for the teacher which topics would be

taught, at what pace, using which techniques, and when the lesson would commence or terminate. For instance, in the first classroom observation, Roy decided (and not the teacher) when the lesson was over.

One day, at 1:49, Roy announced: "*Let's go. The lesson is over!*" and gathered his belongings and put them in his backpack and stood up. Despite the fact that 11 minutes remained in the lesson, all of the other pupils subsequently stood and collected and packed up their belongings, imitating Roy. As pupils began to mill about, waiting for the bell, Roy looked at the researcher and said: "*It was interesting, right? This is a class of retards*" and walked out of the class, followed by other pupils. The teacher, Ms. Dina, watched Roy without responding. When the last pupil left the room (early), Ms. Dina gathered her belongings and also left the room and said to the ethnographer "*it's OK, they had a hard day.*"

Here, Roy demonstrates his power in two ways: first by making a procedural decision as to when the lesson will be over (through his early dismissal of the class) and secondly by showing the researcher that they have a special bond, and that he can supply her with important "material" for study.

This observation of Roy as an initiator and decision maker for both the pupils and the teacher was common, especially with one specific teacher, Ms. Dina. As observations progressed, it became clear that if Roy was academically engaged and interested in the lesson, the lesson would progress according to the teacher's plan. However, if Roy was distracted or disinterested, the lesson would be derailed through incessant noise, chaos, and discipline problems as the teacher invested most of her energies in restoring order. During many lessons, Roy's agitation was apparent, along with his disruptive influence on the entire class's behavior. At times, Roy would be explicit in describing his intention to determine how the class would progress (four separate examples):

Vered! [researcher] Today is going to be a mess!
Wait and see! You'll have a lot to write about today!

Vered! It's good that you came today, I'm in a combative mood and we're going to have a 'good time' with Ms. Dina

Today I feel like learning something; it's going to be a great class. Guys! Today we study! I came motivated

Vered, today you won't be able to recognize the class.

Roy's leadership role was contextually specific as is apparent through his differential behaviors in different contexts. In another class, with a different teacher, Ms. Karen, Roy's behavior was consistently passive and submissive. For instance, during one of Ms. Karen's lessons, Roy attempted to initiate a group-wide disruption. Ms. Karen immediately turned to Roy, reprimanded him, and firmly told him to sit quietly; Roy immediately acquiesced.

Victims. It is clear that Benny was the pure victim in the classroom. We never once observed him standing up to, or coercing, another pupil; he was consistently the victim of tormenting by others, as is clear in the water-bottle episode, above. Other pupils also saw Benny as the perennial victim. For instance, in the interview (described above) with Yuval, she described Doron's tormenting of Benny: "Doron and Assaf [male] are always putting down other kids in the class, for example Benny, who is a midget and a strange kid. He's really strange."

By classifying Benny as "strange," Yuval was describing him as different and not part of her clique. It was clear that Benny had low social status and was seen as part of an out-group (i.e., not part of Yuval's social circle), exposing him to ridicule by other students. For instance, during an interview, Doron was asked why Benny is always teased for comments and questions which are also made by other children in the class, he simply replies: "Because Benny is not one of the gang."

Gilad (male) often appeared as a provocative-victim. Like Benny, Gilad was often a victim of physical, verbal, and relational violence at the hands of other members of his class (and not only the bullies) and subject to curses, having rumors spread about him, social ostracization, and being the butt of malicious pranks (e.g., having things thrown at him, having water sprayed at him, having his personal belongings taken from him without permission). However, unlike Benny, Gilad also engaged in high-frequency provocative behaviors.

During an exceptionally hot day, students were working relatively quietly in their air-conditioned classroom. Suddenly Gilad stood up, walked to the air conditioner while at the same time pupils begin to shout at him not to touch the dials. Gilad turned off the air conditioner and returned to his seat. Other pupils in the classroom shouted at him: "*what did you do that for?*" Doron and Roy both got up and slapped him on the head. Roy shouted at Gilad: "*If you touch the air-conditioner again, I'll break both your hands*" and turned the air conditioner back on. Several minutes later, Gilad stood up and once again turned off the air conditioner, whereupon he was set upon by both Doron and Roy. This

episode repeated itself several times during the same lesson.

During his interview, Doron also described the provocative nature of Gilad's behavior: "For instance, once Gilad sat like this [he slumped in his chair] and Roy came up from behind and hit him on his head. Gilad got up and hit him back! Roy shouted at him: 'What the Hell? What are you doing?'" In this situation, Gilad's attempt to stand up for himself was seen as a provocation, as he did not assume the submissive posture such as that taken by Benny. Gilad often engaged in a large variety of "provocative" behaviors (e.g., copying school work from the pure bully, Roy, which simply got him into more trouble with Roy and the other bullies); and so, in the eyes of some of his classmates he "got what he deserved."

Other roles. We observed a small group of classmates who were often present during bullying incidents, yet showed no direct or indirect involvement, even appearing at times to be unaware of these incidents. For instance, despite the fact that we observed Amit (female) during many violent incidents, we never observed her becoming involved or even acknowledging these events. Indeed, despite the fact that the classroom often appeared to be quite violent, as was evident from our field notes, Amit believed that the violence was limited to the beginning of the school year.

