EXPLORATORY STUDY

An Exploration of the Relationship between Experiences with Sibling Abuse and Peer Bullying: a Pilot Study

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Abstract This paper uses peer reviewed research and a comprehensive literature review to highlight some of connections and similarities between experience with sibling abuse and experience with peer bullying. Specifically, an altered version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 41, 75-88, 1979) was used to empirically explore the potential relationship between experience with peer bullying as a survivor or perpetrator, and experience with sibling abuse as a survivor or perpetrator. The results of Person's product moment correlations indicate there is a significant relationship between surviving sibling abuse and surviving peer bullying, as well as perpetrating sibling abuse and perpetrating peer bullying. In addition to a discussion of the details of the study conducted, clinical considerations for interventions, training, research and prevention are discussed.

Keywords Sibling abuse · Peer bullying · Familial violence · Trauma · Child abuse

Historically, both sibling abuse and peer bullying have been viewed as a “normal” adolescent rite of passage. It has only been within the past decade that bullying has gained attention in the world of academic research and been viewed as abusive behavior which can no longer be dismissed (Roberts, Zhang, & Truman, 2010). The issue of sibling abuse has been largely ignored and is considered to be somewhat of a non-issue; one

in which the family is often left to handle the situation on their own (Caspi, 2011; Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 2007). While bullying has gained attention from researchers as prevalence connected to social media raises awareness of the severity of the issue, and while sibling abuse has recently begun to gain attention in professional research through studies that have focused on prevalence and defining sibling abuse, there remains a gap in the study of a potential relationship between sibling abuse and peer bullying (Caspi, 2011; Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 2007; Morrill and Bachman 2013). Both sibling abuse and peer bullying are abusive behaviors that are processed and dealt with in a private manner, usually within the confines of the home (Phillips-Green 2002). As a result, these issues often play out in private, with little support available or accessible for families to turn to for help. Individual studies of peer bullying and sibling abuse reveal that a substantial percentage of young people are impacted by these abusive behaviors, many on a frequent basis, and potentially with these experiences overlapping (Roberts, Zhang, & Truman, 2010). The similarities sibling abuse and peer bullying share need to be studied in order to develop a deeper understanding of abusive behaviors among young people and how to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies for families, clinicians, educators, law enforcement and communities in general. The primary goal of this study is to understand how experiencing sibling abuse may be related to experiencing peer bullying, as either a survivor or a perpetrator.

Historically, familial abuse was considered to be private family matter not to be discussed in the public forum. However, following the feminist movement in the 1970s, issues of abuse within the family began to come to the attention of the public. This change in perception had a huge impact on how abuse and violence are perceived by the general population (Ammerman and Hersen 1991; Bess and Janssen 1982; Caspi, 2011; Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 2007; Morrill and

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Bachman 2013). While areas of familial violence such as child abuse, partner abuse and elderly abuse have gained much attention over the past several decades, very little consideration has been given in regard to sibling abuse. The lack of research being completed related to sibling abuse is shocking given that studies suggest sibling abuse is actually the most common form of family violence (Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro 2005; Goodwin and Roscoe 1990; Straus and Gelles 1990; Wiehe 1998).

One study supporting the notion of how prevalent sibling abuse is found out of 272 high school students surveyed, 60% reported some experience with sibling abuse (Goodwin and Roscoe 1990). Additionally, 53% of children were found to be perpetrators of sibling abuse in a study conducted by Vernon Wiehe (1998), while Straus and Gelles (1990) found 80% of children aged 3–17 commit some form of abuse towards a sibling. A study by Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner, and Shuttuck (2013) found 32% of children and adolescents surveyed had been the victim of one type of sibling abuse while 8% were the victim of more than two types of sibling abuse. Though research confirms sibling abuse to be damaging with consequences lasting long in to adulthood, most research suggest there is a lack of appropriate intervention. c) maintain sibling abuse should not be considered part of normal family dynamics and if not addressed quickly the abuse will continue and likely increase in severity.

