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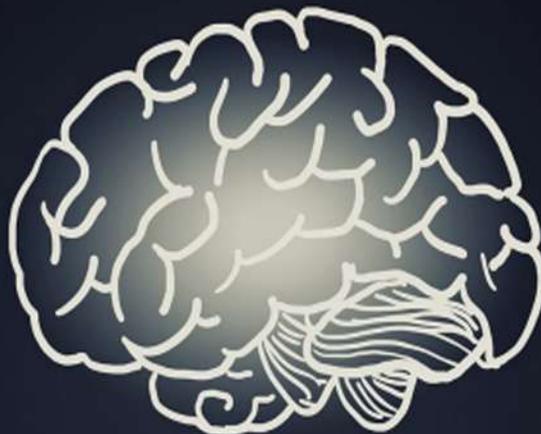
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CONTENTS

Editorial

1. Addressing the Model Minority Myth from a Cognitive Perspective e1-e3
– *Eleazar Cruz Eusebio**

Review

2. Building Resilience in Children to Prevent Social Aggression: The Principles of Behavioral Sciences 42-49
– *Percival Longworth*, Israel Kalman and Jennifer Peluso*

Short Communication

3. An Urgent Request for Evidence-Based Mental Health Intervention Research in Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries 50-52
– *Linda E. O'Raw* and Zara Tariq*

Original Research

4. Exploring the Notion of Performance in Branch Sales Managers: A Narrative Approach 53-61
– *Radhika Bhalla**

Review

5. How the Desensitization of Police Violence, Stereotyped Language, and Racial Bias Impact Black Communities 62-67
– *Stephanie N. Williams* and Annette V. Clarke*

Editorial

Addressing the Model Minority Myth from a Cognitive Perspective

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There has been a lot of emphasis on Asian Pacific Americans as the Model Minority as they are currently the fastest-growing minority demographic in the U.S. The U.S. Asian population grew 72% between 2000 and 2015 from 11.9 million to 20.4 million, the fastest growth rate of any major racial or ethnic group. This immigration wave from Asia accounts for a fourth of all immigrations to the United States since 1965.¹ The current Asian Pacific American status perpetuates and characterizes the pervasive and widely inaccurate “model minority myth” which emerged and is accredited to William Petersen in an article he wrote entitled “Success Story, Japanese-American Style” in 1966.² A few months later, a similar article, “Success Story of One Minority Group in the United States” emerged in U.S. News and World Report³ portraying the success of Chinese Americans, yet making unparalleled comparisons that maligned African Americans. Both articles successfully demonstrated how Asian cultural values allowed them to succeed against the odds in America by citing statistics on rising educational attainment and income levels coupled with statistics on low rates of reported crime and mental illness. However, the resulting misalignment of ethnic minority groups and unfair treatment of a whole demographic as successful served nothing more than to further marginalize Asian Pacific Americans.

It is critical to look at the credibility of the Model Minority Myth from a cognitive perspective because the cognitive approach in psychology involves human behavior that focuses on how we think which, in turn, affects the way that we behave. After more than a century of invisibility combined with separatist and inexcusable vitriol to the point of eliminating and imprisoning Japanese Americans in internment camps after World War II, the tables briefly turned in the 1970s. Later, the United States made formal apologies and signed legislation in a formal apology which paid out \$20,000 in compensation to each surviving victim.

However, the radical attitude shift was suspicious for Asian Pacific Americans who had become familiar with the “friend today, foe tomorrow” mentality as they were inadvertently refashioned as a political and social hammer against other disadvantaged groups by the government in the United States. Asian Pacific Americans were faced with the conundrum to accept the model minority status as a major improvement over the mysterious and perpetually alien enemy from the East.⁴ Other ethnic minority groups began to see Asian Pacific Americans as a demographic that was given unwarranted privileges that were not to be trusted.

Although the stereotype initially seemed a positive one, it has perpetuated three inherent negative effects. First, and perhaps the most deleterious, is in the intergroup relations and how the model minority myth pits Asian Pacific Americans against other groups targeted by racism in the United States. The underlying message from the dominant White culture to other ethnic minority groups is “Asians overcame discrimination, so why can't you?” This is both dangerous and damaging to the relations between Asian Pacific Americans and other ethnic minorities. Secondly, uncritical acceptance of the stereotype has detrimentally concealed the issues and needs of the Asians in America who have not come anywhere close to experiencing any of the success the stereotype inherently suggests. Finally, the myth contributes to White resentment which led to an increase in anti-Asian violence, particularly after the post-911 era.

The most damaging effects of the model minority myth come from the misinterpretation of statistical research that obscure the actual facts, specifically that Asian Pacific Americans are better educated, on average, than Whites and that they have a higher reported average household income than the average White family.⁵ These misrepresented facts are harmful in that the inac-

curacies are profoundly irresponsible while not stating the fact that, when compared to equally qualified individuals, Asian Pacific Americans consistently earn less than Whites, despite reports that state they are consistently the top earners in America today. Furthermore, Asian Pacific Americans tend to have more family members contributing to the household income. Income inequality is rising more rapidly among Asian Pacific Americans than any other ethnic groups in America, revealing wide disparities in income among the demographic as a whole.

Speaking about the deleterious effects is critical, but we must also examine what happens to people's subsequent behavior from the cognitive perspective. The cognitive model describes how people's perceptions of, or spontaneous thoughts about, situations influence their emotional, behavioral and subsequent physiological reactions and, therefore, correcting the misinformation that leads to one's thoughts is key. The Model Minority Myth must be dispelled as it continually misleads society's perception of Asian Pacific Americans by excluding the critical elements of the theory, homogenizing an entire demographic, thereby, ignoring the rights and historical underpinnings of the entire demographic.

When the data is accurately disaggregated and properly representative of the 43 countries that constitute Asian Pacific America, varying levels of inequality are clearly identified. For example, 35% of Laotian Americans, 43% of Cambodian Americans, and more than 25% of Vietnamese Americans live in poverty, as compared to 13% of the general United States population. In addition, educational attainment data reveal wide variations among Asian Pacific Americans. Much of the data reported has often shown the demographic as achieving the highest level of education among all ethnic and racial groups in America. However, despite the overall homogenous success of Asian Pacific Americans, upon closer examination of the statistics, some demographics within the broader culture are in direct contrast to the stereotype. For example, high school completion rates are approximately only 35% among Cambodian Americans, 36% for Laotian Americans, and 58% for Vietnamese Americans. Conversely, high school graduation rates are 82% for Asian Pacific Americans as a homogenous group.⁶

The model minority myth also deleteriously serves to further isolate and misrepresent students in the Asian Pacific American demographic. Not only is there a pervasive expectation for students to outperform and excel in mathematics and science, they are often encouraged to pursue fields in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) despite other academic interests. It was not until more recently that STEM included and integrated the Arts.

The positive stereotype perpetuates that Asian Pacific Americans are quiet and content with their status quo and that any sense of advocacy may appear unexpected and angry. The process of finding oneself as perpetually invisible, silent, and in a subservient and agreeable position to the dominant White culture often puts Asian Pacific Americans in a position of further invisibility, silence, and ultimately, oppression in the United States.

The U.S. government has a history of developing and applying race-based discriminatory and exclusionary policies to a variety of ethnic and racial groups throughout history. Cultural identities are not solely determined by racial ideologies, but racism increases the need for a positive self-defined identity in order to survive psychologically in a multicultural and egalitarian society. In turn, many ethnic minorities adopt a mindset of being inherently oppressed by accepting the concept that they have been marginalized by society. This is not a strengths-based mentality, but rather one that lends itself to a negative self-image.

The impetus behind writing this editorial is to acknowledge and enact change in identifying areas that still desperately need formal investigation and reconstitution in order to dispel a vastly used, but continuously disproved stereotypical myth that, inadvertently or not, perpetuates racist inequities within and outside of the Asian Pacific American demographic. This editorial is, in no way, attempting to reverse the repercussions of the misguided use of the Model Minority Myth, but rather introduce a different perspective of the demographic based on data. The objective is to identify the areas where the myth is misleading, but served its purpose in how the U.S. identified the demographic, in many ways the best way it could. It provided a positive outlook for a widely misunderstood and new demographic of immigrants in America. However, it unintentionally represented anyone who identified as Asian Pacific American as successful with their finances and in education. Although, there is some data that proves this may be true for some, it is a misnomer as it is not true for all. Intercultural relations between varying ethnic minority groups as well as White culture in America are further jeopardized with the inaccuracies and damaging stereotypes of Asian Pacific Americans. Most importantly, children of Asian Pacific American upbringing have been taught to follow and subscribe to the myth, inadvertently perpetuating its stereotypical message. Of course, there are some who may believe that the Model Minority Myth has been beneficial to Asian Pacific Americans because of the elevated financial and social status it portrays anyone in the demographic. But, without disaggregating the data, the blanket concept does not represent every ethnicity within the entire Asian Pacific American demographic. Unless we denounce as an artifact, they will continue to accept and live in a society that does not responsibly correct its misguided information. So, in 2020 and beyond, let's face and dispel the ugly stereotypical factors and move into a more just and equitable world where myths are debunked in exchange for actual, accurate, and responsible data. Cognitive science and the future will thank us for it.

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Review

Building Resilience in Children to Prevent Social Aggression: The Principles of Behavioral Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Most anti-bullying programs today are punitive. They rely heavily on schools enforcing procedures based on reporting, investigating, punishing, and labeling bullies. This paper challenges the notion that bullying behavior can be regulated effectively by legislative bodies and policymakers. Schools are communal ecosystems featuring unique social norms and behaviors. For example, in school, a student reporting a classmate to authorities may be labeled a ‘snitch’ because ‘tattling’ violates accepted social norms. Furthermore, the current legal definitions of bullying are confusing and complicated. In many cases, even trained lawyers have difficulty identifying acts of bullying. We suggest, the better approach to preventing bullying in schools, even the workplace, is to ground interventions using psychological frameworks to strengthen children’s social and emotional competence. We contend that social development models provide the psychological frameworks society needs to develop emotionally stable children and adults while providing them with the internal fortitude to bounce back effectively from adverse situations like bullying.