There doesn't appear to be a lot of physical violence in the class, I think ... sometimes Roy goes nuts about someone and everybody is alarmed! He can be really scary when he gets agitated! Doron is also that way. There were a few violent incidents like that in the class, mostly at the beginning of the school year. For instance, I remember once when Roy got angry at Assaf because Assaf teased him on purpose. It was really scary. Serious punching! There were also tables and chairs involved [incident mentioned earlier] during the middle of class. The teacher intervened and Roy was suspended. But that's rare now."

Two other students in the class also appeared to be primarily bystanders. We rarely observed Adí or Orelle (both girls) directly interacting with anyone in the class, they tended to associate only with one another and seemed to have low social status among the other students in the class. It may be, however, that their self-imposed isolation from the rough and tumble classroom was an adaptive strategy for self-protection and that their lack of direct involvement was a result of their low social status and their fear of reprisals. Their status as outsiders was described by Amit:

Adi and Orelle don't have any friends in the class and are not really involved with all of the jokes and the conversations we are all having with each other; however, they are both very good friends with each other and are always together. Nobody ever bothers them; they're not part of the group.

The pure bully often recruited assistance from his cronies. For instance, in this classroom Roy routinely pressed some of his fellow students into acting as proxy bullies. One such example is Assaf. During our interviews, we found that Roy was aware of his assistant and of his efforts to get him involved in the bullying dynamic. Recruiting the assistant was observed in the following situation:

Mr. Danny to Shahar (male): *Shahar, leave the class!*
Shahar to Mr. Danny: *Why, I didn't do anything!*

Roy to Shahar: *Shahar shut your mouth! You spoke during class so get out!*

Shahar to Roy: *Mind your own business! It's between the teacher and me.*

Assaf to Shahar: *Don't tell Roy to mind his own business. It's his right! You are bothering me and I can't concentrate during class. The teacher told you to get out, so get out!*

Roy to Shahar: *Damn, Shahar, get out! You're holding us all back, we want to learn.*

Mr. Danny gets involved. Shahar looks at the teacher and Roy, and leaves the class while cursing.

Roy and Assaf exchange smiles and give each other high fives.

This incident also exemplifies some of the complexity in Assaf's and Roy's behavior. While acting as the teacher's enforcer, Roy appears to be working on two fronts: on the one hand he is showing his teacher-supported dominance over Shahar, while at the same time he is being cooperative with the teacher who (de facto) has higher status. Assaf is doing Roy's bidding while at the same time is also currying favor with Mr. Danny.

Assistants also seem to be differentiated from the pure bully by their level of anxiety. Whereas during his interview, Roy and Doron did not describe anxiety or qualms related to their coercive power relationships with others, Assaf, described his anxiety about getting caught tormenting another pupil. Interestingly, he failed to show any remorse regarding the suffering he caused to his victims.

Structure and Classroom Management Techniques (Aim III)

It was clear from our observations that there were few overtly aggressive episodes in Ms. Karen's classes

and many such interactions during Ms. Dina's classes. Ms. Karen's history classes were well structured and organized, and clearly emphasized classroom order and discipline. Before beginning every class, Ms. Karen would write on the blackboard in the front of the class that day's lesson plan. Upon entering the classroom, the pupils would stand until they received her permission to be seated. Ms. Karen forbade any eating or drinking during her classes and requests to go to the bathroom (or any other requests) were mostly denied. Students were permitted to ask questions only during the last 10 min of the period, and despite allowing pupils to pick their own seating arrangements, she frequently rearranged them. During the interviews, interviewees said that they feared Ms. Karen's harsh reactions: "She calls parents over any little thing" (Doron), or "Ms. Karen immediately speaks with the homeroom teacher, who then calls the parents" (Assaf). Even Roy, the unabashed and unafraid leader of Ms. Dina's class, was submissive and well behaved in Ms. Karen's classes. In one incident when he was caught cheating during an exam, Roy pleaded with Ms. Karen not to be punished. It is unclear whether Roy was fearful of Ms. Karen's reaction to his cheating, or whether his submissive behavior was feigned due to his understanding of Ms. Karen's higher status and power. During his interview, when asked if there were teachers who he was afraid of, Roy emphatically replied: "NO! What can they do to me? I'm not afraid of anyone!"

On the other hand, Ms. Dina's lessons were chaotic. There were no clear behavioral boundaries set by the teacher, and so each pupil set his or her own rules. It was common to see pupils eating and drinking during class and chatting with one another about irrelevant topics. Classroom discussions were spontaneous and random. When a pupil would begin a discussion, ask or answer a question or make a comment, he or she would do so at any time during the lesson and not as a result of an interaction with the teacher. Pupils entered and left the classroom on their own volition, with a steady stream of traffic constantly entering and leaving. This allowed for a certain number of pupils, at any given time, being outside in the school yard, sometimes for extended periods of time, and often for the entire lesson.