The normalization of abusive behaviors between siblings is similar to the normalization of peer bullying behaviors. As such, there exists a decreased chance of reporting such behaviors (Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro 2005; Caspi, 2011; Hoetger et al., 2015; Morrill and Bachman 2013; Tippet & Wolke, 2015).

The statistics related to sibling abuse make the pervasive nature of this type of abuse impossible to ignore. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) conducted one of the first and only empirical studies directly measuring the prevalence of sibling abuse. In this study, it was estimated as many as 40% of children in the United States engage in physical sibling abuse and as many as 85% engage in psychological sibling abuse (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Wiehe (1997) conducted family research which suggested that at least 53 out of every 100 children in the United States are perpetrators of some form of sibling abuse. It is clear sibling abuse is pervasive rather than simply an anomaly.

The type of relationship one has with their siblings has a tremendous impact on long-term sense of well-being, self-expectancies, and interpersonal competencies (Johnston and Freeman 1989; Liem and Boudewyn 1999; Morrill-Richards and Leierer 2010; Phillips-Green 2002; Snyder et al. 2005). Phillips-Green (2002) found negative sibling relationships often lead to normalization of maladaptive interpersonal behavior. Johnston and Freeman (1989) interviewed families over time and found positive sibling relationships have a beneficial and significant effect on siblings and vice versa. Liem and

Boudewyn (1999) conducted a study based on attachment theory in which they found relationship expectancies and self-expectancies are carried into adulthood out of the experience with one's closest peer; in the majority of cases, the closest peer is a sibling. When siblings experience negative, unhealthy relationships with their siblings, they may learn maladaptive interpersonal behaviors that often persist into adulthood. Individuals may also begin to have feelings of anger, vengeance and hopelessness in response to experiencing sibling abuse (c).

As the relationship one has with their closest peer (which is often a sibling) has been shown to be a predominant indicator of dimensions of well-being throughout one's life, it seems a similar phenomenon may be occurring with experience related to peer bullying (Smith, 2004). Unlike sibling abuse, over the past decade research related to peer bullying has grown extensively. In the past few years, studies related to peer bullying, especially when considering the implications of social media, has increased dramatically (Duncan, 1999; Finger, Marsh, Craven, & Parada, 2005; Holt, Kantor & Finkelhor, 2009; Renda, Vassallo, & Edwards, 2011; Vaillanourt, McDougall, Hymel, Krygsman, Miller; et al. 2008; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). In spite of the growing research on peer bullying, there is a dearth of research focusing on the connection between peer bullying and sibling abuse. The fact that little has been done to explore the potential connection between experience with sibling abuse and experience with peer bullying is surprising given support in the literature indicating sibling interactions are extraordinarily similar to peer interactions (Rapoza, Cook & Zaveri, 2010).

Peer bullying has become prevalent in today's society. A recent study found over 30% of middle and high school students reported moderate to severe involvement with peer bullying, as either a perpetrator or survivor (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons, Morton, & Schidt, 2001). Baly et al. (2014) interviewed a group of 382 middle school students and found approximately 32% identified themselves as a victim of peer bullying in sixth grade, while 18% of the same population report being bullied in both sixth and seventh grade, and 11.8% reported being bullied throughout all three years of middle school. Victimization reported by peers resulted in a decreased GPA during eighth grade year, while students who self-reported being bullied had more aggressive attitudes and were less likely to ask for help with the bullying problem, which led to more risky behaviors, such as carrying a weapon, fighting, feeling unhappy and hopeless, and thoughts of suicide (Baly et al., 2014).

Cyber bullying is the deliberate and recurrent harm wreaked through the use of cell phones, other electronic devices, and the computer (Seiler & Navarro, 2014). In a study by Seiler and Navarro (2014) they found bullying is no longer a phenomenon that occurs only during school hours or in the school environment. Children having access to the Internet and social media

makes bullying possible and accessible at any time from any location. As such, the high rate of cyber bullying offers little escape from bullying behaviors. Children bullied offline are over fourteen times more likely to experience cyber bullying in addition to in-person bullying (Seiler & Navarro, 2014). This finding suggests a definite connection between both types of bullying as children now categorize online and offline socialization as a necessary part of a full social life (Seiler & Navarro, 2014). There are groups and behaviors that increase the likelihood of being cyber bullied. For example, younger white females are at the highest risk for cyber bullying as well as those who lie about their age online, participate in sexting, or have frequent access to social networking sites and/or the internet without a healthy balance of after school social activities and relationships (Seiler & Navarro, 2014).