Keywords

Bullying prevention; Social-emotional learning (SEL); Social development; Emotional strength; Social aggression; Anti-bullying; Self-awareness; Social-emotional competence; Power imbalance; Intentional; Columbine; Intervention.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN TO PREVENT SOCIAL AGGRESSION

According to Borgwald & Theixos,¹ despite the efforts to regulate and prohibit aggressive behavior, incidents of bullying remain persistent in U.S. schools and throughout the world. In response to the mass shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, virtually every school system in the U.S. has adopted an anti-bullying intervention program of one kind or another. Since 1999, 49 of 50 states have passed anti-bullying legislation² and more than 193 countries have adopted the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child UN resolution to prevent bullying in schools throughout the world.³ However, current laws and policies to reduce it are, at best, unclear and counter-intuitive. Bullying is such a comprehensive concept, suggests Cornell & Limber,² that it generates significant confusion regarding its meaning, severity, and relation to other antisocial behaviors such as harassment and

social aggression. For example, the universal definition (legal, existing programs, policy, and institutional) for bullying includes three measures:

1. The aggression is intentional
2. A power imbalance exists between the victim and the perpetrator(s)
3. The hostility is repetitive

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes this “tripartite” definition of social aggression.² Herein lies the problem: First, “intentional aggression” (physical, verbal, and social hostility) is deliberately meant to cause someone harm. However, in its less volatile form, bullying can be virtually impossible to distinguish from typical childhood mocking, roughhousing, or name-calling.

Second, size and strength of the bully notwithstanding, power imbalance is difficult to assess and establish, and it is an aspect typically ignored by victims reporting a bullying incident.² Unfortunately, science has not developed tools for isolating and identifying power imbalance. To the untrained eye (teachers, administrators, and many policymakers), determining whether bullying has occurred is a virtual guessing game. Despite the inability to clearly establish power imbalance between two people, it is still a requirement.²

Thirdly, the inclusion of “repetitive aggression” in the definition of bullying further complicates enforcement of anti-bullying policies. As noted by Cornell and Limber,² repetitive behavior is vital in classifying an act of bullying, but it places the liability on observers (teachers, administrators, and counselors). When a victim reports an act of “bullying,” how does the current legal definition provide the precise framework for educators to offer an effective remedy when so much of its definition is so difficult to prove?

This current state has netted a system in which 86 percent of the anti-bullying programs fail to reduce bullying at all, and only 14 percent provide minimal results.⁴

What if the aggressive behavior was intended to cause harm, but lacked power imbalance, repetition, or both? Unfortunately, existing anti-bullying legislation and policies are too ambiguous to provide a clear-cut answer. Not only are schools saddled with a complicated definition of bullying, but educators must also sort through which federal and state laws apply to a student who reports bullying.²

While Columbine sparked a national effort to end bullying, the more pressing question is does current policy and legislative processes provide an effective solution? Oddly, little research has been conducted to determine the execution of these laws and policies, and what affects (financial, climate, culture, etc.) they have on curbing bullying in our schools.² Many researchers and anti-bullying experts believe the answer to the current bullying dilemma is outside our legal and legislative systems.

DO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS OFFER A SOLUTION? |

Schools are communal ecosystems comprised of distinct sets of socially acceptable and unacceptable norms and behaviors. For example, in school, reporting a classmate to authorities may be considered a violation of existing social standards. Conversely, slapping someone on the butt might be considered a form of bullying, even sexual harassment, but in certain contexts and situations, a teammate for example, this act may be considered a suitable congratulatory gesture. However, today’s legal and policy systems fail to distinguish between real hostile behavior and other minor forms of social aggression, according to Kalman.⁵ As much as we would like to isolate children from potentially adverse situations, especially at school, many experts suggest the better approach is to provide

kids with the social skills they need to thrive in any setting.⁶⁻⁸ Still, few current anti-bullying programs offer theoretical frameworks to enhance social and emotional skills in children.⁹

“... legal and legislative branches of the U.S. government leaned towards sanctioning their way out of the issue without, first, understanding its central cause.”⁴

Moreover, most anti-bullying programs require children to report peers to adults, including teachers and other school officials.¹⁰ Unfortunately, children who “tattle” on classmates may be labeled informants or “snitches” by their fellow students for acting in ways that are counter to the school’s “social” code of conduct, so many victims are less likely to report an incident. Additionally, when reported to “authorities,” bullies consider themselves to be the victim; consequently, their retaliation and efforts for revenge tend to be much harsher than the initial act.¹¹

So, what are the cognitive and emotional undertones that spark or prevent bullying and how do teachers, counselors, administrators, students, and parents mediate more efficiently? Social development models that include social-emotional learning (SEL) offer suggestions for reducing aggressive social behavior:

- Help kids develop self-awareness—foster their ability to recognize their feelings, thoughts and other influences on their behavior. This aspect includes acknowledging one’s personal strengths and weaknesses. Children with a high-level of self-awareness understand how their ideas, feelings, and actions interconnect.¹²
- Children also need skills to help them regulate their emotions; these include thoughts and behaviors, as well as managing stressful situations and controlling instinctual impulses (flight or fight). Students who develop this strong sense of self-management are much more likely to exceed academic and personal goals.¹²
- Teaching children social-emotional competence provides them with the ability to accept the perspectives of other people regardless of culture, economic status, ethnicity, or religion. These developmental qualities make it possible for kids to empathize and grasp social and ethical norms, which are essential elements for successfully creating positive relationships with others.¹²
- Because a school is a social setting, reducing social aggression means providing students with tools to listen and communicate effectively, navigate conflict constructively and offer help to others, or seek it when the need arises.
- Finally, to build a kinder, gentler school environment, kids need the capacity to make respectful choices that take into consideration, safety and security, ethics, and potential consequences for their actions including the well-being of others.¹²

Children who develop positive self-awareness, self-management, social mindfulness, relationship and decision-making skills are more likely to become self-reliant and confident in dealing with difficult situations, not only in school but throughout their

life.⁹ Based on a McCormick¹³ study, in schools where this model of learning exists, teachers and administrators spend less time managing anti-social behavior and more time teaching.¹³ Additionally, through effective SEL programs, academic performance typically improves and kids develop the capacity to recover quickly from adverse situations like bullying. Students who develop competent social and emotional skills tend to be better adapted to school, the classroom, and at home.¹² Consequently, we recommend focusing on building social and emotional strengths within children and, at the same time, providing parents and teachers with the tools to guide, mentor, and teach students how to thrive in virtually any social situation.

“...we recommend focusing prevention efforts on building social and emotional strengths... and providing parents, and teachers with psychological tools to teach kids how to thrive...”

WHAT IS BULLYING AND WHY DOES IT OCCUR? |

Typically, experts agree that bullying is a relational-based form of aggression, which includes various types of physical or verbal actions meant to humiliate, dominate, or oppress another person. Explicit bullying is physical hostility focused towards peers with the intent of causing or threatening physical harm.¹⁴ On the other hand, relational bullying, the most common form, consists of verbal aggression such as name calling, threats or insults. These indirect forms of social aggression also include gossiping, spreading rumors, and social exclusion.¹⁵

The most common theme is that bullying consists of physical and verbal attacks targeted towards a victim or victims, by one or more students (power imbalance) taking place over an extended period.¹⁶ For example, one child may begin harassing an unpopular student, and then a few friends urge the aggressor on while others sometimes stand by and passively observe. In either case, this power differential means victims often feel incapable of stopping or even preventing the attack. Consequently, victims in this example may become an ongoing target because they are either incapable of defending themselves, or more often, lack the social skills to resolve the situation calmly.¹⁷ This power imbalance and constant targeting separate bullying behavior from the odd fight, pushing and shoving match, or teasing that commonly takes place among children of similar age and size.¹⁸

“... typical bullying targets are students who are perceived as different, weak, shy... including gays, lesbians, people of color or lower socioeconomic status...”

A vast amount of research indicates that the typical targets of bullying are those students perceived by classmates as different, weak, or socially shy.¹¹ As Karin Lehnardt suggests,¹⁹ these include gays and lesbians, people of color, students of lower socioeconomic status and various religious sects. Even being considered too good by classmates (“teacher’s pet”) is a formula for being bullied.¹¹

In social settings, such as school, children typically jockey for power and status, so some aggressive behavior is a relatively normal childhood behavior.¹¹ Nevertheless, for the 5 to 15 percent of children who are chronically bullied,²⁰ this form of social aggression is anything but normal. Being frequently bullied can have devastating effects throughout a child’s lifetime. As a consequence of failing with peers and teachers, both bullies and victims can become withdrawn, socially anxious, aggressive, and fearful, which puts them at risk of developing even more serious problems as they navigate through adolescence and into adulthood.¹¹

In fact, in one longitudinal study conducted by Olweus with more than 700 boys from Stockholm, 36 percent of bullies at ages thirteen to sixteen received three additional bullying convictions between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four.²¹ Furthermore, in a Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development, boys who bullied at age fourteen tended, in their mid-twenties, to have children who were also bullies.²¹

So, how do we protect children from the dangers of bullying? As previously noted, reporting bullies to adults or authorities may backfire and lead to more severe reprisals.¹¹ Among children who are already socially apprehensive or anxious, “standing up” physically or verbally to confront a bully may also be counterintuitive.¹¹ While a victim’s retaliation against a bully may decrease his or her anxiety level temporarily, it may also require him or her to become physically aggressive, which could run counter to their personality, or personal values. Moreover, this “tit for tat” strategy may prolong or escalate the targeted aggression.

