

The Criminal Bully—Linking Criminal Peer Bullying Behavior in Schools to a Continuum of Delinquency

Matthew T. Theriot, PhD
Catherine N. Dulmus, PhD
Karen M. Sowers, PhD
Stan L. Bowie, PhD

SUMMARY. In light of a recent wave of anti-bullying legislation following several high-profile incidents of school violence, this study explores the criminality that is inherent in certain acts of school bullying. These acts include physical aggression, theft of property or money, and damage to property, among others. As research continues to link school bullying and childhood aggression to later delinquency and adult criminal offending, “criminal bullies” may be an especially vulnerable population

Matthew T. Theriot is Assistant Professor, Catherine N. Dulmus is Associate Professor, Karen M. Sowers is Dean and Professor, and Stan L. Bowie is Assistant Professor, with the College of Social Work, The University of Tennessee.

Address correspondence to: Matthew T. Theriot, The University of Tennessee, College of Social Work, 1618 Cumberland Avenue, 322 Henson Hall, Knoxville, TN 37996-3333 (E-mail: mtheriot@utk.edu).

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for subsequent criminal justice system complications. Consequently, early identification and intervention with these children may yield better long-term outcomes. In this study of 192 students at rural elementary and middle schools, 34 children reported committing a criminal bullying act during a three-month period. This equates to 17.7% of the total sample or 48.6% of all self-identified bullies. The authors discuss the significance of these findings as well as the proposed utility of "criminal bully" as a new typology of school bullying. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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The belief that criminal violence is a recent phenomenon in American schools is a striking misconception. Certainly, there has been a rise in lethal school violence during the past fifteen years. From Littleton, Colorado to Springfield, Oregon to Jonesboro, Arkansas, the American educational landscape is increasingly spotted with highly-publicized school shootings. Yet, despite this recent wave of media and public attention, criminal violence has existed in schools for decades. In fact, thousands of students are victims of crimes at school each day (MacNeil, 2002). These children are the victims of bullying, much of which is criminal in nature.

Bullying is a global phenomenon—perpetrated in schoolyards, classrooms, hallways, and bathrooms around the world. In studies done outside of the United States, the prevalence of being a bully ranges from 4.1% to 49.7% (Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003). Dan Olweus (1993; 1994), a pioneer in bullying research, found that, in his extensive studies of students in Norway, 7% of the children were bullies and 1.6% of children are both victims and bullies. American studies have likewise placed the prevalence of bullying students consistently between 13% and 20% (Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999; Nansel et al., 2001). Bullying is believed to occur at almost all American schools (Furlong & Morrison, 2000).

Though there are variations in the definition of school bullying, most definitions derive from that originated by Olweus (1993; 1994). Ac-

According to his definition, “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 1173; Olweus, 1994). These *negative actions* include actual or threatened physical contact or harm, verbal abuse, teasing or inappropriate gestures, theft or destruction of property or money, and relational bullying (such as intentionally excluding one from a peer group, spreading rumors and false lies, and so on). A key concept for these negative actions to be “bullying” is the requisite imbalance of strength (or an *asymmetric power relationship*; Olweus, 1994). Specifically, the student being harassed must be in a position of less power or strength than the harassing student(s). As a result, conflicts between students of nearly equal physical or mental strength cannot be considered bullying (Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003).

Clearly, many different behaviors meet the definitional criteria for bullying. However, it must be noted that a handful of these acts are technically criminal. That is, if students engaged in these behaviors outside of the school setting, the juvenile or criminal justice system would be expected to intervene. This includes physically assaulting a peer, threatening such harm, forcing others to do things against their will, and the theft or destruction of money and property.

This paper will examine the prevalence of this “criminal bullying” and define such bullies as a new typology of bullying. Since bullying in American schools has only begun to receive adequate research attention during the past 20 years, researchers in this field are still struggling to define and assess bullying behaviors (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). To this end, several different bullying typologies have been proposed. For example, bullies may be differentiated by type of aggression. This includes *proactive*, *reactive*, *direct*, *indirect*, or *relational* aggression (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Previous research has also identified the *bully/victim*, or those children who are both a bully and a victim. Still another type of bully is the *passive bully*. This is the henchman or follower—a child who bullies others but does not take the initiative (Olweus, 1993). Undoubtedly, these varied typologies provide useful insight for understanding bullies and their behavior. Nevertheless, recent shifts in public and legislative attitudes towards bullying would seem to necessitate a new typology of bullying—the *criminal bully*. This typology would highlight those children who bully others by employment of criminal behaviors, such as those listed above.

