THE HIGH COST OF BULLYING: AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

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Social Justice Issue

The classroom should provide an environment that allows all children to develop both academically and socially. The school should be a safe place for all students to spend their days. Many of us can look back at our school experiences and remember countless days of enjoyable learning and interaction with our classmates. We learned the three Rs—reading, writing, and 'rithmetic but we also learned how to get along with each other. We learned how to take turns, negotiate, and compromise while simultaneously developing self-discipline and self-confidence. Unfortunately, there are also many adults today who look back at their days in school with displeasure. Some had negative experiences with their classmates; perhaps they were bullied or felt unaccepted or incapable. Even worse, some students have had experiences where the teacher was the problem; uncaring, unprepared, and unprofessional.

Children spend at least 13 years attending school. If they begin at age five and graduate at age 18, they have spent almost three-fourths of their lives in school. Those years should yield academic achievement along with predominantly positive memories. In order for positive outcomes to occur, it is essential that we provide our future teachers with the tools they need to create a positive classroom environment that welcomes every student and supports both their academic and social development from kindergarten through their senior year of high school.

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Teachers have the opportunity everyday to promote and model social justice principles in their classrooms. "Human Dignity" is a key principle of Catholic social teaching. "Belief in the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching. Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the starting point for a moral vision for society. The principle of human dignity is grounded in the idea that the person is made in the image of God. The person is the clearest reflection of God among us. We are required to honor the human person, to give priority to the person" (Catholic Charities Office for Social Justice, 2006).

Economic Issue

Victims of bullying also are more likely than other students to report that they do not want to go to school because of fear of being

bullied (Slee, 1995). Carney and Merrell (2001) found that students who are bullied are at higher risk for truancy and subsequent dropout because of fear. Students may act upon their feelings of fear and actually start avoiding places in school or be truant from school, classes, or extracurricular activities (DeVoe & Kaffenberger, 2005). It is estimated that as many as 160,000 students stay home from school on any given day because they are afraid of being bullied. In addition, one out of every ten students who drop out of school does so because of repeated bullying (Bradford, 2010).

According to McCaul, Donaldson, Coladarci, and Davis (1992), dropping out leads to "adverse consequences for both individuals and society" (p. 199). One of those adverse consequences is reduced income. The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2009 was $19,540, compared to $27,380 for a high school graduate. The impact of this income reduction on the country's economy is staggering (Snyder & Dillow, 2010).

10 percent of dropouts are a result of repeated bullying.

If the nation's secondary schools improved sufficiently to graduate all of their students, rather than the 72 percent of students who currently graduate annually, the payoff would be significant. For instance, if the students who dropped out of the class of 2011 had graduated, the nation's economy would likely benefit from nearly $5 billion in additional income over the course of their lifetimes (Editorial Projects in Education, 2011).

The U.S. Department of Justice (2002) states that raising the high school completion rate one percent for all men ages 20 through 60 would save the U.S. $1.4 billion annually in crime related costs. Each class of high school dropouts costs the U.S. economy more than $8 billion in incarceration expenses and lost wages per year. If the male graduation rate were increased by only five percent, the U.S. could save $7.7 billion a year through reducing crime related costs and increasing earnings (Wise, 2007).

Obviously, dropouts are a drain on the nation's economy and the economies of each state. Lower local, state, and national tax revenues are the most obvious consequence of higher dropout rates; even when dropouts are employed, they earn significantly lower wages than do graduates. State and local economies suffer further when they have less-educated populaces, as they find it more difficult to attract new business investment. Simultaneously, these entities must spend more on social programs when their populations have a lower educational level (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

According to Bradford (2010), 10 percent of dropouts are a result of repeated bullying. We also know (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006) that almost 1.3 million students did not graduate from U.S. high schools in 2004, costing more than $325 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over their lifetimes. Based on these numbers, as

many as 130,000 students drop out of school every year as a result of being bullied.