Unfortunately, for school kids, bullying is such an effective way of gaining and maintaining social status. Bullying is typically present at every age—it is somewhat like a severe storm that is not in our power to totally control.¹¹ Nonetheless, we can shield children from the adverse effects of bullying by instilling in them a feeling of self-efficacy (resilience)—the sense that they can control the situation.¹¹ In creating the curriculum for the Be Strong bullying prevention program, our goal was to design a school-wide program to build children’s interpersonal competencies and, at the same time, provide them with the confidence to overcome the challenges associated with bullying (and other adverse events) using resilience and social and emotional learning theories.

WHY ARE CURRENT ANTI-BULLYING INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FAILING? |

Bullying intervention programs are well intended. For example, the Olweus Bully Prevention Program provides school administrators with plans for conducting assemblies early in the academic year to discuss the school’s stance on bullying.¹¹ In the Olweus program, school officials are encouraged to form bullying prevention committees that include student participants from each grade. Teachers and students are taught to recognize bullying behavior and take appropriate steps to identify, investigate, report, and punish offenders. One of the main goals of this program is to create a school-wide policy against all forms of peer abuse.¹ But, do these kinds of programs work? The majority reduce bullying only mar-

ginally—20 to 23 percent—and reduce victimization between 17 and 20 percent.²²

“... the US Department of Education threatened to cut funding in schools failing to investigate and address every bullying complaint... America’s legal and political systems laid intervention and prevention directly on local school systems.”

After Columbine, state, federal, and local policymakers acted quickly to protect children and create a safe and secure school environment.⁵ Washington D.C. and nearly every state in the U.S. adopted legislation against bullying, passing mandates for punishing offenders and requiring schools to enforce strict codes of conduct. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education declared that funding for general school programs would be cut in schools failing to investigate and address every bullying complaint.⁵ Consequently, the American political and legal systems laid intervention and prevention directly on local school systems by demanding that they eradicate bullying.⁵ Today, many “bullying” policies include an elaborate punitive systems to discourage bullies from exercising their power over weaker and often younger classmates. However, David Myers suggests,²³ that this current punitive approach fails to recognize a fundamental aspect of human nature—our innate desire to belong and develop meaningful relationships with others. Think about this for a moment. In a legal system, the rules are black and white; there tend to be few gray areas. For example, a child commits an act of social aggression in school; the child is apprehended, investigated, labeled a “bully,” and punished. However, school is a social system, not a legal one, and most psychologists agree that the cause of bullying is filled with lots of gray areas and murky waters. Would a more sensible approach to prevent bullying include insight into the natural laws of human behavior? We believe the answer to be a resounding yes! Leading cognitive and behavioral scientists know that social systems, such as schools, are comprised of many different integrated pieces.

Even well-intended interventions can have unintended effects; consequently, psychologists do not presume that because the intent is honorable that results will only be positive. Scientists consider potential adverse outcomes before developing the appropriate responses or interventions. Passing laws and policies that make bullying illegal is an exceedingly harsh intervention with grim consequences for children, their parents, teachers and school administrators. Especially when the definition of bullying is so vague. The current system identifies and punishes bullies, schools get sued, and, in the end, the system pits parents and teachers against each other to avoid the appearance of criminal negligence. Still, research indicates that even the most highly-regarded intervention programs not only fail to stop bullying, but they also leave schools sitting ducks for parents armed with lawyers.⁵

“As Alfred Adler suggests,³⁴ to be human is to understand one’s existence as a social being – an equal and accepted member of society.

It bears repeating that schools are social settings featuring

a unique set of norms for social behavior. Many of today’s anti-bullying initiatives center their efforts on pledges, investigating, labeling offenders “bullies,” and punishment that include expulsion from school. However, it is not just these types of policies that fail to reduce bullying, gold-standard programs that set the bar for full-school intervention programs are producing poor results, as well. Why? Based on a literary review of more than 2,000 studies and articles, we have identified five factors that may inhibit the success of many of today’s anti-bullying programs:

- Legal and legislative action—bullying is a socially based phenomenon, and we are attempting to legislate our way out of it, including all the appropriate penalties. Constraining when and where it can occur will not address the underlying causes of social aggression or prevent it from occurring.
- An underlying motivation that drives human behavior is the need to belong and to develop meaningful relationships with others. As Alfred Adler suggests,²⁴ to be human is to understand one’s existence as a social being—an equal and accepted member of society. This sense of belonging is crucial for positive individual mental health. Well-being grows when children feel they belong to a larger circle of existence; this feeling of social safety is a fundamental aspect of human life.²⁵ Even bullies act out a desire to “connect” with others, or out of frustration when peers reject their attempts to connect. Practices and programs that vilify a bully—without addressing his or her own need to belong—at best, offer an imperfect solution. Anger and aggression in children is a complex issue; enforcing laws, rules, and institutional regulation is not the answer. We are taking a page from John Gottman²⁶ to suggest a slightly different approach: train parents and teachers to become emotional coaches, so children develop the skills to prevent and overcome socially aggressive situations such as bullying.²⁷

“Interventions should... assess the level of bullying in school, offer mechanisms to reduce it, provide the means to change behavior, accurately measure results, and evaluate program elements...”

- Social-emotional learning (SEL)—few bullying intervention programs emphasize providing children and adults with the means to overcome stressful situations by fostering self-efficacy, emotional strength, and resilience.²⁸ We view this as a fundamental foundation for successfully reducing social aggression.
- Home environment—parents play a vital role in preventing bullying, so parental inclusion is imperative. Families can foster emotional security, belonging, and connectedness in their children. Furthermore, parents who create secure relationships with children also promote exploration, self-efficacy, learning and social development, which are tools needed to help children successfully adapt to and overcome stressful situations.²⁹ Typically, a child’s exposure to bullying occurs first at home, then at preschool and kindergarten. Consequently, to begin building resilience in children, we should consider integrating social and emotional training into school curriculum and home at an earlier age.⁴
- Research—few authors of anti-bullying programs offer the-

oretical mechanisms of change or identify which elements if any, result in a reduction in social aggression.¹⁷ Theoretical frameworks help researchers to establish internal and external validity and provide the impetus for understanding the intervention's ability to generate the desired impact.

In our example, we propose reducing incidents of bullying by improving a child's self-efficacy.³⁰ There is too much research and too many experts who acknowledge that anti-bullying programs as they stand today are ineffectual and that the way their efficacy is measured fails to provide proper scientific rigor.²² Creating more efficient anti-bullying programs means starting with a fundamental understanding of the factors that are known scientifically to reduce aggression and increase prosocial behavior.³⁰ Then, we need to use methodically, rigorous research processes to assess and analyze program outcomes. With this in mind, we advocate for social-emotional learning components that offer students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators the quantifiable instruments for understanding and overcoming adverse situations in a positive, caring and humane manner.

WHAT DO PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES RECOMMEND?

Ideally, an effective anti-bullying program would get students to change their attitudes and behavior towards each other (as well as toward bullying) as opposed to just recognizing and reporting bullying to authorities. Interventions should be designed to assess the level of bullying in school, offer mechanisms to reduce it, provide the means to change behavior, accurately measure results, and evaluate program elements and their ability to spark and sustain change.³⁰ From this perspective, we recommend basing interventions on prevailing psychological theories. Scientific principles help us to identify the essential elements that lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors; to the contrary, most anti-bullying programs today focus on legal enforcement.⁵

In their attempt to address every potential cause of bullying, most programs fill schools with posters containing catchphrases, implore bystanders to jump in, define specific acts of social aggression, and encourage students to report bullies to authorities.⁵ From this standpoint, it is nearly impossible to identify which specific program elements reduce bullying and foster the desired behavioral change because most lack an expressed theoretical foundation.³⁰

This fragmented approach may lead to some reductions in bullying; however, often, it results in expending extraordinary sums of money and effort without the promise of long-term success.⁵ Frequently, this approach exacerbates the problem by reinforcing bullying behaviors instead of preventing them. For instance, zero-tolerance policies, standard in many schools today, are linked to an increase in a different type of bullying—covert forms.¹ In our attempts to prohibit bullying, we have driven it underground. Covert bullying is becoming more widespread and imaginative.¹ For instance, the spreading of rumors and hostility through cyberbullying is increasing, and incidents of physical aggression have moved

from the classroom and playground to the bathrooms and other isolated areas of school out of plain sight.¹

Scientific experts also recommend that anti-bullying interventions take place at the appropriate level.³⁰ As a case in point, a significant amount of research indicates that social aggression begins as early as four years of age and is also prevalent in kindergarten; however, most anti-bullying programs target older elementary, middle school and high school students.⁹ Experts also suggest that the size and depth of the intervention should address the extent of the change needed. In other words, program duration (length of time) and intensity (frequency of sessions) should relate closely to the desired behavioral change.

For example, Rotheram-Borus created an effective intervention program for runaway children called "Street Smart".³¹ The program provides kids with access to healthcare, condoms, and a series of 10 skill-focused sessions based on social learning theory. In this example, the more sessions kids attend, the better the results.³⁰ Bullying has existed throughout various levels of society for centuries; consequently, lasting change to reduce it is more likely to occur with sustained intervention. In these instances, when programs continue over an extended period, even when follow-ups are informal, intervention programs are more apt to reduce the problem.³⁰ In this regard, bullying prevention programs should be considered long-term and planned accordingly.

*"Home is a child's early learning environment; it provides them with countless hours of interaction that shape their adaptive skills, self-efficacy, and social and emotional competence."*²⁹

Many bullying prevention experts recommend including parent training in social and emotional management in an intervention's program's curriculum. Since exposure to social aggression typically begins at home, this seems to be a logical part of a successful intervention. However, few anti-bullying intervention programs include a coherent, structured parenting component. For example, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) includes school-wide and classroom training modules, classroom curriculum, and bullying questionnaires.³² OBPP is a whole-school program that features school, classroom, individual, and community-level components. These modules emphasize enforcement, rules, bullying definitions, supervising student activities, and meeting with parents, teachers, and community leaders, and not social and emotional development.³²

Burkhart et al¹⁴ suggest Parenting programs can be an enormously effective means to reduce internalizing and externalizing problems in children. According to Hoffman's theory of moral internalization,¹⁴ children learn discipline, empathy, resilience, the concept of justice, and consideration of others from their parents first. Consequently, parents need a fundamental understanding of bullying and the ability to recognize if and when their child becomes a victim. However, experts also suggest that family and child resilience is intertwined. Home is a child's early learning environment; it provides them with countless hours of interaction that

shape their adaptive skills, self-efficacy, and social and emotional competence.²⁹ These are the principal components we used to create the Be Strong Bullying Prevention and Resilience Program.