Historically, school bullying has been seen as a disciplinary matter and not a criminal one (Furniss, 2000). Bullying has often been excused or ignored within schools as a normal part of growing up, as a rite of

passage in childhood, or as an example of “boys being boys” and “kids being kids” (Will & Neufeld, 2003; Limber & Smalls, 2003). Now, however, and partly in response to many of the same high profile incidents of school violence mentioned in this paper’s opening paragraph, fifteen states have passed legislation that addresses bullying in schools (Limber & Small, 2003). The actual benefit of this new wave of legislation remains to be determined, yet these legislative actions may signify the beginning of a very real shift in the way that bullying is viewed by American society and the way that bullying is handled in schools. While most legislation still leaves the disciplining of bullies in the hands of the school or the school district, such emerging policies may mark the beginning of a formal criminalization of school bullying.

The recognition of a relationship between bullying and criminality is neither novel nor new. Instead, research has clearly connected childhood bullying to later delinquency and criminal offending. Olweus (1993; 1994) found that, in his follow-up studies with former bullies, approximately 60% of males who bullied others during grades 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24 years. Moreover, 35-40% of these former bullies had three or more convictions by this same age compared to only 10% of males in a non-bullying control group. Along the same lines, former bullies are also more likely than their peers to violently abuse their spouses and to utilize harsher discipline with their own children (MacNeil, 2002). As an interesting side note, there is little evidence that bullies commit other, non-bullying forms of delinquent behavior while still in school (Rigby & Cox, 1996).

Not surprisingly, there are also striking similarities in the characteristics of bullies and criminal offenders. For example, Dake, Price and Telljohann (2003) reviewed the professional literature on characteristics of bullies. They found that, among other characteristics, bullies are likely to engage in substance abuse, fighting or violent behavior, and minor academic or criminal misconduct. Bullies are also likely to have inadequate adult role models, to suffer child abuse, to have lower academic achievement, and to have psychiatric problems. Comparably, in a review of the literature on factors that predict criminal arrest and recidivism, Farrington (1987) found that an early age of onset for offending, early antisocial behavior, convicted parents, low family income, school failure, and drug use were all among recurring predictors of criminal justice system involvement.

Moreover, in yet another example of the relationship between bullying and criminology, classic criminological theories, such as Sutherland’s (1924) differential association theory, Cloward and Ohlin’s

(1960) theory on the development of delinquent subcultures, and Akers' (1973) differential association-reinforcement theory, are frequently reflected in discussions of bullying. For instance, Pellegrini and associates (1999), in their description of the rejection often experienced by bullies, draw quite heavily on each of these theoretical orientations. In their scenario, a bully's aggressive values and behavior place the child at odds with the majority of other students and school personnel. This rejection by peers and teachers leads the bully to increasing school failures and stronger affiliations with other aggressive children. The bully may eventually reject all school connections by dropping out of school.

Despite this complex relationship of bullying and delinquency, the conceptualization of bullying itself as a criminal act (and not simply a school disciplinary matter) is a relatively recent phenomenon. In this emerging era of anti-bullying legislation and in light of the demonstrated relationship between bullying and future criminality, the typology of the criminal bully may have its greatest utility as a mechanism for identifying those children most at risk for future legal and criminal justice complications. While the criminal labeling of children may be distasteful to some, this paper is not intended to promote the criminal processing of bullies. The detrimental impact of such actions and the lasting stigma associated with such adjudication would yield only long-term negative consequences. Instead, this new proposed typology is suggested as a research tool for advancing the knowledge base about bullies and bullying. The typology acknowledges the role that certain forms of bullying may have on a continuum of evolving criminality. Studies have shown that a younger onset of serious delinquency may pose an increased risk for serious offending later (Farrington, 1987). For example, in one study of juvenile offenders, it was determined that approximately half of all males who become serious juvenile offenders had an onset of delinquent behavior before the age of 12 years (Stouthamer-Loeber & Loeber, 2002). Young children already perpetrating criminal bullying behaviors while still in elementary or middle school may be among those most likely to become juvenile or adult offenders. Thus, this group may be among those most needing immediate intervention.