A recent study found younger siblings with maladaptive adjustment during adolescence were more likely to have participated in regular conflict with an older sibling (Snyder et al. 2005). Liem and Boudewyn (1999) conducted research suggesting peer relationships directly impact the relationships one has with others. According to Wolke & Skew (2012) violence at home greatly impacts behaviors and interactions at school. Tippet and Wolke (2015) also found a strong relationship between aggressive behaviors in the sibling relationship and roles at school, such as being a perpetrator or survivor of bullying. For example, survivors of abuse at home were more likely to be survivors of abuse outside the home while perpetrators of abuse at home were more likely to be perpetrators of abuse outside the home. Another study found experiencing psychological abuse from a peer or a sibling was internalized in the same way by the survivor (Tucker et al., 2013). Given there is an established link between how a child behaves with peers at school and experiencing abuse at home, it seems a logical step to explore the specific relationships between peer bullying and sibling abuse.

The present study intends to fill the existing gap in empirical research as extant studies focus on peer bullying separate from abuse at home or exclusively on the connection of peer bullying to parental abuse. In addition, this study will provide insight into the relationship between sibling abuse and peer bullying. It has been established that associations exist between various types abuse such as that between child abuse and dating violence, yet little has been done to consider the association between sibling abuse and peer bullying (Bell and Guimond 2012; Dardis, Dixon, Edwards & Tuchik, 2015; Gomez 2011). One of the few studies that examined how sibling abuse relates to peer bullying found the interactions between siblings and peers are extraordinarily similar (Rapoza, Cook, & Zaveri, 2010). Given the similarities proposed between sibling relationships and peer relationships the authors hypothesize that experiencing sibling abuse as a child has a positive and significant correlation with experiencing peer bullying as a child.

Sibling Relationships

Sibling relationships are not easily defined. Morrill-Richards (2009) defined sibling relationships as interactions that may be comprised of biological siblings (sharing the same biological parents), half siblings (sharing one parent), step-siblings (related through marriage of parents), adoptive siblings, foster siblings (related through a shared home) or fictive siblings (may not be biologically related, but are considered siblings) (Morrill-Richards 2009). All interactions, verbal or nonverbal, which include two or more members of the same sibling subsystem comprise the sibling relationship (Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro 2005).

Sibling Abuse

There are three components to defining sibling abuse: perception, intent, and severity (Morrill-Richards 2009; Wiehe 2000). These components are critical to consider in order to distinguish the difference between sibling rivalry and sibling abuse. Perception refers to how each sibling interprets the interaction. For example, if one sibling involved in the sibling dyad views the behavior as abusive, regardless of his or her role as survivor or perpetrator, a dynamic beyond the scope of ‘normal’ sibling rivalry is likely present (Caspi, 2011; Morrill and Bachman 2013; Morrill-Richards 2009). The second facet, intent, refers to what a sibling hopes to accomplish. When sibling abuse is present, the primary intent of the perpetrating brother or sister is to cause harm rather than to gain access to limited family resources such as space, time and affection (Kiselica and Morrill-Richards 2007). Severity is related to the length and intensity of the sibling behavior. As severity increases there is greater likelihood that the sibling relationship is abusive (Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro 1998; Morrill-Richards 2009; Wiehe 2000). For the purpose of this study, sibling abuse involving psychological abuse and physical abuse will be examined. Some examples of psychological sibling abuse include: threatening to cause harm, threatening to hurt pets, excessive teasing, harassment, intimidation and provocation. Some examples of physical sibling abuse include: punching, hitting, kicking and shoving.