Researchers also suggest that school climate plays a vital role in preventing bullying and improving academic performance. These dimensions include the commitment by school officials to educate, instruct, and develop trusting relationships with staff, community members, parents, and students. In 2014, Hajduova & Andrejkovic found that in schools that convey their policies towards bullying clearly, and create an environment of inclusion and cooperation among students and faculty members have shown a significant reduction in bullying incidents according to.³³ We support making tools available to school administrators, counselors, and teachers for educating, clarifying policies, motivating collaboration, and supporting students on both social and emotional levels.

“...by improving their social-emotional skills, we can provide children with the internal strength they need to overcome challenges like bullying, build secure relationships with others, and excel academically.”¹²

WHAT IS RESILIENCE AND CAN WE TEACH IT? |

Though not considered a character trait per se, resilience refers to the ability to successfully adapt to a situation when confronted by significant adversities, challenges or disruptions such as bullying, harassment, discrimination, and natural or human-made disasters.²⁹ RAND, a prominent global research and analytics firm, groups factors related to resilience into individual, family, organizational (school, work, etc.) and community categories.²⁹ Individual classes include positive coping (practical problem solving), buoyancy (positive affect), positive thinking (reframing thought), setting realistic expectations (interpreting situations accurately), and behavioral and emotional regulation.³⁴ Resilience training programs used by the military and first responder groups typically include these components borrowing theoretical frameworks from cognitive and behavioral sciences.³⁴

Resilience depends on internal assets such as possessing a calm demeanor, being self-aware, able to regulate emotion, and to empathize with others. As previously noted, just like math and geography, resilience can be taught, reinforced, and refreshed through social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL provides the pathway to educate children so they can recognize and control their feelings more efficiently, manage stress, resolve conflict peacefully, and make responsible decisions. In other words, by improving their social-emotional skills, we can provide children with the internal tools they need to overcome challenges like bullying, build secure relationships with others and excel academically.¹² Fortunately, during the past twenty years, educators have gained access to a multitude of SEL models designed to enhance the development of social and emotional wellbeing in children.

For example, Bullies to Buddies, a program developed by Izzy Kalman and the Be Strong Bullying Prevention and Re-

silience Program, created by the authors of this paper, impart social-emotional skills so kids can cope and bounce back quickly when confronted with stressful situations. In other words, the programs teach children to frame adversity, such as being bullied, as a challenge and then provides them with the social mechanisms they can apply to move beyond it positively. These include acknowledging responsible choices and appropriate behaviors; recognizing personal strengths, keeping emotions in check, and being aware of other people’s perspectives. Typically, children who can understand and manage their emotions effectively perform better academically; they form healthier relationships with peers and adults, set realistic expectations and make responsible and ethical decisions.¹² Why is this important? Because children equipped with social and emotional competency tend to adjust to school and classroom environments more effectively. Their ability to focus energies on academic assignments is stronger compared to students exhibiting poor social skills.¹²

Furthermore, in classrooms with established SEL programs, teachers spend much less time managing volatility, and this includes investigating and apprehending bullies.¹² In addition to a reduction in antisocial behavior, greater social and emotional competence correlates to an increased likelihood of attending college, career success, and better overall psychological health. What is even more encouraging is that a recent meta-analysis of more than 80 school-based SEL intervention evaluations illustrates that sustaining positive outcomes for students over time is possible.¹²

CONCLUSION |

We are not advocating for the abandonment of existing anti-bullying programs. In severe cases of bullying, perpetrators should be apprehended and punished appropriately. Children also need a support system that includes the opportunity to report social aggression that causes physical or emotional harm to the proper authorities, but they also need an internal developmental system that helps them to address the issue on their terms. Meaning, by understanding social constructs within the school environment and developing social and emotional competence, we can prepare children to handle almost any unfavorable situation.⁹

One of the first ethical codes of conduct we learn as psychological professionals is to do no harm (APA, n.d.). Still, our profession promotes anti-bullying policies that, according to a significant body of evidence, produce minimal results. The current system suggests that targets are powerless; we need to protect them at all costs. After all, kids deserve the right to attend school in a bully-free, safe environment. While we agree in principle, we also know that establishing dominance through relational aggression has been in existence since the dawn of time; it is an instinctual survival behavior.⁵

From this perspective, legislating or setting a policy to prevent bullying runs counter to human nature and presses educators into the role of enforcer, judge, and jury at the risk of their school’s legal peril. As psychologists, we are also taught to

avoid taking client sides and more importantly, labeling people, but today's anti-bullying establishment requires us to do both. Unfortunately, this victimization rationality pits aggressors against targets, teachers against parents and students, administrators against policymakers, and the legal system against the educational system. This current state has netted a system in which 86 percent of the anti-bullying programs fail to reduce bullying at all, and only 14 percent provide minimal results.⁴

Scientists know that we cannot possibly control mother nature; in other words, a natural disaster will inevitably strike at some point somewhere in the world. However, like bullying, we can provide people with the means to prepare and mitigate the unexpected harm mother nature often perpetuates. As a result, we are recommending a fundamental paradigm shift in today's anti-bullying interventions. Instead of focusing on protection and punishment, center the foundation for prevention on preparation and personal development.

In other words, help kids cultivate, identify, and tap into their social and emotional strength so they can persevere and thrive in hostile or challenging situations—this is the heart of what we recommend and support.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Short Communication

An Urgent Request for Evidence-Based Mental Health Intervention Research in Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries

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The rise in mental health issues is a global phenomenon. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has published data that shows the global burden of mental disorders continues to grow and claim that the health systems throughout the world are struggling to respond adequately to the needs of people with mental health disorders.¹ Approximately 85% of the world population resides in 153 low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs). Further, more than 80% of people who have mental disorders are located in LMICs.² However, it is estimated that 90-95% of mental health resources, including human resources for psychological therapies are being delivered in countries that only account for 5% of the population.³ This is a global inequity and it is unjust. This article serves as a desperate call to researchers to urgently engage in evidence-based psychological therapies interventions in LMICs. This is not as an attempt to reallocate existing provision of mental health resources, but to reduce the treatment gap by advocating opportunities for all.

Mental health disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide as measured in disability adjusted life years (DALYs), accounting for nearly a quarter (22%) of all days lived with disability.⁴ As populations age, the burden of non-communicable diseases, such as mental disorders, is rising. Mental and neurological disorders combined account for over a third (37%) of the disability burden associated with chronic non-communicable diseases.⁵ The DALYs due to mental illness grew by 38% in the twenty years between 1990 and 2010.⁴ That growth is expected to continue, because mental disorders are most commonly diagnosed in the adult years, and as populations age, they become more susceptible to neurological disorders such as dementia and Parkinsonism. Interestingly, the WHO (2011) predicted that, by 2030, mental health

problems, particularly depression, will be the leading cause of mortality and morbidity globally.¹ Currently, more than 300 million people suffer from depression globally and it contributes to 800,000 suicides per year.¹ Depression alone is likely to be the third leading cause of disease burden in low-income countries and the second highest cause of disease burden in middle-income countries.⁶

There is a clear association between the mental health of a child and the development of mental health disorders as an adult.^{7,8} Mental health issues are estimated to affect 10-20% of youth in LMICs,⁹ although this statistic is thought to be highly conservative as it fails to take account of any co-variation of factors, such as lack of supply side barriers or demand side barriers. Further, confounding factors like the normalisation each individual society has placed on the impact of stressful life events and experiences will have a significant bearing on how mental health is seen, the stigma attached to it and how statistical information is recorded and interpreted.^{7,10} Interestingly, between 1992 and 2001, published research from LMICs contributed just 5% of the mental health research-related articles to the internationally indexed literature on mental health.¹⁰ However, despite this clear and apparent need, evidence-based research and sustainable interventions for children and adolescence with mental health issues as well as the aging populations in LMICs are restricted and limited.^{2-4,7}

Stressful trigger events that are associated with an increase in mental health disorders are often very different in LMICs than high-income countries (HICs). For example, children and adolescents in LMICs that have experienced either man-made (such as civil conflict or war) or natural disasters (such as flooding or

drought), are at greater risk from a variety of mental health issues, the most common of which are elevated anxiety and mood disorders, suicide and suicidal ideation, acute stress reactions including post-traumatic stress disorders, sleep disruption, as well as a decreased sense of self and identity from loss (of place or person) and grief reactions.¹⁰⁻¹³ Interestingly, neuroscience research has comprehensively documented that prolonged exposure to the stress hormone, cortisol, can damage areas of the brain associated with memory, movement and mental health.¹⁴ Therefore, it is hardly surprising that suicide rates in a number of LMICs are some of the highest in the world.^{8,13}

Stigma is a known factor that inhibits access to psychological therapies. About 8 in 10 people with depression had experienced discrimination, usually within familiar settings such as with family members, friends, work relationships, marriage and divorce and with other interpersonal relationships.⁶ Nearly forty percent of people with depression will not reach out for things they truly consider important in their personal and work life, out of fear (anticipated stigma) that they may be discriminated against.⁶ This hinders progress, as the tendency is to hide family members with mental illness out of embarrassment, rather than bring them forward to access the treatment and care they need. Such individuals are thus, often at increased risk of suffering human rights abuses. Therefore, in the author's opinion, those that engage with evidence-based intervention research should include a programme of mental health awareness training to aid the ongoing sustainability of that intervention.