It was clear from the observations that when the students were in a structured, organized, and predictable lesson with a focus on discipline; there were also fewer coercive and aggressive interactions between the pupils. Ms. Karen's lessons began and ended on time, and we often observed her suppressing aggressive behavior through statements such as "Be quiet and sit down!" We recorded no overt altercations in Ms. Karen's classes throughout the year, whereas Ms.

Dina's classes were replete with such events. From our observations we also found that time is an important situational influence on coercive relationships. Approximately 10 min before each class began we were able to observe many such interactions. Students in the class tended to mill about in the classroom before the bell rang (a second group tended to enter the classroom with the teacher). During these unstructured break times, students sat together, chatted, and ate. In many of these 10-min periods, we were able to observe fist fights involving the throwing of furniture, stealing another student's food, spraying of water, cursing, teasing, and name calling.

In an attempt to separate the effects of class times from teaching style, we observed history, grammar, and literature lessons on different days and at different periods of the day (literature and grammar were in first period on Mondays and in last period on Wednesdays; history was in third period on Tuesdays and in last period on Thursdays). After approximately 30 hr of observations of different periods and the two different subject areas, it became clear that we could predict pupil behavior as a function of class period and teacher.

Observing different teachers was instrumental in understanding the contextual specificity caused by individual teachers. From the observations we could see the ability of different teachers to influence the social structure of the classroom as well as how they moderated behaviors and the resulting social roles. The teacher fulfilled an instrumental and central role in the classroom social structure. It was also clear that often the teacher worked to enhance her own social status. Ms. Dina moderated and reinforced Roy's behavior as a class manager and bully and directly and indirectly reinforced these behaviors and empowered aggressive and coercive behaviors. For instance, in many instances during altercations between a bully and another student, Ms. Dina would form an alliance with the class bullies and thus reinforce their behaviors.

Ms. Dina to Gilad: *You are not sitting like a student. Sit correctly!*

Roy to Gilad: *Yeah! And you've also got your telephone in your hand!* [shouting and staring at Gilad]

Gilad immediately adjusts his posture and puts his cell phone on the desk and looks at Roy, as if to ask for acknowledgement.

Roy to Ms. Dina: *Ms. Dina, I think that you need to write a referral to the principal for Gilad's disturbance! He's not working!*

Doron shouts at Gilad: *Shut your mouth. I'll kill you! Stop bothering already!*

Ms. Dina sent a referral slip to the principal.

Shifting Roles (Aim IV)

Different students took on the role of the bully reinforcer as they reinforced Roy and Doron's behavior. Adí and Orelle, most often the uninvolved bystanders, could, in different situations also function in a different role. Both girls could also reinforce the bully, depending on the circumstances. In a typical episode, Roy convinced the teacher (Ms. Dina) to send Gilad out of the room. Both Adí and Orelle actively intervened in the encounter and encouraged Roy to exercise his power.

Ms. Dina to Gilad: *Gilad, leave the room, now!*

Orelle and Adí [sitting next to the door] giggle loudly while pointing to Gilad and saying in an easily heard voice: *ha ha, poor guy. Gilad, it's really hot outside. Poor guy, but he deserves it. Good for Roy!*

A few minutes later, Gilad re-enters the classroom while the teacher (and Roy) are not watching.

Adí and Orelle watch him, Adí: *Gilad, did someone give you permission to enter the room?*

Adí looks at Roy: *Roy, is he allowed to come back? He didn't ask permission.*

Yuval's behavior is an example of the ability of participants to assume different roles, dependent on the situation. During the water-bottle episode, Roy and Benny were not alone in the classroom during the break, other students were there. Yuval and another girl, Amit, observed the incidence without getting involved. Yuval in describing her distain for Benny, felt no compunction about not getting involved.

Participant behaviors were not fixed or stable between episodes. For instance, in the following example, Yuval changes roles, from being a bystander and onlooker to being a defender:

During a grammar lessons, Benny asked Ms. Dina a question about grammar.

Dor: *Ms. Dina, why is this, like this?*

Roy [shouting at Benny]: *You moron. Idiot. Stupid and ugly.*

Yuval: *What's wrong with you? Leave him alone!*

During the interview, when asked about this incident, Yuval stated that she defended Gilad because he was "asking questions about things he didn't understand... it's not his fault." In other words: he was not "getting what he deserved."

Participant roles did not shift only according to different situations; we were able to observe the same participant assuming different roles within the same episode. Again, an excellent example is provided by

Yuval. During a lesson, Roy was consistently teasing Gilad: ridiculing his teeth, taking and stealing pens and pencils from, and spraying him with water.

Yuval is sitting next to Roy and grabs his hand: *I'm dying of laughter. I have a stomach ache from laughing so much.*

As the teacher explains something, Gilad asks a question.

Roy (screaming): *What are you? An idiot? She just explained that; are you doing this on purpose or are you just stupid?*

The class is suddenly quiet. Gilad appears to be on the verge of crying.

Yuval to Roy (in a soft voice): *Enough, leave him alone, you went too far.*

Roy (shouting): *He needs to shut-up. I can't take him anymore.*

Yuval (in a whisper to Roy): *He's going to cry. Enough!*

In this episode, Yuval switches roles from the bully reinforcer to the defender. Interestingly, her confrontation with Roy was low-key as she spoke with him in a whisper.