Interestingly, it is not just the bullied who drop out of school. The children who bully are also more likely to be truant and drop out of school (U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, n.d). Bullies who escalate aggression in adolescence and adulthood are four times more likely to have three or more convictions by age 24 because they demonstrate a continuing pattern of aggression and violence as they grow older (Dodge, Greenberg, & Malone, 2008; Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990; Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003). In addition, homicide perpetrators were more than twice as likely as homicide victims to have been bullied by peers (Make Beats Not Beat Downs, 2009). Bullies have reported higher rates of poor academic achievement, negative attitudes toward school, and early participation in sexual behavior than nonbullies (Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). More important, these and other antisocial behaviors often persist or increase during late adolescence and adulthood.

Thus, as young bullies age into older adolescence and young adulthood, they are at increased risk for gang involvement (Viljoen, O'Neill, & Sidhu, 2005) and criminal behavior (Sourander, Jenson, Ronning, Niemela, Helenius, Sillanmaki, & Almqvist, 2007). Moreover, individuals who bully others at a young age experience high conviction rates, substance abuse, and frequent depression and anxiety disorders during adulthood (Sourander et al., 2007).

Clearly, everyone would benefit from the eradication of bullying. To begin with, both the bully and the victim would enjoy the benefits of increased graduation rates. High school graduates provide both economic and social benefits to society. In addition to earning higher wages--resulting in corresponding benefits to local, state, and national economic conditions—high school graduates live longer, are less likely to be teen parents, and are more likely to raise healthier, better-educated children (Muennig, 2005). High school graduates are less likely to commit crimes, rely on government health care, or use other public services such as food stamps or housing assistance (Garfinkel, Kelly, & Waldfogel, 2005).

Schools should do everything possible to eliminate bullying; this should result in a lower dropout rate. Understanding the personal and economic magnitude of the dropout problem associated with bullying is an important preliminary step to developing bullying-prevention strategies.

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The Prevalence of Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated interpersonal behavior that is intended to do physical or psychological harm (Child Trends Databank, 2009). Bullying inherently involves an imbalance of power, and is most frequently manifested in physical or psychological aggression, with bullies intimidating their victims through threats, name calling, social exclusion, gossip, and physically aggressive acts such as punching or slapping (Nansel et al., 2001).

Increasingly, schools, communities, parents, and adolescents are acknowledging that bullying is not a rite of passage, but rather a practice that can be extremely damaging to children and teens (Duncan, 2010). When students are bullied, they become a victim and their human dignity is denigrated. Bullying results in both short- and long-term negative effects on the victim and on society.

Some of the short-term personal effects include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and isolation; poor school performance, illness, absenteeism; suicidal ideation; and suicide attempts. Some of the long-term personal negative outcomes include low self-esteem and self-worth, severe depression, antisocial behavior, vandalism, drug use and abuse, criminal behavior, self-destructive behavior, and suicide (Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011).

These negative personal outcomes may have economic repercussions. For example, absenteeism may lead to poor school performance which may result in the victim dropping out of school. Dropouts earn 71 percent of the annual income of a high school dropout (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). Unfortunately, bullying is prevalent in our schools today:

- According to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration, "15-25% of U.S. students are bullied with some frequency, while 15-20% report they bully others with some frequency" (HRSA, n.d., para. 2).
- A study by Wang (2009) reported the high prevalence of having bullied others or having been bullied at least once during the last two months: 20.8% physically, 53.6% verbally, and 51.4% socially.
- 15% of all school absenteeism is directly related to fears of being bullied at school (Make Beats Not Beat Downs, 2009).
- 90% of 4th through 8th graders report being victims of bullying (Make Beats Not Beat Downs, 2009).
- 71% of students report incidents of bullying as a problem at their school (Make Beats Not Beat Downs, 2009).
- In one study of 4th through 6th graders, 25% of students admitted to bullying another student several times or more

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often during the school term (Melton, Limber, Flerx, Cunningham, Osgood, Chambers, Henggler, & Nation, 1998).
- Another study found that 80% of middle school students reported engaging in some form of bullying during the past 30 days, with 15% doing so frequently (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999).
- In a national study of more than 15,000 students in grades 6 through 10, 17% reported having been bullied "sometimes" or more often during the school term and 19% reported bullying others "sometimes" or more often (Nansel et al., 2001).