Peer Bullying

Rigby (2002) defined bullying as a systematic abuse of power which creates an unhealthy interpersonal dynamic between peers. The behavior is intentionally aggressive and repeated multiple times against the peer victim and often involves acts of assault, theft and vandalism (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1999). Hazler, Hoover, and Oliver (1992) described bullying as actions that may also be indirect. Indirect bullying

can be just as detrimental as direct forms of bullying and is a critically important piece of understanding the concept of bullying. Indirect bullying is directly linked with psychological bullying and may consist of: manipulating, spreading rumors, ostracizing, sending cruel or threatening emails or text messages, and posting hateful or harassing comments on social networking sites (Keith & Martin, 2005).

In this study, bullying is defined as a condition or act which creates an atmosphere where an individual feels fear or intimidation, and may include physical or psychological aggression (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 2002; & Keith & Martin, 2005). Examples of psychological peer bullying include: name-calling, spreading rumors, threats of physical harm, social exclusion and harassment either on-line (cyber-bullying) or in person. Examples of physical peer bullying include: punching, hitting, kicking and shoving.

Method

Primary Goal and Hypothesis

The primary goal of this study is to gain knowledge and better understand the potential relationship between experience with sibling abuse and experience with peer bullying, as either a survivor or a perpetrator. The research addresses a gap in the literature related to this form of interpersonal violence. This study proposes two hypotheses based on the idea that there is a significant relationship between experience with sibling abuse and experience with peer bullying:

Hypotheses 1: Experiencing sibling abuse as a survivor has a significant and positive correlation with experiencing peer bullying as a survivor.

Hypotheses 2: Experiencing sibling abuse as a perpetrator has a significant and positive correlation with experiencing peer bullying as a perpetrator.

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of graduate students from a private university in the Midwestern region of the United States. The sample was one of convenience in that the primary investigator distributed surveys to classes for which the instructor had been granted permission. Permission to contact professors to gain in person access to their classes was obtained through the Institutional Review Board of the university. The primary researcher then contacted professors across the university to ask permission to attend classes and distribute the surveys in person. Surveys were voluntary, anonymous, self-report and

defined the study without using the term abuse in order to minimize the tendency to respond to questions with what would be considered favorable. Detailed information outlining informed consent was attached to each survey for the student to detach and keep. The informed consent included contact information for the university counseling center to seek support if the survey brought up painful mental reactions.

The classes spanned a range of concentration areas within the college of education and the college of arts and sciences. The age of students in the sample ranged from 22 to 58, with a median age of 23 and a mean age of 26. Women comprised 82.3% of the sample while men comprised 17.7% of the sample. Students identifying as African American/Black comprised 3.1% of the sample, students identifying as Caucasian/White comprised 90.8% of the sample, students identifying as Latino/Hispanic comprised 4.2% of the sample, and those identifying as Other comprised 1.9% of the sample.

Studies related to this research were reviewed to gain an overview of typical sample sizes used. There has been a wide range of sample sizes used in studies with similar research designs related to familial abuse and studies with similar research designs related to peer bullying, with a minimum sample size found being 23 and a maximum being 1158. In addition to this review, an a priori power analysis was performed to determine the desired target sample size for this specific study, given an effect size of .15, a desired statistical power of .80 and an alpha of .05. This power analysis found a minimum acceptable sample size of 60. After considering both a review of studies and the power analysis, the minimum target sample number was set at 80. It was estimated the return rate of the surveys would be 80%, after removing subjects who did not complete the survey, and those who did not identify as having at least one sibling (a requirement for inclusion). Once these aspects of the sample were accounted for, the final estimate for the sample size was projected to be 64. In actuality, 102 surveys were administered to students with 17 cases excluded due to the parameters mentioned above. The return rate was 96% leaving a final sample size of 81.