DISCUSSION

This research had four primary goals. First, an ethnographic approach was used to determine whether participant roles, identified in previous questionnaire-based research (e.g., Gumpel, 2008), could be observed by classroom observations (Aim I). We were able to identify previously identified participant roles and found that the pure bully also exerted control over other aspects of the classroom and acted as a *bully manager*. Bully reinforcers and assistants were observed as well as bystanders; although it appears that bystanders also served as a support for the bully.

Through our recording of a large number of violent and bullying incidents, it soon became apparent that at the top of the class social structure, the bullies were most dominant (e.g., Roy and Doron). However, we were clearly able to observe that teachers also played an integral role in that social structure. At times and in certain contexts, it appeared that the student bully was socially dominant, where at other times, it appeared that the teacher was the socially dominant actor either by suppressing or encouraging coercive behavior and possibly by allowing the bully to bully. By observing the cooperation and independence between these actors, we are able to expand on the *bully* versus *assistant bully* dichotomy (Salmivalli, 1999, 2010). Among the students, clearly, one of these boys was the undisputed leader of the group. Roy was able to command both

respect and obedience from most other pupils. Roy was a *pure bully* (Gumpel, 2008; Schwartz, 2000); however, Doron could either function as a pure bully or as one of the *assistants of the bully* with Assaf (Salmivalli, 1999, 2010), depending on the specific social exigencies. Roy was clearly a ringleader bully (Stellwagen & Kerig, 2012), whereas Doron was not.

Participants were able to describe these roles and offer insights into how these roles reflect the social structure of the classroom (Aim II). Aggressors and bystanders see victims, both pure and provocative, as members of an out-group (Correia & Dalbert, 2007; Correia et al., 2007) who "got what they deserved" (Olweus, 1978). Indeed, Correia et al. (2007) showed that Belief in a Just World (BJW) mediates whether the bystander will blame the victim for his or her victimization. In other words, if the bystander believes that the victim is a non-innocent victim, BJW will inhibit the offering or administration of assistance through the suppression of moral mechanisms of engagement (Bandura et al., 1996; Obermann, 2011a, b). It may be that bullies, as individuals who are attuned to their own social status vis-à-vis other members of their in-group, may see the bystander's lack of reaction as a reinforcer of their coercive behaviors. Further research should use a combination of deductive and inductive research designs to more fully understand these phenomena.

The *outsider* was not a benign on-looker or bystander as is often portrayed in the literature. In this entire classroom of 20 students, we could find no students who consistently had no knowledge or opinion of either the bully's or victim's behaviors; were all indirect participants to some degree. The closest we were able to come to these benign uninvolved on-lookers were the two girls (Adi and Orelle); however, we were often able to see them surreptitiously reinforcing the bullies. Indeed, we are not certain as to whether "bystanders" even exist in the bully/victim ecology. Perhaps bystanders offer silent, yet significant, support because they ascribe to the BJW hypothesis (Daunic & Smith, 2010) believing that the victim received his "just deserts" and through their passivity they support the bully.

Behaviors were contextually driven (Aim III). Three primary teachers worked with this classroom, and the incidence and topography of aggressive acts widely differed during their classes. For these teachers we saw a connection between classroom management and type and degree of classroom socially coercive behaviors. The more structured the classroom lessons, the less covert and overt bullying took place. Ms. Dina (either knowingly or not) assumed a role as an active participant in bullying and victimization. At times she was a clear instigator of Roy's cruelty, and at other times she was an accomplice. Further research is needed to more fully understand

Ms. Dina's cooperation with the bully. For instance, did she cooperate with Roy because she agreed with his behaviors (or, herself, wanted to victimize Benny or Gilad) while using Roy as a proxy? Was she simply too weak to stop the class bullies? Or did she encourage this bullying behavior in order to use these bullies as her personal enforcers and possibly dominate them through their being co-opted? Ms. Karen created a very different reality in her classroom. The regular protagonists during Ms. Dina's lessons (Roy, Doron, and Assaf) showed little or no coercive physical or relational bullying when Ms. Karen was present. How can we explain Ms. Karen's direct actions to stop bullying in her classroom? Clearly, differing contextual variables influenced students' behaviors in very different ways. Future research should further examine the teacher's role in classroom bullying and why teachers assume (knowingly or not) roles as moderators or mediators of coercive behavior. For instance, it is important to understand why Ms. Dina was permissive regarding coercive behavior, while at the same time Ms. Karen was restrictive; observations and interviews of other teachers in other social situations would help to further understand how teachers' dispositional variables create situational influences on classroom social structures. Future research may also look at personal variables which may influence attitudes and behaviors adopted by different teachers. This finding is interesting as previous research has linked workplace bullying with an autocratic management style (Hoel, Glasø, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2010); whereas we did find Ms. Karen's teaching style to be rigid, responsive, and autocratic, we did not observe coercive bullying between the teacher and the pupils or between the pupils themselves. Ms. Karen's teaching style, while autocratic, was not tyrannical and this may be a predictive variable.