A first step in understanding criminal bullying requires an assessment of the prevalence of such bullying in schools. Utilizing descriptive statistics, this paper will evaluate the prevalence of such bullying in a sample of rural elementary and middle school children. Further analy-

ses will also seek to elaborate on the spectrum of bullying behaviors that a criminal bullying group engages in.

METHODS

Study Design

This study utilized a survey research design to gather information from students as to their experiences and observations of bullying among students in their school. The questionnaire also solicited responses from students as to their own bullying behaviors, which is the focus of the results reported in this article. The IRB at a large research university in the Southeastern United States granted permission to conduct the research prior to the start of the project. Parental consent was obtained for all student subjects whose participation was voluntary and confidential.

Study Sample

Letters to parents were sent home with students to recruit subjects. Subjects were recruited from three rural public schools (an elementary school, a middle school, and a school that housed grades K-8) located within the same school district in a Southeastern rural region of the United States. The school district is located in a county characterized by high rates of poverty as evidenced by 43% to 61% of students receiving free or reduced lunches and 12% of the population still not having a telephone. The school district's students are 98% Caucasian and the dominant culture is Appalachian.

The letter sent home to parents included information related to the study and a consent form for parents to complete to allow their child to participate in the study. A self-addressed stamped envelope was provided for parents to mail the consent form back to the principal investigator at the university. Ultimately, the convenience sample consisted of 192 students in grades three through eight, representing an 18.4% response rate. Data collection occurred in the fall of 2002. A team of researchers conducted data collection in the school setting for all children who met inclusion criteria and for whom written parental consent was obtained. Since all subjects were measured at one point in time, no follow-up was necessary. Thus, attrition was not problematic.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) subjects had to be students enrolled in the school where data collection occurred, and (b) subjects had to be in grades three through eight. Written parental consent was obtained for each subject prior to their participating in the study. In addition, all children completed an individual assent form.

Measure

Each subject completed the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1986). This 56-item, self-administered questionnaire, designed for grades 3 through 10, asks questions specific to student's perceptions, observations, and participation in various aspects of bullying in the school setting.

For the purposes of this study and as per the Olweus questionnaire, we defined and explained bullying to the students as being when another student, or several other students do the following:

- completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose
- hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock him or her inside a room
- tell lies or spread false rumors about him or her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her
- and other hurtful things like that.

In addition, we explained that a student is being bullied when the above things happen over and over again, and it is difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself. We further explained that bullying is when a student is teased over and over in a mean and hurtful way, but that bullying was not when teasing was done in a friendly or playful way.

Data Collection Procedures

A team of researchers collected data in the school setting over a period of two days. Students whom parental consent had been obtained were called to the cafeteria during the school day to complete the assent form and questionnaire. Definition of bullying used for this study and directions for completion of the questionnaire were provided. Data collectors were trained to use appropriate and consistent responses to student questions and to utilize the study's definition of bullying. They also assisted students with the reading of questions as necessary. Upon

completion of the questionnaires, students were given a pencil and key chain as a thank you gift and sent back to their classrooms. All subjects were assured of the confidentiality of their responses throughout the study. There were minimal physical, psychological, legal, or social risks for participants. To ensure confidentiality and protection of subjects they were instructed not to put their names or any identifying information on the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

All data were coded directly from respondent's answers to specific questions asked on the survey instrument. The primary group to be analyzed is the "criminal bullying" group, or those students reporting the perpetration of a bullying behavior that is criminal in nature. These behaviors include hitting, kicking, or otherwise physically assaulting another student, taking or damaging another student's money or property, and/or threatening or forcing other students to do something that they do not want to do. While racist name-calling and comments about another student's race, ethnicity, or skin color may be a criminal violation under broad definitions of a hate crime, these acts were not included in the definition of "criminal bullying" utilized in this study. Likewise, names, comments, or gestures of a sexual nature, while technically forms of sexual harassment, were also excluded so that this study may focus more specifically on other criminal aspects of bullying.