Cyberbullying

The explosive use of technology has allowed the old-fashioned form of bullying to morph into a different type of bullying--cyberbullying. "Cyberbullying is being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the Internet or other digital technologies" (Willard, 2007, p. 1). Cyberbullying includes slurs on websites or blogs, mean or threatening instant messages, using camera phones to take embarrassing photos and posting them on websites, and circulating gossip and rumors.

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According to Willard (2007) and Valkenburg & Peter (2009) cyberbullying is particularly harmful because the aggressor can hide and be anonymous; the gossip, rumors, and pictures spread rapidly to a large audience; there is little fear of punishment and it is often not reported because the victims fear losing access to their electronic communication.

Like bullying, cyberbullying is also rampant. According to a survey of 1,500 students in grades 4-8 conducted by iSAFE (2004),
- 42% have been bullied while online.
- 35% have been threatened online.
- 21% have received mean or threatening e-mail or other messages.
- 58% admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online.
- 53% admit having said something mean or hurtful to another person online.
- 58% have not told their parents or an adult about something mean or hurtful that happened to them online.

Cyberbullying can be more harmful than physical bullying because a victim cannot get away from it. With physical bullying, the victim can eventually get away from the situation. Once the victim removes himself from the situation, the bullying stops until the bully and victim meet face to face again. Conversely, cyberbullying may follow the

victim.   The victim can be harassed in their own homes since cyberbullying is electronic and can occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A victim may even move to another school to get away from the bullying yet cyberbullying can follow the victim anywhere.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there is often crossover between being cyberbullied and being bullied in person–victims of cyberbullying were also more likely to be bullied at school (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

Both types of bullying show no respect to their victims.   The victim's human dignity is compromised by the bully. There are also far-reaching economic consequences when a student drops out of school to avoid being bullied.

Theoretical Framework

The reality of these statistics is that many students are unable to enjoy their school experience because they are being victimized by bullies. Think about the day of a victim: The alarm goes off and it is time to get ready to go to school. The victim feels sick because he is nervous about getting on the bus, going to class, to the cafeteria, to the restroom, and to the playground. He may be ridiculed, threatened or physically harmed. Every minute of the school day, he feels nervous and anxious about what he may face around the next corner. At the end of the school day, he has to get back on the bus and ride home where he, hopefully, will feel safe there unless he is also being cyberbullied.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Ormrod, 2011), a bullying victim will have a difficult time focusing on learning the subject matter being taught. The victim will be too distracted with the issue of his personal safety and will not be able to focus on the teacher's instruction.

According to Maslow, one's needs must be met at the lower level before a person can progress to the next level as shown in the diagram below. A victim's basic physiological needs may be met; he may have adequate food, clothes, and shelter. Because of bullying, the victim definitely does not have his safety needs met and thus cannot progress up the hierarchy. Until the safety needs are met, the person cannot have his social needs met. Until the social needs are met, he cannot have his self-esteem needs met and certainly does not reach self-actualization. The victim of bullying is trapped at the second level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs—safety needs. Until the bullying stops, he will not be able to progress which will absolutely effect his academic and social development.