Despite huge strides in recent years, the treatment gap remains enormous and represents a gross inequity that exists with people's ability to access mental health provisions in LMICs. The most vulnerable groups appear to be child and adolescent and the aging populations, although the data available from various government statistics are lacking and there is little on the ground evidence-based intervention research being published that shows sustainable steps forward. The associated consequence of this is critical gaps in knowledge and a failure to adequately understand global mental health needs, especially in poorer socioeconomic countries. Given the growing burden of mental health across the globe and an increasing population size, both high-income countries as well as LMICs could benefit from the identification of successful, low-cost sustainable evidence-based interventions, particularly those that include the family and community-based provisions. As global citizens, academic researchers and clinicians, we have a responsibility to address this global injustice and inequity, ensuring that mental health provision is available to those in need by developing sustainable interventions.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Original Research

Exploring the Notion of Performance in Branch Sales Managers: A Narrative Approach

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ABSTRACT

Aim

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that affect the performance of branch sales managers (BSM) of a private bank in India. It also aimed to identify factors that differentiate high performing BSMs from the rest.

Methods

A phenomenological methodology known as narrative analysis was used to uncover the lived experiences of Branch sales managers. Open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted with 50 Branch sales managers situated across the Northern, Western and Southern Regions of India who were pre-classified in two pools of talent—high performers and average performers based on their performance ratings.

Results

Results yielded two distinguishing profiles of high and average performing BSMs known as ‘Bulls’, and ‘Bears’ respectively. Ramifications of individual’s personality, family structure and education profile, birth order, educational and vocational choices, influence of their past work experience, etc., were found to contribute to distinct patterns of work behavior and thereby performance.

Conclusion

Sales organizations will need to hire both “Bull I/Bull II” and “Bears” as each brings a different work ethos that is critical for high and consistent performance within the sales function. Organizations will need to create specific performance levers to engage the “Bull I/Bull II” and “Bears”.

Keywords

Bears; Bull I; Bull II; Sales performance; Sloths.

INTRODUCTION

Sales performance is usually construed as the accomplishment of defined sales goals. Effort towards achieving goals is usually not regarded as a measure of performance. Outcomes over inputs are therefore, valued, measured and rewarded in sales performance. Across industries, companies attach a premium to recruit sales people who can become high performing, contributing immediately and consistently towards getting in more customers (hunting) or getting in higher share of wallet from existing customers (farming).

In Indian banks, the branch sales manager (BSM) role is designed to accommodate both hunting and farming sales, even though the skills needed for both are quite distinct. The role largely looks at individual customers, however, it could also allow the BSMs to approach institutions located in the vicinity of the bank’s branch.

This research examines unique work behaviors that contribute to high performance in a BSM role. The research is a precursor to develop a recruitment process that will help identify candidates who are most likely to demonstrate work behaviors that lead to performance.

Personality Influences

BIG 5 predictors of high performance in sales jobs: Research on sales performance has traditionally focused on the BIG 5 personality model.¹ The BIG 5 model was published by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae in 1985 and continues to be a popular personality framework used by researchers to understand the relationship between personality and work. The factors of conscientiousness, extraversion and emotional stability have been reflected consistently in performance researches.²

Conscientiousness can be defined as the propensity to follow socially prescribed norms for impulse control, to be goal directed, to plan, and to be able to delay gratification.³ It is the tendency of being standardized, steady, self-disciplined, acting dutifully, focusing on achieving goals, and prioritizing planned behaviour.⁴

Studies indicate that individuals who report high scores on conscientiousness are more dependable, achievement oriented and display goal-motivated behaviours.⁵ This trait is a valid predictor for good job performance in various occupational groups especially in highly autonomous work situations.⁶ Individuals who possess this trait act well in the customer field.⁵ Considerable research indicates that the five factor model personality dimension of conscientiousness is one of the best predictors of job performance.⁵ Some researchers have suggested that conscientiousness incorporates volitional variables, such as hardworking, achievement-oriented and persevering.⁶ Thus, conscientious individuals are achievement oriented, hardworking, and have high expectations of themselves, which leads them to set more difficult goals (i.e., choice of level of effort to expend). Conscientiousness tends to be the only personality trait that correlates with performance across all categories of jobs.⁷

Extraversion is almost always studied in relation to sales jobs. Sales jobs require higher amounts of extraversion and are usually believed to be better enjoyed by people who possess a higher degree of extraversion. Past research conducted by researchers has found conscientiousness to be a predictor of job performance, extraversion to be a predictor of performance in sales-management roles, while agreeableness was found to predict performance in teams.⁸ An employee with high values on these three factors is most likely to achieve a positive career outcome.

As quoted earlier, the general norm around a sales profile is predominantly characterized by extraversion. Research has indicated that individuals with high extraversion trait were found to be more energetic, assertive, outgoing and dominant in social situations and found to strive for position power, engage in impulsive decision making and risk-taking behaviour, and possess good social skills in determining the relational role of the customer service provider in the service industry.⁹ Extraversion has been found to be the most consistent correlate of achievement motivation for both sexes, followed by psychoticism and neuroticism.¹⁰ Extraversion has also been found to correlate with success in sales and management jobs as well as with training performance.¹¹

In this paper, the outcomes did not indicate a relationship between extraversion and performance. Thus, introversion or extraversion did not impact the way high performing BSMs sought, built or managed their customer and internal relationships. Several studies have indicated that avoidance behaviours of an extraverted individual may weaken the business relationship and has been proven to negatively impact the relationship.⁹ A dominant feature of this trait i.e. granting status to oneself at the cost of others may be a reason for the existence of this negative relationship.⁵

Emotional stability is important especially when it involves jobs that require teamwork as they entail characteristics such as the ability to control temper, endure pressure, with the outcome focused on attaining excellent job performance.⁵ Individuals with the ability to control stress, anxiety and depression are strongly related to job performance that involved teamwork.¹² Dealing with challenging customers with multiple requests, complaints and demands require high emotional tolerance.¹²

Achievement orientation and job performance: The term need for achievement was 1st used by Henry Murray in 1938.¹³ The construct refers to an individual's desire for significant accomplishment, mastering of skill, control or high standards of living. This entails intense, prolonged and repeated efforts to accomplish something difficult.¹³ Whenever one's performance can be assessed as reaching given standards of excellence or not, achievement motivation comes into play.¹⁴ Achievement orientation is a learned drive that develops in early childhood.¹⁵

With respect to sales, the competition and desire to win or to be better than others or the need for interpersonal competition are the pleasure obtained by competing with other salespeople. The desire to exceed them in performance which affects the effort of the salespeople is a feature of the individual which pushes him/her in the path of victory.¹⁶

Self-efficacy and sales performance: According to Bandura, "self-concept reflects people's beliefs in their personal efficacy." Self-efficacy is defined as the confidence in one's ability to accomplish things.¹⁷ People who have a high sense of self efficacy believe they have the intelligence (common sense), drive, and self-control necessary for achieving success.¹⁸

Individuals who perceive themselves as highly efficacious activate sufficient effort that, if well executed, produces successful outcomes, whereas those who perceive low self-efficacy are likely to cease their efforts prematurely and fail on task. Empirical research also suggests that self-efficacy is related to a number of other work-performance measures such as adaptability to advanced technology, managerial idea generating, coping with career related events, managerial performance, skill acquisition, etc.¹⁹

Higher self-efficacy in a realm is associated with good outcomes, ranging from greater job satisfaction and performance, to better physical and mental health, to better academic performance.¹⁷ Previous studies have shown that self-efficacy and motivation are both an integral part of performance and both these

factors contribute to a good service quality, effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace.¹⁷

Most research establishes self-efficacy as one of the most important predictors of sales performance.²⁰ Researchers have studied the role of self-efficacy, effort and sales skills as influencers of salespeople's performance.¹⁶ The effort can manifest in the working hard (persistence and the intensity of the energy used) *vs.* working smart (efficiency in allocating their energy i.e. to know to identify which activities are aligned with the goals) dimension coupled with the salesperson's capacity of accepting the feedback.²¹ The self-efficacy can manifest with different faces such as sales skills, knowledge, and orientation towards learning for building up relationship with customers.¹⁶ These findings are supported by research which indicates that people with higher self-efficacy tend to make more effort, and consequently to get a better performance in sales jobs.¹⁶

Manager Influences

Role of manager in creating high performance: The manager plays a crucial role in determining the performance of his/her subordinates that could range from bringing tasks to a closure (for instance, achieving monthly targets) to helping his/her subordinates in lifting the team morale. Previous studies have indicated that salespeople's perceptions of their managers' role-modeling behavior relate positively to trust in the sales manager and relate indirectly, through trust, to both job satisfaction and over-all performance of salespeople.²¹ In addition, congruence between salespeople and sales managers plays a significant role in reducing role conflict and ambiguity, thereby exerting a positive influence on salesperson performance.²¹

Studies also show that a variety of factors such as recognition of effort and results, personal growth and ability, leadership and supervisor feedback, financial compensation and incentives, employee autonomy and team work have strong influence on motivation of salespeople performance and leads to their stronger relationship with the organization, which in turn fuels higher performance.²²

Research has found a number of variables that affect job performance at work including manager's attitude towards employees, organizational culture, personal problems, job content and financial rewards.²³ Organizational culture is a reflection of employees' performance on the job. Further, the design of job has long been considered an important influence on individual's intrinsic motivation and later leads to higher job performance level of employees.²⁴

Tenure and high performance: Researchers have highlighted that an individual's performance changes as a result of learning and that high performance is always the result of greater understanding towards the specific job instead of greater effort to the job.⁷

Childhood Influences

Occupational choices made by parents can exert a direct influence

on the career choices of their children.²⁵ Factors like parental beliefs such as achievement expectations or efficacy might function as links between socioeconomic status (SES) and achievement outcomes.²⁶ Early adversity in childhood can negatively impact adult education, employment, and income.²⁶

Research has indicated that adults with lower SES experience more stressful life events and tend to have fewer psychological resources (e.g., self-confidence, self-control, delayed gratification) to deal with life's challenges.²⁷ Yet another study found a significant relation between achievement and parental income.²⁸

Reflecting on past literature, the purpose of this research was to identify factors that affect the performance of BSM of a private bank in India. It also aimed to identify factors that differentiate high performing BSMs from the rest. This has been elucidated further in the research.