The data are displayed on four tables. Table 1 compares demographic and attitudinal characteristics for three groups—students who reported perpetrating bullying of a criminal nature, students perpetrating bullying of a non-criminal nature, and students who responded that they have not bullied others and they have not done any of the nine types of bullying listed in the survey at any time during the previous three months. Tables 2, 3, and 4 show information for only those students committing the aforementioned criminal acts of bullying. Specifically, Table 2 describes the types of bullying committed by each gender, Table 3 differentiates these types of bullying by student's grade level, and Table 4 shows bullying by both gender and grade level. Consistent with the structure of the school district, students in grades 3, 4, and 5 are elementary school students while those in grades 6, 7, and 8 are middle school students. Furthermore, one child in the "criminal behavior" group failed to identify their gender on the survey instrument and, as a result, is excluded from analyses when necessary. On all 4 tables, categorical vari-

ables are presented in frequencies and percentages while continuous variables are reported as means ($\pm$ standard deviations).

RESULTS

Only 40 students responded that they have bullied other students when asked directly in one survey question, yet 70 students responded positively to perpetrating some form of bullying when asked about specific types of bullying behaviors or actions. Within this bullying group, 34 students (48.6%) reported that they have bullied a peer within the previous three months with a behavior that is technically a criminal offense. This group, the *criminal bullies*, forms one comparison group while non-criminal bullies and non-bullying students form the others. As detailed on Table 1, there does not appear to be substantial differences between the three groups on the limited demographic and attitudinal measures included here. The one exception, however, is student's feeling towards school. On this measure, although a vast majority of students in all three groups report liking school, a larger percentage of the students who have engaged in criminal bullying behaviors stated that they dislike school (11.8% compared to 8.3% and 7.4% in the other two groups, respectively). Accordingly, across the three groups, the "criminal bullying" group has the lowest percentage of students reporting that they like school.

Moving now to a focus only on those students who reported acts of criminal bullying, Table 2 shows that the most common criminal behavior for both genders is bullying of a physically abusive nature. The least common is the taking or damaging of money or property. More males reported threatening or forcing others to do things than females did (64.7% of males versus 37.5% of females). In fact, most males have engaged in multiple criminal behaviors while physical assault was the only behavior that involved a majority of females. Furthermore, males in this group participated in a wider variety of bullying behaviors, both criminal and otherwise, than females did. Specifically, a majority of males reported engaging in five of the nine bullying behaviors whereas a majority of females engaged in only three of these behaviors.

Table 3 shifts the focus from gender to student's grade level. In general, elementary school students engaged in almost all of the different types of bullying at a higher percentage than middle school students in the sub-sample did. The only exceptions were physical assault (86.7%

TABLE 1. Demographic and Attitudinal Characteristics (N = 192)

Characteristic	Have Bullied Peers with Criminal Behavior in Past Three Months (n = 34) Frequency (%) or Mean $\pm$ SD	Have Bullied Peers with Non-Criminal Behavior in Past Three Months (n = 36) Frequency (%) or Mean $\pm$ SD	Have Not Bullied Peers in Past Three Months (n = 122) Frequency (%) or Mean $\pm$ SD
Gender (n = 191)			
Male	17 (51.5)	17 (47.2)	58 (47.5)
Female	16 (48.5)	19 (52.8)	64 (52.5)
Current School Grade Level			
3rd Grade	6 (17.6)	7 (19.4)	32 (26.2)
4th Grade	4 (11.8)	6 (16.7)	14 (11.5)
5th Grade	9 (26.5)	5 (13.9)	22 (18.0)
6th Grade	2 (5.9)	6 (16.7)	22 (18.0)
7th Grade	5 (14.7)	6 (16.7)	17 (13.9)
8th Grade	8 (23.5)	6 (16.7)	15 (12.3)
Age	10.85 $\pm$ 1.79	10.78 $\pm$ 1.88	10.47 $\pm$ 1.83
Do you like school?			
I dislike school.	4 (11.8)	3 (8.3)	9 (7.4)
Neutral	8 (23.5)	9 (25.0)	22 (18.0)
I like school.	22 (64.7)	24 (66.7)	91 (74.6)
How many good friends do you have?			
None	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.8)
1	3 (8.8)	3 (8.3)	6 (4.9)
2-3	7 (20.6)	4 (11.1)	27 (22.1)
4 or more	24 (70.6)	29 (80.6)	88 (72.1)