Many participants switched roles depending on the specific social context (Aim IV). Previous research on the relevance of the social context in promoting aggression, bullying, and victimization has shown that the peer group may promote and encourage the exhibition of aggression towards members of the out-group (Estell et al., 2008) as Farmer (2000) describes the role of social dynamics, peer associations, and social roles in the establishment and maintenance of peer aggression. In our observations, we found that aside from the three extreme participant roles of *pure bully*, *provocative-victim* and *pure victim* (Castanheira et al., 2000), classmates often transitioned between the other roles of *assistants to bullies*, *reinforcers of bullies*, *outsiders*, and *defenders of the victim* (Salmivalli, 2010) and that these roles were situationally specific.

We found that despite there being a degree of stability in the extreme participant roles (pure bullies and pure

victims) there was also a degree of fluidity in the other roles described in previous research (bystanders, assistants, and reinforcers; Gumpel, 2008; Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Schwartz, 2000). Further, our observations and interviews showed us that aside from the typical participant roles described in the literature, we were able to observe and document other significant influences on the coercive and power relationships between pupils and were able to observe the interplay between dispositional and contextual situational variables. We found that these situational variables influenced the specific configuration of participant roles in discrete coercive social interactions.

These social processes coexist alongside the academic aspects of the classroom (Aasebø, 2011). Sometimes when locations and goals changed, often rapidly, we were able to observe actors moving between different participant roles. We noticed that many roles are fluid depending on situational vagaries, supporting Zimbardo's descriptions of situationist variables (Zimbardo, 2004, 2006) as primary determinants of human behavior. Shifting between roles was not limited to assuming different roles in different episodes, we were able to observe the same participant moving between different roles during the same social encounter. For instance, Yuval could sometimes act as the bully assistant and reinforcer and sometimes act as a victim helper. Interestingly, she was never observed offering direct assistance to the victim, but rather assisted the victim surreptitiously by working to stop the bullying behavior.

Study Limitations

This study focused on a small remedial classroom within a larger school. Among other reasons, the remedial class was chosen because of its high level of baseline bullying and aggressive behaviors. It is impossible to know if the social structures observed and analyzed can be generalized to non-remedial settings or even settings with lower frequencies of coercive bullying behaviors. Further ethnographic analyses of different types of schools systems are necessary. Tenth grade (age 15–16) is a precarious time for all adolescents and there is no way to ascertain the generalizability of these findings to other age groups.

Data analysis showed that structural elements exert a powerful influence on participants' behavior. Due to study limitations, we were unable to observe participating teachers with other classes or to interview the teachers. Doing so would shed more light on contextual variables. Do these teachers behave similarly with all of the classes they teach? How do teachers view bullying/victimization episodes and their part in them? Additionally, other adults came into contact with our study class;

observing interactions with other adults would add to our understanding of these contextual influences.

In our opinion, a major finding of this study is the between and within episode changes in participant roles. Not all participants assumed all possible participant roles. Future ethnographic studies of bullying should more closely examine this role flexibility. Are there parameters and causes for these shifts? For instance, it appears that for Yuval, both the BJW and empathy in the face of cruelty mediated her role changes. This should be examined further. The parameters and variables which stimulate these shifts should be further examined. Some participants never shifted in their roles while being exposed to the same variables (e.g., contextual variables or images of victim distress) and should be examined as well. Our conclusions are limited in scope because we did not specifically interview informants about their role shifts, and we did not interview other participants who did not alter their roles.

Research into the social structure of the classroom has widened from focusing on the individual and how he or she interacts with his or her peers, to considering the social fabric and how it is transactionally modified by the individual's interactions with his or her dynamic environment (Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon, & Lengua, 2000). For instance, Aasebø (2011), in an ethnographic study, described classroom processes as involving power, dominance, hegemony, and marginalization. The purpose of the current ethnographic study was to further expand this focus into areas inaccessible through questionnaires or positivistic methodologies (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2011). In examining the social fabric of the classroom, we identified the principal roles and how they come together to either facilitate or impede classroom bullying. The classroom provided a multitude of social interactions and contexts across different times and locations, each with differing goals and motivations. These social processes coexist alongside the academic aspects of the classroom (Aasebø, 2011). Sometimes when locations and goals changed, often rapidly, we were able to observe actors moving between different participant roles. We noticed that almost all roles are fluid depending on the situational vagaries, supporting Zimbardo's descriptions of situationist variables (Zimbardo, 2004, 2006) as primary determinants of human behavior.

Positivistic methods of data collection often do not capture the dynamicism of quickly changing and complex social interactions. In this study, we have provided an initial glimpse into these social interactions and found that individual dispositional factors are activated or suppressed by situational determinants and have expanded on the growing body of research which shows a high level of social understanding by the bully (Sutton et al., 1999).

Caravita, Di Blasio, and Salmivalli (2009) suggest that the bystander may be aware of this superiority and hence acquiesces out of both fear of reprisal from a more socially sophisticated potential foe or through deferment to what he or she sees as the bully's superior social understanding. Further research should continue to examine this dynamicism using ethnographic methodologies in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of these complex social situations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank Edna Lomsky-Feder and Douglas Fry as well as two anonymous reviewers as well as the management, teachers, and pupils of the "Aviv" school who participated in this study.