METHOD

Sample

The sample comprised of 50 males working in Delhi NCR, Mumbai and Chennai branches of one of the largest private-sector banks in India offering a comprehensive suite of financial products. The participants were identified through purposive sampling and fell in different positions at the bank such as manager, deputy manager (DM), senior manager (SM), etc. Given the gender skew in the BSM population, no female employees were sampled for the research.

Performance (fulfilment of sales leads, customer engagement, generating referrals, enhanced portfolio of customers, etc.) remained a prime sampler for the study since the study was designed to understand what led some people to perform better in a retail sales role. Performance was largely defined as "achieving the stated sales goal number for the month", for a minimum of 10-months in a 12-month annual cycle, for at least 2 consecutive years. Average performance defined as "achieving the stated goal for a minimum of 6-months in a 12-month annual cycle. There was no distinction made between people who met the goal and those who exceeded the goal, at the sample stage. The degree of goal deficit was not considered as a factor to distinguish between average performers.

As a natural outcome of the annual appraisal process, low performers were not met with as most of them had already attrited.

Within the performance sets, sampling was further refined based on the education, total work experience, total relevant work experience, tenure at the bank, geographical work location, and domicile city.

Participants were segmented into two pools of talent-high performers and average performers by their respective human resource (HR) manager. A semi-structured interview was prepared

before interviewing the participants probing into the parameters for performance and the motivation behind the same. The data was collected in the form of spoken accounts or narratives and participants were prompted to speak about their demographic and psychological characteristics such as familial background, career, academic experiences, and drivers for goal achievement and motivation at work, leadership skills, satisfaction with their jobs, career views, job related activities, etc. All the interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewee, besides a handful of them conducted in English. The data obtained was subjected to narrative analysis.

PROCEDURE

Narrative Analysis

The current study used narrative analysis as a strategy of inquiry. The current study helped gain an understanding of the participant's experiences, expectations and ideas related to performance in their jobs.

Narrative analysis is a qualitative approach that extrapolates an understanding of how meaning is conferred onto experience, especially in narratives of personal experience about concrete life situations. Narratives attempt to explain or normalize what has occurred; they lay out why things are the way they are or have become the way they are.²⁹⁻³²

A narrative is a story that tells a sequence of events that is significant for the narrator or audience or her or his audience. In this research the narrative approach highlighted the way that participants integrated their expectations from life and career with their jobs, the energy they spent in making themselves successful at their jobs and the work behaviours they chose to demonstrate.

In this study the participants of the two performance groups shared their individual stories. The narrative interviews explored the meaning of performance, perceptions of behaviours/skills needed to deliver performance, perception of performance barriers (both internal and external), perceptions and meaning of career and career success, motivators, values, beliefs and assumptions that propel the work behaviors used in the delivery of day-to-

day work. A large part of the dialogue also focused on understanding what career and career success meant to participants in a larger view of life.

The emerging data were viewed in an idiographic sense which enabled a holistic understanding of each individual's narrative by focusing on their past history (including family history, past work experiences) and their current jobs in relation to their past and present experiences. The researchers read, re-read and discussed each of the narratives until an overarching understanding of a frame of reference was formed that accounted for the variations in the data. In the analysis the stories were subjected to a rigorous analysis to deduce commonly emerging themes. Consensus was obtained among the researchers with respect to assigning attributes to different personality categories.

The analysis yielded different themes for high and average performing sampled participants. The themes were reviewed by managers at different levels and validated against other (non-participants) high and average performing BSMs. For demographic and part socio-graphic profile, a review of the employee data bank yielded validations.

The research was commissioned by our client, a leading private sector bank in India. Participants of the research were communicated via email and in-person about the intent of the research and its process. The research outcomes did not impact and were not used to make any career decisions about the participants. They were used to understand performance profiles and enablers with the intention of using outcomes to strengthen the recruitment process making it more predictive of hiring high performers. Input will also be used to modify the reward and recognition programs. The research outcomes were not shared with any manager for validation as person-wise profile was not shared. Only the outcomes were distributed.

RESULTS

The research unearthed 4 sales talent profiles, each with a distinct demographic, socio-graphic and personality profile that explained work behaviors and subsequent job performance. For ease of reference these 4 profiles were called out as the Bull I, Bull II, Bears, and Sloths.

Figure 1. Predictors of Performance

			
Achievement Orientation	Dominant	Present	May Not Be Present
Self-Efficacy	Present	May Not Be Present	May Not Be Present
Conscientiousness	Present	Dominant	May Not Be Present
Managerial Mindset	May Not Be Present	Present	May Not Be Present

The high performers and average performers differed on 4 personality factors –

Achievement Orientation

The extent to which the individual takes proactive steps to meet and exceed performance expectations and does so to progress faster in one’s career and attain financial success.

Conscientiousness

The extent to which the individual feels confident about own ability to deliver results, seeking autonomy and initiating action/decision needed to deliver on goals.

Self-efficacy

The extent to which the individual feels dutiful and engages in laid out work steps, believing that these will lead to success.

Managerial Mindset

The time that the individual invests in people management, making own team successful through continuous guidance/coaching/support, etc.

Each of these predictors of performance comprised of several sub-factors. Factors like family background, need for money, ambition and competitiveness, method of goal achievement, collaboration, stability *versus* growth, responses to challenges constituted achievement orientation. Mastery experiences, response to failures and need for guidance accounted for self-efficacy.

Orientation towards processes and protocols, dutiful and respect for hierarchy comprised conscientiousness. Lastly, view on managing others accounted for managerial mindset. These have been elucidated further in the next section.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to identify factors that affect the performance of BSM of a private bank in India. It also aimed to identify factors that differentiate high performing BSMs from average performing BSMs. A narrative approach was particularly chosen since it allows for deeper level of analysis of personal experiences in concrete life situations. Data was synthesized and analyzed. Analysis of the narratives revealed themes of achievement orientation, self-efficacy, conscientiousness and managerial mindset. The narratives also uncovered socio-graphic, demographic and personality variables that are characteristic of two distinguishing profiles that emerged during the course of our study. These came to be known as Bulls II and Bears. Based on our research, two hypothesized profiles emerged i.e. Bulls I and Sloths, which could be studied in the future. The results from the current study have been elucidated further.

The High Performing Bulls

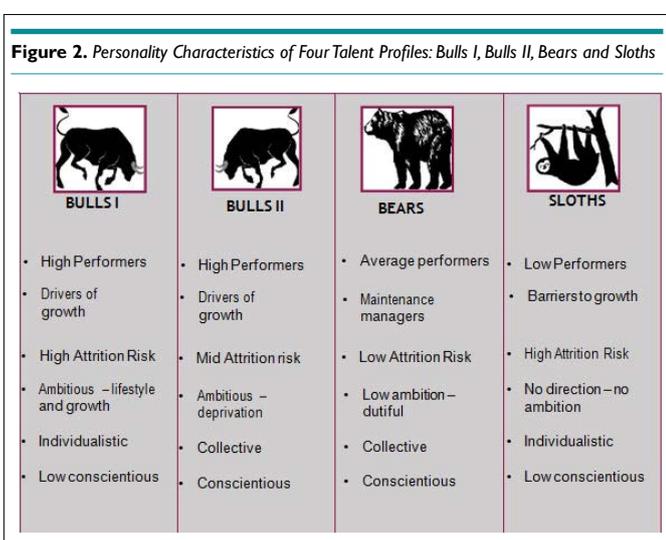
High performing BSMs were categorized into Bulls I and Bulls II. Both demonstrated work behaviours that led to consistent high performance in their roles as sales managers. Their definition of performance, experience of performance, method and motivators of driving performance were different.

Bull I and Bull II were characterized by distinct levels of high achievement orientation and high self-efficacy, both identified as core drivers of work performance in the current study. These characteristics were attained differently, guided by the differences in their life experiences.

Bulls I, with a high need to pursue and maintain socially good lifestyle aspired for the money that they gain as a result of high performance. The need for good lifestyle was propelled by their currently middle-high income group, parents’ solid social status, premium education and peer group income.

The money, usually attained by winning in higher incentives against sales, remained their core motivators to expend energy in generating new sales leads, closing sales and creating high share of wallet from each current customer. In the pursuit of sales closure, they usually found the banks policies, protocols constraining or bottlenecks to their speed of working. It was not unusual for them to bypass, ignore or reform these policies/protocols in favor of sales, sometimes exposing the bank to high-risk. It was hypothesized that Bull I would seek to spend the highest amount of time per day in seeking sales and would find activities of managing people, engaging in team work or managing internal networks unimportant and interfering. Bull I would work best individually, chasing sales, ensuring they remain high performing. Bulls I were hypothesized to have a more short term view of success. They are most likely to invest higher energy in high value wins or quick wins, but less on ensuring sales is sustainable, repeatable and consistent. Often, Bull I will have sudden peaks of high sales, followed by unexplained lulls.

The current study elicited a differential profile known as



Bulls II, who in contrast, were motivated by the desire to create a secure financial future for themselves. Through early childhood experiences of deprivation, parents low-mid income group, large dependent family structure and access to basic education, the Bulls II valued the stability that money can provide and saw it as an essential resource to ensure they can maintain their current lifestyle, while saving for the future, in the hope of offering better opportunities to their young and growing families. The money, largely attained *via* incentives achieving (exceeding sales goals), is a prime motivator for Bulls II to engage in sales activities. They prefer to spend more time in activities where the guarantee of sales is higher. Thus, they stressed upon farming rather than hunting sales efforts. Bulls II seemed to value consistency, stability and repeatability of sales as much as they would value the sales itself. They exerted effort in maintaining processes whilst including others, spent time with teams which was usually equally distributed with their sales effort. Bulls II saw organizational processes/policies/protocols as important levers of sales. In comparison to Bulls I, Bulls II would have a less unpredictable sales pattern.