Column percentages may not total 100% because of rounding, SD = standard deviation

TABLE 2. Types of Bullying Committed in the Past Three Months by Gender (N = 33)

Type of Bullying	Males (n = 17) Frequency (%)	Females (n = 16) Frequency (%)
Criminal Behaviors		
Hit, Kicked, Shoved, or Assaulted Others	13 (76.5)	12 (75.0)
Took or Damaged Money or Items	6 (35.3)	5 (31.3)
Threatened or Forced Others to Do Things	11 (64.7)	6 (37.5)
Non-Criminal Behaviors		
Called Others Mean Names, Made Fun of, or Teased Them	10 (58.8)	12 (75.0)
Intentionally Excluded or Ignored Others	9 (52.9)	8 (50.0)
Spread Lies or False Rumors About Others	5 (29.4)	7 (43.8)
Said Comments or Called Others Names Based on Race or Color	6 (35.3)	2 (12.5)
Bullied Others with Sexual Comments, Names, or Gestures	10 (58.8)	5 (31.3)
Bullied Peers in Other Ways	7 (41.2)	3 (18.8)

TABLE 3. Types of Bullying Committed in the Past Three Months by Grade Level (N = 34)

Type of Bullying	Elementary School Students (n = 19) Frequency (%)	Middle School Students (n = 15) Frequency (%)
Criminal Behaviors		
Hit, Kicked, Shoved, or Assaulted Others	12 (63.2)	13 (86.7)
Took or Damaged Money or Items	8 (42.1)	3 (20.0)
Threatened or Forced Others to Do Things	11 (57.9)	7 (46.7)
Non-Criminal Behaviors		
Called Others Mean Names, Made Fun of, or Teased Them	13 (68.4)	10 (66.7)
Intentionally Excluded or Ignored Others	10 (52.6)	8 (53.3)
Spread Lies or False Rumors about Others	8 (42.1)	4 (26.7)
Said Comments or Called Others Names Based on Race or Color	5 (26.3)	3 (20.0)
Bullied Others with Sexual Comments, Names, or Gestures	10 (52.6)	6 (40.0)
Bullied Peers in Other Ways	10 (52.6)	1 (6.7)

of middle school students versus 63.2% of elementary school students) and the intentional exclusion of others (53.3% versus 52.6%).

Finally, Table 4 combines gender and grade level. Unfortunately, though this table allows for a greater depth of analysis, making such a combination yields smaller sample sizes for each column. As a result, the reduction in cell counts makes comparisons difficult and suspect. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there does not appear to be any glaring differences across the four groups.

DISCUSSION

Perhaps the most important finding to be extracted from the data is the overall prevalence of criminal bullying within this sample. Explicitly, 17.7% of the total sample (or 48.6% of bullies) reported engaging in these specific behaviors at some point in the previous three months. It is also interesting to note the differences in attitudes towards school, with the criminal bullying group reporting higher levels of dislike and neutrality for school. While this group is more extreme in their negativity than the non-criminal bullying group, the finding is consistent with other studies that describe bullies as being in opposition to peers and teachers and, eventually, less interested in school affiliations (Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999).

The remaining three tables (Tables 2-4) provide deeper descriptive analyses of the criminal bullying subgroup. Beyond this purpose, however, the utility of these tables is limited. This may be due to the relatively small sample size or the lack of a relevant comparison group. In any case, the general pattern that males are more involved in bullying is consistent with the existing literature (Nansel et al., 2001; Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003). The finding on Table 3, however, that elementary school bullies were more involved in a variety of bullying behaviors than their middle school counterparts, deviates somewhat from the conclusions of other studies that show a rise in bullying problems during early adolescence (which usually coincides with the end of middle school and beginning of high school; Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999). One explanation for this finding, though, may be that this study measured variety in bullying behaviors and not frequency.