Measure

This study used an altered version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Morrill, 2014; Morrill and Bachman 2013; Straus 1979) to measure experiences, severity, and type of abuse (either sibling abuse or peer bullying). This altered version has been used in previous research on sibling abuse and has been found to be consistent and reliable in its measure (Morrill 2014; Morrill & Bachman, 2013; Morrill-Richards 2009; Morrill-Richards and Leierer 2010). In addition, the questions explore the role one had in the relationship

dynamic, whether as a survivor or a perpetrator. The survey employs a total of 60 prompts using the Likert rating scale ranging from never to always (0 = never, 1 = very rarely, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = very frequently, 5 = always). The first 28 prompts relate specifically to experience with sibling abuse, while the second 28 prompts exactly mirror the sibling abuse section; however, the wording was changed to address the peer relationship rather than the sibling relationship. The following are examples of the altered CTS used for this study:

Sample of question related to being a survivor of sibling psychological abuse:	
<i>A sibling insulted me</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
Sample of question related to being a perpetrator of sibling psychological abuse:	
<i>I insulted a sibling</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
Sample of question related to being a survivor of psychological peer bullying:	
<i>A peer insulted me</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
Sample of question related to being a perpetrator of psychological peer bullying:	
<i>I insulted a peer</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
Sample of question related to being a survivor of physical sibling abuse:	
<i>A sibling used a knife or gun against me</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
Sample of question related to being a perpetrator of physical sibling abuse:	
<i>I used a knife or gun against a sibling</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
Sample of question related to being a survivor of physical peer bullying:	
<i>A peer used a knife or gun against me</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
Sample of question related to being a perpetrator of physical peer bullying:	
<i>I used a knife or gun against a peer</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5

The CTS has been shown to have stable and consistent construct validity across hundreds of studies, and has been altered in numerous ways to address different relationship dynamics with the construct validity remaining steady regardless of these adaptations. In addition, the CTS has demonstrated consistent reliability ranging from .79 to .95 over the course of decades of use (Morrill and Bachman 2013; Straus and Gelles 1990). For this study Cronbach's alpha was used to test reliability. The surviving psychological sibling abuse scale reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .82, while the perpetrating sibling psychological abuse scale reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .81. Surviving sibling physical abuse reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .79, while perpetrating sibling physical sibling abuse reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .82. The surviving psychological peer bullying scale reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .81 and perpetrating peer psychological abuse reflected a Cronbach's alpha of .80. Surviving physical peer bullying reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient

of .78, while perpetrating physical peer bullying reflected a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .82.

Results

Diagnostic tests were run to test the data to ensure any potential problems were addressed prior to analysis. In addition to checking for missing data, frequencies were run on each survey question to ensure participants had answered questions within the parameters of the accepted range (0–5). This analysis also allowed investigators to check for any errors that may have occurred during data entry. After accounting for all cases that had missing or inaccurate data, a final sample size of 81 was used.

Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were computed to test the two primary hypotheses in this study. The first hypothesis was tested by running a Pearson's correlation between overall scores for surviving sibling abuse and overall scores for surviving peer bullying, which indicated a significant positive relationship exists ($r = .297, n = 81, p = .015$). In order to gather more detailed information regarding these general results, additional Pearson's product moment correlations were run on each specific type of survivor prompts asked related to psychological abuse and physical abuse, respectively. There was a significant positive correlation between surviving psychological sibling abuse and surviving psychological peer bullying ($r = .305, n = 81, p = .013$). Interestingly, there was not a significant correlation between surviving physical sibling abuse and surviving physical peer bullying ($r = .286, n = 81, p = .020$). These results suggest that psychological maltreatment may play a larger role in the significant relationship that exists between surviving sibling abuse and surviving peer bullying than does physical maltreatment.

The second hypothesis was also tested by running a Pearson's product moment correlation for the overall scores on perpetrating sibling abuse and perpetrating peer bullying, which indicated a significant and positive relationship exists ($r = .525, n = 81, p = .000$). As with the first hypothesis, two additional Pearson's correlations were run to garner more exact information regarding how perpetration of psychological and physical maltreatment specifically relate to the correlation found with general perpetration. There was a significant and positive correlation found between perpetrating psychological sibling abuse and perpetrating psychological peer bullying ($r = .539, n = 81, p = .000$). There was also a significant and positive correlation found between perpetrating physical sibling abuse and perpetrating physical peer bullying ($r = .390, n = 81, p = .001$). These results indicate that perpetration of either psychological or physical aggression may have a significant impact on the relationship among siblings and peers.