REFERENCES

- Aasebø, T. (2011). Anti-schoolness in context: The tension between the youth project and the qualifications project. *Social Psychology of Education, 14*, 503–518. doi: 10.1007/s11218-011-9153-3
- Asher, S. R., Parkhurst, J. T., Hymel, S., & Williams, G. A. (1990). Peer rejection and loneliness in childhood. In: S. R. Asher & J. D. Coie (Eds.), *Peer rejection in childhood* (pp. 253–273). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Atkinson, P., & Coffey, A. (2004). Analysing documentary realities. In: D. Silverman, (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp. 45–62) London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 1*, 248–261.
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Mechanisms of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*, 364–374. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.364
- Batsche, G. M., & Knoff, H. M. (1994). Bullies and their victims: Understanding a pervasive problem in the schools. *School Psychology Review, 23*, 165–174.
- Bekerman, Z., & Tatar, M. (2005). Overcoming modern-postmodern dichotomies: Some possible benefits for the counselling profession. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 33*, 411–421. doi: 10.1080/03069880500179723
- Benbenishty, R., Zeira, A., Astor, R. A., & Khoury-Kassabri, M. (2002). Maltreatment of primary school students by educational staff in Israel. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*, 1291–1309. doi: 10.1016/S0145-2134(02)00416-7
- Boulton, M. J. (1999). Concurrent and longitudinal relations between children's playground behavior and social preference, victimization, and bullying. *Child Development, 70*, 944–954. doi: 10.1111/1467-8624.00068
- Bukowski, W. M., & Sippola, L. K. (2001). Groups, individuals, and victimization: A view of the peer system. In: J. Juvonen & S. Graham (Eds.), *Peer harassment in school: The plight of the vulnerable and victimized* (pp. 355–374). New York: Guilford.
- Burkard, A. W., & Knox, S. (2004). Effect of therapist color-blindness on empathy and attributions in cross-cultural counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 51*, 387–397. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.51.4.387
- Caravita, S. C. S., Di Blasio, P., & Salmivalli, C. (2009). Unique and interactive effects of empathy and social status on involvement in bullying. *Social Development, 18*, 140–163. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9507.2008.00465.x