Implications for Service Delivery

The recognition of the criminality inherent in specific bullying behaviors has real implications for social work intervention and service

TABLE 4. Types of Bullying Committed in Past Three Months by Gender and Grade Level (N = 33)

Type of Bullying	Elementary School Students		Middle School Students	
	Males (n = 13) Frequency (%)	Females (n = 5) Frequency (%)	Males (n = 4) Frequency (%)	Females (n = 11) Frequency (%)
Criminal Behaviors				
Hit, Kicked, Shoved, or Assaulted Others	9 (69.2)	3 (60.0)	4 (100.0)	9 (81.8)
Took or Damaged Money or Items	6 (46.2)	2 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (27.3)
Threatened or Forced Others to Do Things	9 (69.2)	1 (20.0)	2 (50.0)	5 (45.5)
Non-Criminal Behaviors				
Called Others Mean Names, Made Fun of, or Teased Them	8 (61.5)	4 (80.0)	2 (50.0)	8 (72.7)
Intentionally Excluded or Ignored Others	6 (46.2)	3 (60.0)	3 (75.0)	5 (45.5)
Spread Lies or False Rumors About Others	4 (30.8)	4 (80.0)	1 (25.0)	3 (27.3)
Said Comments or Called Others Names Based on Race or Color	4 (30.8)	1 (20.0)	2 (50.0)	1 (9.1)
Bullied Others with Sexual Comments, Names, or Gestures	7 (53.8)	2 (40.0)	3 (75.0)	3 (27.3)
Bullied Peers in Other Ways	7 (53.8)	2 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (9.1)

delivery. Previous research has established the link between childhood or juvenile delinquency and an increased likelihood of offending in adulthood (Wolfgang, Thornberry, & Figlio, 1987; Sampson & Laub, 1993). This relationship has also been clearly demonstrated for bullies. As outlined in the introductory section, Olweus (1993; 1994) and others (see MacNeil, 2002) have shown that, as young adults, males with a history of school bullying have as much as a fourfold increase in their level of serious, recidivist criminality when compared to a control group of males who have not engaged in bullying. These former bullies are also more likely to violently abuse their spouses and to utilize harsher discipline with their own children (MacNeil, 2002).

The findings of these previous research studies combined with the main finding of this study that many students have indeed engaged in criminal bullying would seem to clearly place bullying into a continuum of criminal offending. In fact, given the young age of the students in this study, these children may be an even more problematic group than most, especially since studies have shown that approximately half of all males who become serious juvenile offenders have an onset of delinquent behavior before the age of 12 years (Stouthamer-Loeber & Loeber, 2002).

Of course, many school bullies and young offenders do not continue their criminal careers into adulthood and curbing future criminal involvement should be a very real goal of any interventions intended for a criminal bullying population. Before the development of such interventions, however, more research is needed to further develop and expand upon the notion of the "criminal bully" as a unique type of school bully. Similarly, it is also imperative not to ignore the influence of childhood developmental stages on perceptions of bullying. For example, fighting, especially among very young children, may signify age-appropriate conflict resolution skills or the child's level of emotional maturity. It will be important, therefore, to incorporate developmental theory into these research endeavors aimed at characterizing and conceptualizing the "criminal bully."

This study should be viewed as a first step in this direction. The data reported here are descriptive and not without limitations. Specifically, this study did not use random assignment or a control group and subjects were impaneled from only one region of the country. Besides utilizing a more rigorous study design, the next step in this line of research should evaluate the myriad of psychosocial factors that may differentiate those students engaging in criminal bullying from other bullies as well as from other students. Future studies seeking to advance knowl-

edge on this topic should consider using a longitudinal study design and a variety of data collection tools, instruments, and standardized measures.

CONCLUSION

At this point, the “criminal bully” typology is conceptual. It is a hypothesis—a proposal or a suggestion—inviting further investigation, rigorous evaluation, discussion, and debate. The research done here is exploratory and done with the intention of stimulating deeper exploration. The data suggest that the scope of criminal bullying in schools is sizable, with approximately one-fifth of all study respondents (and 50% of all bullies) engaging in such behavior. The development of evidence-based interventions designed to serve this group will, therefore, not only help to deter these individuals from later deviance, but will also make schools safer and more comfortable for all children.

Regardless of bullying typologies, the seriousness of criminal bullying should be appreciated. The behaviors contained within a “criminal bully” label are among the most serious and threatening acts confronting children in schools today. The inclusion of such behaviors on a continuum of aggression, juvenile delinquency, and later adult offending is natural and appropriate. While progression along such a continuum is far from inevitable, the similarities between bullies and criminal offenders and the current trend towards criminalizing school bullying suggests that criminal bullying should, at the very least, be recognized as a marker for the development of more serious problems later.

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