Managing the Bulls

Both Bulls I and Bulls II would deliver high performance, however, their method and motivator varied. Similarly, their needs from managers and organization also varied.

Bulls I and Bulls II both seek high recognition, preferably in monetary formats for the outcomes they deliver. Bulls I would attrite in the absence of highly differentiating incentives and also for higher guaranteed monthly pay. Bulls I may tend to believe that delivery of sales is a result of their skills alone and that the company's environment/products etc. play little role in the same.

They may not feel anxious about losing their performance streak in new environments. This could propel them to take chances with their career and indicate high propensity to switch jobs. In contrast, Bulls II preferred career stability over career chance. They believed that performance is a function of their skill and the company's culture/levers. Moving to a new company would often mean that they would need to re-invest time in building internal equity, gelling into the new culture and learning new tricks of the trade. During the settlement period into any new company, they fear a period of low/average performance. They expressed that they would often feel anxious about whether the new environment will create performance for them or not. In such anxiety provoking situations, they would prefer to stay longer in current organization where they have been rewarded and are more successful.

Bulls I would possibly seek managers who deploy high levels of autonomy and allow freedom to decide the method of work, as long as outcomes are delivered. They may feel disengaged in situations of reporting and monitoring. Bulls II sought and valued managerial support. They usually sought managerial engagement and advice. Bulls II entered the organization with moderate levels of self-efficacy but high achievement orientation. They further expressed that praise, encouragement and mentoring by managers greatly impacts their performance and further builds on

their Self- efficacy.

Managerial Mindset of Bulls

Bull I would most likely prefer to spend most of their time in activities linked directly to the goal that would yield the highest recognition and incentive. As an obvious consequence, their attention to sales would likely be higher than their attention to people management. Bulls I, as managers, would have high performance expectations and could find it hard to allocate any mindshare to individuals who will be struggling to perform. As a result, Bulls I are more likely to instigate competition and openly favor the high performing team members.

Bulls II valued performance in team members; hence, they invested time in building self-efficacy of their team members. They mentored and coached more frequently than Bulls I and would display a little more patience towards those struggling to perform. As managers they may be demanding in terms of performance but are also facilitative of it.

Retaining the Bulls

Retaining Bull I and Bull II would be a matter of how differentiated they feel for the performance they deliver and a function of monetary success. Their need to grow, be promoted and be compensated will be high. Bulls I, in contrast to Bulls II, are likely to seek a competitive work environment and prioritize the value they derive from their peer groups. According to the current research, organizational brand and market position played important role for the Bulls.

The Average performing Bears

In contrast to the Bull 1 and Bull 2, findings from the current research indicated that Bears built a career out of a necessity and accepted it as a natural progression of life. A job spelt regular stable monthly income. Additional income from incentives was welcome for the Bears but they did not actively seek it, as actively as they would when they engage in tasks that could yield better results. Bears tended to be dutiful and believed that their sense of duty, their focus on ensuring that they attend to all tasks described in the job, will get them performance. In the present study, it did but only sparingly.

The conscientiousness of Bears towards their jobs was found to indicate not just their duties but also policies/protocols/processes of work.

Bears were able to maintain the sales performance they inherited, and were also able to create sales in opportunities that came across their way. They did not actively go out to create sales opportunities. In routine environments, stable managerial relationships, standard products sales, Bears were able to deliver on sales goals with some consistency. They lacked the drive to achieve sales in new/complex work situations, with new and/or high net worth customer base or in situations where performance pressure was very high.

Findings from the current study indicated that Bears preferred stability and consistency over change. Once they would settle into a role and an organization, they would ideally prefer long stints and remain low on attrition risk.

Bears, as managers, remained inclusive and provided a high degree of mentoring and guidance. They were concerned with harmony and would prefer to create collaboration over competition in their teams. The resulting team set will therefore resemble the Bear profile. A Bull I/II would find it hard to work under a Bear, often seeking more autonomy and operating with a sense of competition.

Managing the Bears

Bears seemed to respond well to a high degree of supervision, mentoring and guidance—they are likely to flourish only if it is made available to them. Bears worked more effectively under managers who displayed empathy and partial behaviour (concerned about employee's well-being and success, being decisive about what needs to be done and how it needs to be done, providing encouragement, shielding employee from failures and stress, etc.)

Bears usually entered the organization with low levels of self-efficacy. They expressed that they would need to gain an understanding of their skills and also see successes before they feel confident of delivering on the job. Manager investment plays a key role in this process. The initial success of Bears came from covering high probability sales opportunities that their managers provided them. This cycle of gaining opportunities from managers and converting those remain the bedrock of their performance pattern for a long time into their careers. Bears almost always quoted methods of work that they had learnt from their managers and henceforth did not create own ideas to drive sales.

Managerial Mindset of Bears

Bears seemed to adapt their own manager's style. They tended to invest time in people management, driving equality in performance and opportunity. They coached, mentored, guided their teams and cajoled people into performance. Bears, as managers, found it easier to manage employees who were Bears *vs* employees who were characteristic of Bulls I and II. Bull employees were regarded as too competitive, independent and demanding for a manager characteristic of a Bear to handle and drive harmony.

Retaining Bears

Retaining Bears is critical to the business. They seem to thrive in a culture that does not aggressively drive high performance expectations or competitive behavior. They respond to an environment that promotes sharing and harmony and one where manager support and availability is very high.

The Sloths—Low Performers

In the current research, the profile of Sloths has been hypothe-

sized because the motivators were evident in Bull I, Bull II and Bears. Sloths, the research assumes, would lack the core motivators needed for optimal performance in a sales job that is characterized by routine, pressure and discipline.

Sloths could come from a wide socio-graphic/demographic background but their commonality will be a part of their desire to create a stable professional career. They would find it hard to adapt to the professional role, the discipline and activity it requires. The uncomfortableness of the work environment, its protocols, monitoring, expectations, would make Sloths rebel or get disengaged.

Our study offers a window into the nature of performance pertaining to sales profile in the banking sector, contributing to the growing number of narrative studies addressing issues of non-performance in organizations. The study was limited by its restricted sample that did not include gender difference and did not include a group of low performers in the BSM role. Additionally, the findings of this research may be limited to front line sales roles in retail banking in India. The research may not have cross industry and cross geography relevance. The validation of personality factors can be undertaken *via* psychometric assessment and is planned as the second phase of this research. Future research in this area could create a finer distinction in performance categories and could use quantitative research methods to enhance validity and scalability.

CONCLUSION

Sales organizations will need to hire the Bulls and Bears for each brings a different work ethos that is critical for high and consistent performance. Organizations will need to create specific performance levers to engage the Bulls and Bears to harness their performance potential and keep them engaged. The lack of differentiated performance reward programs will tend to disengage the Bulls, who have higher achievement orientation. Bulls got motivated with high sales incentives and wanted to be paid a premium for exceeding goals. They tend to respond well to a tiered sales incentive plan that gave them a chance to earn more if they exceeded the goals by 20% or 50%. The more the (positive) differentiation between the goal and their achievement, the higher they would want to be incentivized. Bulls liked less follow-ups and more autonomy. They liked the feeling of going into the battle and coming back with a trophy. They didn't like having to check back for approvals, solution packs, pricing options etc., Bulls demanded a high amount of career progress.

Our research findings indicate that achievement orientation is the most important factor in determining whether an individual will be a Bull or a Bear or a Sloth. Self-efficacy is found to have interdependencies with achievement orientation—with the latter (achievement orientation) impacting the creation of the former (self-efficacy)—people high on achievement orientation typically have high self-efficacy. Conscientiousness emerged as an independent factor, unaffected by the level of achievement orientation or self-efficacy (though it was generally found that people high

on achievement orientation and self-efficacy were usually not very high of conscientiousness as they preferred self-initiation over following prescription). Managerial mindset emerged as an independent and important factor in driving performance of Bulls II and Bears.

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Review

How the Desensitization of Police Violence, Stereotyped Language, and Racial Bias Impact Black Communities

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ABSTRACT

As the access to create media continues to expand, issues related to the desensitization of police violence, stereotyped language (racial baiting), and implicit bias within the criminal justice system are brought to the forefront highlighting the negative and harmful relationships between the criminal justice system and Black communities. In order to address these issues on a national scale, a call to action is made for psychologists to assist in restructuring the understanding of the relationship of violence, cognition, and media in order to advocate for social justice. Psychological research on the topics are discussed as well as how the field of psychology can inform training within police departments and the communities they serve.

Keywords

Police violence; Racial bias; Black communities.

INTRODUCTION

The use of media in social justice movements has allowed for national conversations regarding the need to repair how Black communities are policed.^{1,2} Activists use their platforms to highlight the repercussions of aggressive policing as well as the impact that mass media has on promoting biased views of Black victims who experience violence *via* the criminal justice system.^{3,4} Despite America's well-documented history of aggressive policing against Black communities,⁵ social activists and the general public use video-recording technology to assist in documenting acts of excessive force.⁶⁻⁸ Due to the availability of video recording technology the unnecessary deaths of people of color flood the media⁹; and despite the explicit imagery the utility of the videos are often viewed with skepticism by many within the criminal justice system.^{10,11} Although each situation is nuanced by its unique set of circumstances, there are several recurring issues that are paramount to note: violence desensitization, the use of bias and stereotyped language, lack of adequate training and poor community involvement (e.g., community policing). Addressing these concerns is fundamental when attempting to ameliorate the experience of injustice many Black people feel when dealing with the criminal justice system.