- Carspecken, P. F. (1995). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide (critical social thought)*. New York: Routledge.
- Castanheira, M. L., Crawford, T., Dixon, C. N., & Green, J. L. (2000). Interactional ethnography: An approach to studying the social construction of literate practices. *Linguistics and Education, 11*, 353–400. doi: 10.1016/S0898-5898(00)00032-2
- Chaiklin, S., & Lave, J. (1996). *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Champion, K., Vernberg, E., & Shipman, K. (2003). Nonbullying victims of bullies: Aggression, social skills, and friendship characteristics. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 24*, 535–551.
- Coie, J. D. (1990). Toward a theory of peer rejection. In: S. R. Asher & J. D. Coie (Eds.), *Peer rejection in childhood* (pp. 365–401). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Coie, J. D., & Dodge, K. A. (1983). Continuities and changes in children's social status: A five-year longitudinal study. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 29*, 261–282.
- Coie, J. D., Dodge, K. A., & Kupersmidt, J. B. (1990). Peer group behavior and social status. In: S. R. Asher & J. D. Coie (Eds.), *Peer rejection in childhood* (pp. 365–401). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Cole, M. (1998). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Harvard University Press: Belknap Press.
- Correia, I., & Dalbert, C. (2007). Belief in a just world, justice concerns, and well-being at Portuguese schools. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 22*, 421–437. doi: 10.1007/bf03173464
- Correia, I., & Dalbert, C. (2008). School bullying: Belief in a personal just world of bullies, victims, and defenders. *European Psychologist, 13*, 248–254. doi: 10.1027/1016-9040.13.4.248
- Correia, I., Vala, J., & Aguiar, P. (2007). Victim's innocence, social categorization, and the threat to the belief in a just world. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 43*, 31–38. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2005.12.010
- Daunic, A. P., & Smith, S. W. (2010). *Conflict resolution, peer mediation, and bullying prevention preventing problem behaviors: Schoolwide programs and classroom practices* (2nd ed.) (pp. 113–132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Dempsey, J. P., Fireman, G. D., & Wang, E. (2006). Transitioning out of peer victimization in school children: Gender and behavioral characteristics. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment, 28*, 271–280.
- Dodge, K. A., & Schwartz, D. (1997). Social information processing mechanisms in aggressive behavior. In: D. M. Stoff, J. Breiling, & J. D. Maser (Eds.), *Handbook of antisocial behavior* (pp. 171–180). New York: Wiley.
- Espelage, D. L., Holt, M. K., & Henkel, R. R. (2003). Examination of peer-group contextual effects on aggression during early adolescence. *Child Development, 74*, 205–220. doi: 10.1111/1467-8624.00531
- Estell, D. B., Jones, M. H., Pearl, R., Van Acker, R., Farmer, T. W., & Rodkin, P. C. (2008). Peer groups, popularity, and social preference. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 41*, 5–14. doi: 10.1177/0022219407310993
- Farmer, T. W. (2000). The social dynamics of aggressive and disruptive behavior in school: Implications for behavior consultation. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 11*, 299–321. doi: 10.1080/10474412.2000.9669417
- Farmer, T. W., Estell, D. B., Leung, M. C., Trott, H., Bishop, J., & Cairns, B. D. (2003). Individual characteristics, early adolescent peer affiliations, and school dropout: An examination of aggressive and popular group types. *Journal of School Psychology, 41*, 217–232. doi: 10.1016/S0022-4405(03)00046-3
- Farmer, T. W., & Hollowell, J. H. (1994). Social networks in mainstream classrooms: Social affiliations and behavioral characteristics of students with EBD. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 2*, 143–155. doi: 10.1177/106342669400200302
- Farmer, T. W., Lane, K. L., Lee, D. L., Hamm, J. V., & Lambert, K. (2012). The social functions of antisocial behavior: Considerations for school violence prevention strategies for students with disabilities. *Behavioral Disorders, 37*, 149–162.
- Fox, C. L., Elder, T., Gater, J., & Johnson, E. (2010). The association between adolescents' beliefs in a just world and their attitudes to victims of bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*, 183–198. doi: 10.1348/000709909X479105
- Gini, G. (2006). Bullying as a social process: The role of group membership in students' perception of inter-group aggression at school. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*, 51–65. doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2005.12.002
- Gini, G., Albiero, P., Benelli, B., & Altoè, G. (2007). Does empathy predict adolescents' bullying and defending behavior? *Aggressive Behavior, 33*, 467–476. doi: 10.1002/ab.20204
- Glassner, B., & Loughlin, J. (1987). *Drugs in adolescent worlds: Burnouts to straights*. London: Macmillan.
- Griffin, R. S., & Gross, A. M. (2004). Childhood bullying: Current empirical findings and future directions for research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 9*, 379–400. doi: 10.1016/S1359-1789(03)00033-8
- Gumpel, T. P. (2008). Behavioral disorders in the school: Participant Roles and sub-roles in three types of school violence. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 16*, 145–162. doi: 10.1177/1063426607310846
- Gumpel, T. P., & Sutherland, K. S. (2010). The relation between emotional and behavioral disorders and school-based violence. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*, 349–356. doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2010.06.003
- Hanish, L. D., & Guerra, N. G. (2000). Children who get victimized at school: What is known? What can be done? *Professional School Psychology, 4*, 113–119.
- Hinshaw, S. P., & Melnick, S. (1992). Self-management therapies and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder: Reinforced self-evaluation and anger control interventions. *Behavior Modification, 16*, 253–273. doi: 10.1177/01454455920162006
- Hoel, H., Glasø, L., Hetland, J., Cooper, C. L., & Einarsen, S. (2010). Leadership styles as predictors of self-reported and observed workplace bullying. *British Journal of Management, 21*, 453–468. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8551.2009.00664.x
- Hoy, W. K., & Barnes, K. M. (1997). The organizational health of middle schools: The concept and its measure. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.
- Lave, J. (1993). The practice of learning. In: S. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.), *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lipkus, I. (1991). The construction and preliminary validation of a global belief in a just world scale and the exploratory analysis of the multidimensional belief in a just world scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 12*, 1171–1178. doi: 10.1016/0191-8869(91)90081-L
- Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Menesini, E., Melan, E., & Pignatti, B. (2000). Interactional styles of bullies and victims observed in a competitive and a cooperative setting. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 161*, 261.
- Nirel, R., & Saltzman, P. (1999). *The structure of the sample and sampling weights in the "Israel National Study of School Violence"*. Jerusalem: Laboratory of Statistics, Hebrew University.
- Obermann, M.-L. (2011a). Moral disengagement among bystanders to school bullying. *Journal of School Violence, 10*, 239–257. doi: 10.1080/15388220.2011.578276