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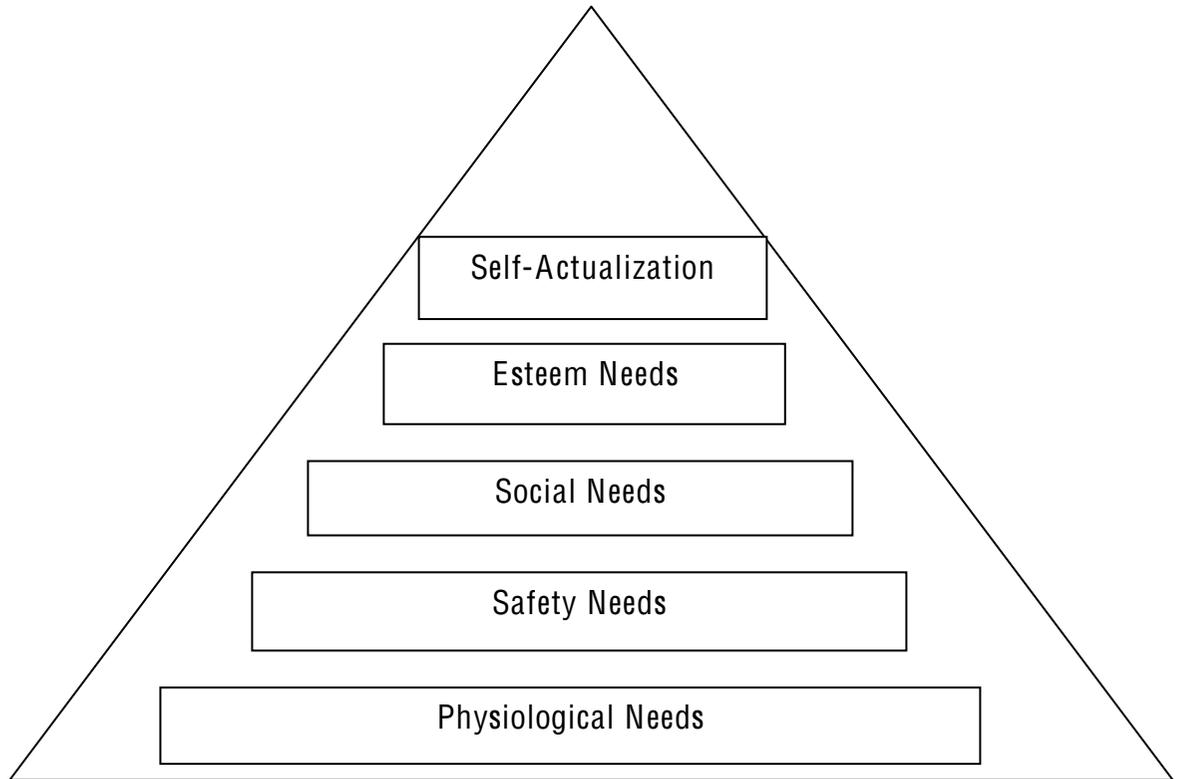being victimized
by bullies.*

Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

　　　Past research demonstrates that students who are targeted by bullies often have difficulty concentrating on their schoolwork, resulting in academic achievement that is marginal to poor (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Farrington (1993) also suggests that the psychological consequences of bullying can include lack of concentration on schoolwork. Finally, the School Crime Supplement 2001 reports that bullied students were less likely to report getting mostly A's than students who did not report or experience bullying at school. Grades may be negatively affected because 15 percent of all school absenteeism is directly related to fears of being bullied at school (DeVoe & Kaffenberger, 2005).

　　　With cyberbullying, students may fear for their safety offline due to harassment and threats conveyed online. Indeed, victims might be consumed with avoiding certain cyberbullies whom they actually know in person; either at school, at the bus stop, or in their neighborhood. Whichever the case, when youths are constantly watching the landscape of cyberspace or real space to guard against problematic interpersonal encounters, their ability to focus on

academics, family matters and responsibilities, and prosocial choices is compromised (Hinduja & Patchin, (2007).

Another goal for most school-aged youth is acceptance. Children and adolescents often desperately seek the affirmation and approval of their peers. Bullying and cyberbullying, however, stymies that goal through rejection and exclusion. Research has shown (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Ormrod, 2011) that when individuals perceive themselves to be rejected or otherwise socially excluded, a number of emotional, psychological, and behavioral ill effects can result. Consequently, the failure to achieve peer acceptance may also produce negative effects and disallow their social needs being met.