These issues require adept training in areas of cultural competence and community systems as well as research, theory, and practice. The field of psychology is a uniquely qualified group of professionals who could and should assist in constructing healthy relationships between the criminal justice system/police departments and Black communities they serve.¹²

VIOLENCE, COGNITION AND MEDIA

Research on the impact of violence has consistently found that the more people are exposed to violence in television, video games, and real life, the more they become desensitized or habituated to future violence.¹³⁻¹⁷ With the desensitization of violence people's natural negative responses to such stimuli are reduced, along with the amount of empathy and sympathy they have for victims of violence.^{18,19} Some researchers have noted that America's trending desensitization has resulted in the development of pro-violent attitudes,^{7,15,20,21} that can likely be linked to the increasingly violent media we consume daily. These factors may lead one to wonder: how does violence habituation impact and/or affect the relationship between the criminal justice system and communities of color?

Despite the relevant research on how violence affects individuals, mass media and the criminal justice system continue to utilize videotaped violence in a manner that would create a habituated effect on viewers and jurors alike. For example, the key piece of evidence in the 1991 beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) police officers was videotaped. The video recorded beating of Rodney King exposed the use of police violence to communities that would otherwise not witness such acts.⁹ And no matter how shocking it was the first time it was viewed, it became less so after its repeated viewing, ultimately causing a numbing effect with the public and jurors, according to psychologist Aletha Huston⁸ and political science professor Lester Spence.²² Similar to the Rodney King incident, videos of violence in Black communities continue to be shown on a rapid loop on various media platforms to either showcase the improprieties of the police, the victims or both.

According to cognitive psychology, bias often occurs because the brain makes shortcuts in order to process information; also known as heuristics. Examples of heuristics as a method of making decisional shortcuts include using a rule of thumb, stereotyping and/or profiling.²³ Some of these short cuts or biases are blatant (e.g. explicit) in people's lives, while others are implicit. Implicit biases are the attitudes or beliefs that occur unconsciously.²⁴ Several studies have found that police officers find Black faces to be more menacing and criminal when compared to White faces, and the decision to shoot an unarmed Black person occurred more quickly and with more accuracy than a decision to shoot an unarmed White person.²⁵⁻²⁹ Because of quick decisional requirements of police officers and the impact that implicit bias can have on the lives of Black community members, there needs to be an intentional re-training of police officers. Through research and the development of best practices psychologists can inform police departments, judges, lawyers and other important decision-makers on how trauma impacts brain functioning, behavior, and the perspectives of those people affected. Psychologists can help in reducing the possibility of traumatizing communities of color through the constant viewing of violence, can assist in teaching police how to respond to people who suffer from trauma.

Similarly impacting the course of justice is the use of violent, racially charged, fear-mongering imagery in mass media and the larger criminal justice system; which can fuel implicit bias.³ The exploitation of racial fears in court cases involving Black people has often resulted in a term coined the 'Big Black Man' stereotype.³⁰ According to the United States Court of Appeals, the use of racial stereotyping can "violently affect a juror's impartiality and must be removed from the courtroom proceeding to the fullest extent possible. It negates the defendant's right to be tried on the evidence in the case and not on extraneous issues".¹⁰ Racial stereotypes in media outlets and courtrooms inevitably prey upon the historical biases of race in America while simultaneously suggesting that the victims are to blame for their deaths.³¹⁻³³ All too often media coverage moves from reporting the facts of a case to making suggestive assumptions about why these incidents occurred to the victim. For example, in the Brown case, Michael Brown was depicted as a youth who had a history of being suspended from

school and was described as an "unstoppable, violent brute, who could kill [Wilson] in one punch", or in the Rice case it was noted that "Tamir Rice's father abused women", or in the Powell case headlines read "man was carrying a variable pump air rifle" and finally in the Garner case, Eric Garner was described as a "criminal" who sold loose cigarettes in the community.³¹⁻³³ Mass media has continually portrayed Black communities as aggressive, criminally inclined and the "collective antithesis of vulnerable and/or innocent".³⁴ These violent and biased views have been described as creating a symbiotic relationship between the mass media and the criminal justice system, causing serious negative outcomes for Black communities seeking justice.³⁰

The continued replay of violent images and the negative narrative around Black lives brings one large issue to the forefront: how do these images impact communities of color? Although there is no clear line of research examining the impact of violent videos on the Black community, Norris (1992) posited that a traumatic event could be described as any experience by a person disturbing enough to cause symptoms of arousal, intrusion and numbing. Understanding this definition of a traumatic event, the frequent exposure to the shootings of Black people can cause trauma. This trauma has been coined 'race-based trauma' and it argues that people of color experience mental distress similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) when viewing police violence against Black communities. Recent research has found that people of color report high rates of stress, frustration, anger, and anxiety in response to mass media coverage of police violence.^{35,36} These trauma responses can be heightened when dealing with and/or re-engaging with the perceived threat.³⁷ Although there is no research examining the impact of explicitly violent images on police officers perceptions, there is research that suggests that police officers have higher rates of PTSD due to vicarious trauma experienced on the job³⁸ and when the human brain is under stress, heuristics may dominate over more controlled decision-making processes,³⁹ possibly making it more difficult for police officers to engage in sound judgments.

TRAINING NEEDS |

These examples, although only the tip of the iceberg, suggest that there is a significant need for the criminal justice system to become culturally competent. Specifically, there is a need for system professionals and decision-makers (e.g., law enforcement officers, judges, reporters, lawyers) to acknowledge, address, and learn from their individual biases and to understand how their personal beliefs and fears may impact their duties when working with Black communities and possibly perpetuating race based trauma in Black communities. Although the cultural training process has begun in some larger cities (e.g., Oakland, CA, USA and New York, NY, USA), there continues to be a vast majority of cities that have failed to address this training need in-depth.⁴⁰ Police officers should also continue to receive education and training on how mental health impacts behavior as well as tools to help identify symptoms of trauma and distress in the community. According to recent databases, approximately 25% of victims killed by the police suffered from some type of mental illness.⁴¹

Psychologists should provide trainings on topics of bias, discrimination, and prejudice to help minimize the impact of these cognitive based issues when working as staff in the criminal justice system. Psychologists should provide research-based understanding of how issues of cultural incompetence can impact job performance which may be able to enhance relationships between the police and the communities they serve while moving towards an effective community policing approach. Lastly, psychologists should provide education to system professionals on the concept of race-based trauma and what the subsequent trauma symptoms may look like in day-to-day life.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Community policing emerged as a response to conflicts between police and mostly non-White and disadvantaged communities in the 1960s and 1970s, which spoke to a disconnect in police-community relations.^{5,42} Although the concept of community policing is diverse, according to the literature it is best described as a plan to reduce crime using more effective and efficient police services by building authentic relationships with the community and developing resources aimed at changing crime-causing conditions.^{43,44} These services include but are not limited to neighborhood watch, police foot patrols, joint police-community patrols, and community meetings. Community policing aims to make communities not just consumers of police services but partners in crime fighting and emphasizes decentralizing authority in decision-making, problem-focused strategies, and empowering citizens to take an active role in identifying public safety concerns and preventing crime in their own communities.^{5,42} Shifting focus to community policing has the opportunity to enhance relationships between police and the citizens of the communities that they serve.⁴⁵ Community policing practices have demonstrated improvements in the perceptions of, satisfaction with, and confidence in the police as well as decreased crime-related problems.⁴² Through a community policing approach, a greater level of accountability for police officers is fostered as well as collaboration in decision-making between officers and the community.^{46,47} Following the incidents of violence against Black men, women, and children, the concept of community policing has been brought to the forefront. Many community supporters and police agencies have discussed ways to strengthen community policing programs using body cameras, expanded training, and increased federal support for police department reform with the sole purpose of increasing community trust.⁴⁸

Community policing has had some success in several communities stretching back to the 1980's such as Flint, Michigan; Houston, Texas; Charleston, South Carolina; Los Angeles, California; and Aurora, Colorado.⁴⁹ However, there is a lack of evidence on its specific impact on stereotyping, and racial bias. Given that community policing improves police-community relationships through a working alliance, and stereotyping and racial bias can be combated with more understanding of and cultural competence in interacting with people with different backgrounds (i.e. improved relationships), it stands to reason that community policing may offer some benefit in resolving these problems as well. Furthermore, contact theory suggests that affective and cognitive changes

can occur with positive intergroup contact if there is cooperation, common goals, support from authority figures and status is equal.^{50,51}

Psychologists are optimally positioned to conduct needs analyses and program evaluations, support implementation of programs, assess outcomes, and apply these to troubleshooting problems. Research suggests that if the public perceives police behavior as just and fair, they are more likely to view their authority as legitimate⁵²; thus, transparency in police procedure and cases of police brutality are imperative in restoring public confidence. Through the use of research and program development psychologists can assist criminal justice policy makers in developing positive working relationships between the community and the police.

CONCLUSION

Traditional and nontraditional media use has recently been utilized to shift the national conversation regarding the relationship between the criminal justice system and the Black community.^{1-4,9} In order to achieve a positive relationship between the criminal justice system and the Black community, there must be a broader discussion on how bias, racially charged language, and stereotyping are used in media and the criminal justice system.³ Although there is no quick fix, this is an opportunity for psychologists to use their platforms to advance the cause of social justice. Through the use of research, psychologists are keenly aware of the impact that violence has on the brain and how vicarious trauma impacts communities of color. Psychologists are also aware of how education and training on topics of implicit bias and race based trauma can shift interactions through community policing practices.

Psychology does have a role in developing more equitable social and political institutions⁵³ and through graduate and continuing education,¹² psychologists can make strong contributions to help mend the relationships between the Black community and the criminal justice system. By engaging in research and advocacy, psychologists can provide training to both the Black community and police departments on how violence, cognition, and media impact our mental health and relationships. Due to the diverse and varied education that psychologists receive, they are in a unique position to simultaneously provide the necessary training around the underlying issues between the criminal justice system and communities of color; while also providing counseling to address the complex feelings that these issues bring up for communities and police departments. This is a formal call to action for all of psychology to stand up and advocate for the advancement of the Black Lives Matter movement.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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