- Obermann, M.-L. (2011b). Moral disengagement in self-reported and peer-nominated school bullying. *Aggressive Behavior, 37*, 133–144. doi: 10.1002/ab.20378
- Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the school: Bullies and their whipping boys*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere Press.
- Olweus, D. (1991). Bully/victim problems in school children: Basic facts and effects of a school based intervention program. In: D. Pepler & K. Rubin (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression* (pp. 411–448). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Olweus, D. (2013). School bullying: Development and some important challenges. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 9*, 751–780. doi: 10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-050212-185516
- O'Moore, M., & Kirkham, C. (2001). Self-esteem and its relationship to bullying behavior. *Aggressive Behavior, 27*, 269–283. doi: 10.1002/ab.1010
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pellegrini, A. D. (1998). Bullies and victims in school: A review and call for research. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 19*, 165–176. doi: 10.1016/S0193-3973(99)80034-3
- Pellegrini, A. D., Long, J. D., Solberg, D., Roseth, C., Dupuis, D., Bohn, C., & Hickey, M. (2010). Bullying and social status during school transitions. In S. R. Jimerson, S. M. Swearer & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), *Handbook of bullying in schools: An international perspective* (pp. 199–210).
- Pepler, D., Jiang, D., Craig, W., & Connolly, J. (2008). Developmental trajectories of bullying and associated factors. *Child Development, 79*, 325–338. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01128.x
- Perry, D. G., Perry, L. C., & Boldizar, J. P. (1990). Learning of aggression. In: M. Lewis & S. M. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of developmental psychology* (pp. 135–145). New York: Plenum.
- Pozzoli, T., Gini, G., & Vieno, A. (2012). The role of individual correlates and class norms in defending and passive bystanding behavior in bullying: A multilevel analysis. *Child Development, 83*, 1917–1931. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01831.x
- Rodkin, P. C., & Hodges, E. V. E. (2003). Bullies and victims in the peer ecology: Four questions for psychologists and school professionals. *School Psychology Review, 32*, 384–400.
- Roland, E., & Galloway, D. (2002). Classroom influences on bullying. *Educational Research, 44*, 299–312. doi: 10.1080/0013188022000031597
- Rose, C. A., & Espelage, D. L. (2012). Risk and protective factors associated with bullying and involvement of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 37*, 133–148.
- Rose, C. A., Espelage, D. L., Aragon, S. R., & Elliott, J. (2011). Bullying and victimization among students in special education and general education curricula. *Exceptionality Education International, 21*, 2–14.
- Rose, C. A., Espelage, D. L., & Monda-Amaya, L. E. (2009). Bullying and victimisation rates among students in general and special education: A comparative analysis. *Educational Psychology, 29*, 761–776. doi: 10.1080/01443410903254864
- Salmivalli, C. (1999). Participant role approach to school bullying: Implications for intervention. *Journal of Adolescence, 22*, 453–459. doi: 10.1006/jado.1999.0239
- Salmivalli, C. (2010). Bullying and the peer group: A review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*, 112–120. doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2009.08.007
- Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K., Björkqvist, K., Österman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (1996). Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behavior, 22*, 1–15. doi: 10.1002/(SICI)1098-2337(1996)22:1<1::AID-AB1>3.0.CO;2-T
- Schwartz, D. (2000). Subtypes of victims and aggressors in children's peer groups. *Journal of Abnormal and Child Psychology, 28*, 181–192. doi: 10.1023/A:1005174831561
- Schwartz, D., Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (1997). The early socialization of aggressive victims of bullying. *Child Development, 68*, 665–675. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1997.tb04228.x
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Slee, P., & Rigby, K. (1993). The relationship of Eysenck personality factors and self-esteem to bully-victim behavior in Australian school-boys. *Journal of Personality and Individual Differences, 14*, 371–373. doi: 10.1016/0191-8869(93)90136-Q
- Spielberger, C. D. (1988). *State-trait anger expression inventory: Professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Staub, E. (2003). *The psychology of good and evil: Why children, adults, and groups help and harm others*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stellwagen, K. K., & Kerig, P. K. (2012). Ringleader bullying: Association with psychopathic narcissism and theory of mind among child psychiatric inpatients. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 44*, 612–620. doi: 10.1007/s10578-012-0355-5
- Stormshak, E. A., Bierman, K. L., McMahon, R. J., & Lengua, L. J. (2000). Parenting practices and child disruptive behavior problems in early elementary school. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 29*, 17–29. doi: 10.1207/S15374424jccp2901_3
- Stueve, A., Dash, K., O'Donnell, L., Tehranifar, P., Wilson-Simmons, R., Slaby, R. G., & Link, B. G. (2006). Rethinking the bystander role in school violence prevention. *Health Promotion Practice, 7*, 117–124. doi: 10.1177/1524839905278454
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. R. (2006). A promising approach for expanding and sustaining school-wide positive behavior support. *School Psychology Review, 35*, 245–259.
- Sutton, J., Smith, P. K., & Swettenham, J. (1999). Social cognition and bullying: Social inadequacy or skilled manipulation? *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 17*, 435–450. doi: 10.1348/026151099165384
- Teräsahjo, T., & Salmivalli, C. (2003). “She is not actually bullied.” the discourse of harassment in student groups. *Aggressive Behavior, 29*, 134–154. doi: 10.1002/ab.10045
- Thomberg, R. (2011). ‘She’s Weird!’—The social construction of bullying in school: A review of qualitative research. *Children & Society, 25*, 258–267. doi: 10.1111/j.1099-0860.2011.00374.x
- Thomberg, R., Rosenqvist, R., & Johansson, P. (2012). Older teenagers’ explanations of bullying. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 41*, 327–342. doi: 10.1007/s10566-012-9171-0
- Twemlow, S. W., Sacco, F. C., & Williams, P. (1996). A clinical and interactionist perspective on the bully-victim-bystander relationship. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic, 60*, 279–313.
- Unnever, J. D. (2005). Bullies, aggressive victims, and victims: Are they distinct groups? *Aggressive Behavior, 31*, 153–171. doi: 10.1002/ab.20083
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (2004). A situationist perspective on the psychology of evil: Understanding how good people are transformed into perpetrators. In: A. Miller (Ed.), *The social psychology of good and evil* (pp. 21–50). New York: Guilford.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (2006). *The psychology of power: To the person? To the situation? To the system? Moral leadership: The theory and practice of power, judgment and policy* (pp. 129–157). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.