In summary, bullying has serious emotional consequences for the victims, including anxiety (Sourander et al., 2007), depression, low self-esteem (Olweus, 1994), and academic problems (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Story, 2003).   Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory can help current and future teachers better understand the complex emotional and behavioral consequences of bullying and cyberbullying.

Addressing the Issue

It is incumbent upon teacher education programs to address the economic and social justice issue of bullying with all future educators. As teachers, it is our duty to demand that respect and consideration be demonstrated in the classroom. Teachers must have a zero-tolerance policy toward bullying. The human dignity of each individual must be honored.

Preservice teaches must be taught how to create a safe classroom environment. The classroom of today may not look like the classroom of the past. Today's classrooms are very diverse. Most teachers will teach students from varying racial and cultural backgrounds including English learners. Some teachers will teach students from low socio-economic backgrounds. These students may come to school without their physiological needs being met; they may be hungry or their clothes may be dirty or may not fit. A typical classroom will be comprised of the students who "have" and those who "have not." This is rich breeding ground for bullying. Yet, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that bullying does not occur.

The classroom teacher should also be taught skills that will help the victim as well as the bully. As soon as a bullying incident occurs, regardless of whether it is bullying or cyberbullying, an administrator or teacher should debrief with both the bully and the victim.

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Adhere to the following steps in the follow-up conversation with the bully:
- Find out in detail why the child is bullying.
- Listen.
- Do not blame others for the behavior.
- Point out that bullying behavior is not acceptable.
- Specify the consequences if the bullying persists.
- Teach and role-play appropriate behavior (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004, p. 11).

The debriefing with the bully may shed light on why the student has the need to bully. For example, the student may be bullied at home by an older sibling or parent. With this information, the school may be able to provide counseling or other services to help the student.

Teachers can help provide students with the skills necessary to deal with bullying. Students who are victims of bullying can be taught to:
- ignore the bully's behavior whenever possible.
- use social skills, such as assertiveness, negotiating, sharing, taking turns, and assisting others.
- leave the situation.
- rebuff in a firm manner.
- protect themselves emotionally and physically (without using retaliation).
- request that the bully stop, and then walk away; if this does not work, then tell the teacher.
- spend time in groups (Mayer, Ybarra, & Fogliatti, 2001, p. 12).

It is important that the victim realize that he is being bullied through no fault of his own. The victim must be assured that the bullying will stop.

In addition, we must teach our students the proper response to cyberbullying should it occur. According to Coughlin (2007, p. 130), students should be instructed:
- to never give out or share personal identification numbers.
- to use Netiquette (Internet etiquette).
- not to send messages when angry; turn off the computer and walk away.
- that if you encounter something online that doesn't look or feel right, it probably isn't.
- not to reply to cyberbullies.

This conversation provides an opportunity to support the human dignity of the victim. It is important that the victim realize that he is being bullied through no fault of his own. The victim must be assured that the bullying will stop.

Summary

As educators, it is imperative that we address bullying at our first opportunity—in the classroom. Teacher education programs carry the responsibility of equipping preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to address both bullying and cyberbullying.   The important moral, social, and economic imperatives for resolving the bullying crisis must be relayed to our current and future educators.

A caring teacher will respect the human dignity of both the bully and the victim. Teacher education programs must train teachers to provide a safe classroom learning environment. On a broader level, the teacher may promote a school-wide anti-bullying program that involves all administration, teachers, parents, and students.   The teacher must also know how to provide victims with skills to cope with bullying. At the same time, the teacher must help the bully understand his need to bully.

Training teachers to support the needs of both the bully and the victim while providing a safe school environment will result in an opportunity to promote a key principle of Catholic social teaching; human dignity. As students find safety in the classroom, they will be more likely to attend school and graduate thus becoming self-reliant economic contributors to our society.

As educators, it is imperative that we address bullying at our first opportunity—in the classroom. A caring teacher will respect the human dignity of both the bully and the victim.

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