Discussion

Implications of Results

Hypothesis I The first hypothesis addressed in this study (Experiencing sibling abuse as a survivor has a positive correlation with experiencing peer bullying as a survivor), was found to be true. These results are interesting to consider as it seems to support there may, indeed, be some connection between being a survivor of sibling abuse and being a survivor of peer bullying. Additionally, while it may strike many that physical forms of abuse would likely have the strongest potential for indicating a relationship between the two groups, this study shows further exploration needs to be conducted related to the power and impact of psychological abuse and the potential connection between surviving psychological abuse from a sibling and surviving psychological abuse from a peer. As the survey was set up to recall events from childhood (through the age of 18), it is possible that surviving physical abuse did not have the same lasting impact that surviving psychological abuse did. While it is critical not to place too much weight on the results of one exploratory study, these results beg for additional research to be done related specifically to early cycles of violence children may learn and in connection to one's closest peer, be that a sibling or a peer outside of the family. It is important to consider how young survivors interpret their experiences and re-create these roles at an early age, which will allow clinicians, educators and families to connect to more effective means for early intervention.

Hypothesis II The second hypothesis (Experiencing sibling abuse as a perpetrator has a positive correlation with experiencing peer bullying as a perpetrator) was also found to hold true in this study. These results indicate not only the possibility of a significant relationship between perpetration of sibling abuse and perpetration of peer bullying, but also there may be a difference between how survivors and perpetrators re-create their roles across peer groups. Again, it would be impossible to make any conclusions based solely on one study; however, the results seem to suggest the importance of more in-depth study on the issue. Such analysis could greatly improve early prevention and intervention related to abuse perpetration as a child.

Limitations One limitation of this study is the sample size. The final sample size for analysis was ($N = 81$), and while this was an exploratory study, we postulate a larger sample size would allow for more generalizability. Additionally, all the participants in this study attended the same university. Using a sample of students from a variety of universities throughout the United States would also increase the likelihood of

generalizability. The majority of our sample identified as female and white and was not an accurate reflection of the larger general population. The implications of age, gender and racial identity are important to consider in regard to potential limitations of the study, as the results could reflect quite differently with a more diverse representation of the population.

This study used a self-report survey, which can also create challenges related to collecting an accurate reflection of true experience. We did not use the term 'abuse' at any point in the survey and it was assumed all participants were honest in their report of recollections of sibling abuse and peer bullying; however, some participants could have minimized their experiences with sibling abuse and/or peer bullying, especially given the historical backdrop in which these issues have been minimized in the mainstream.

A final limitation is the lack of a clear time frame for which each type of abuse occurred. As such, it is difficult to determine if the abuse experiences were co-occurring, or if one tended to occur prior to the other. While this study assumed both sibling abuse and peer bullying were being reported as experiences happening during the same time frame of life development (through the age of 18), further identifying when each occurred could prove to add great benefit in the area of prevention, intervention, and additional research.

Implications for Practice

Clinical Implications The results of this study support the possibility that the connection between sibling abuse and peer bullying is likely more pervasive than previously thought. While there is no doubt that assumptions cannot be made from this study alone, the significance of the results underscore the need for clinicians to begin addressing the issue with more rigor and gravity (Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro 2005; Caspi, 2011; Wiehe 1990). One major implication for clinical practice is the need for a thorough history of sibling and peer relationships to be gathered during intake sessions, even when working with adults. This study suggests those who perpetrate sibling abuse may also perpetrate peer bullying. Results from this study also purport those who survive sibling abuse may also be survivors of peer bullying. This information could present a clear picture of past, present, and future behaviors in reference to peers, which may be instrumental in implementing goals, treatment plans, and effective interventions. In addition, a thorough history would allow the clinician to conceptualize some challenges the client may presently face in reference to past events in the sibling and peer relationship, and how those experiences may be impacting present relationships within the family and outside of the family. Further, working to address any roles connected to repeated cycles of abuse (either as survivor or perpetrator) that may exist early on will likely prevent re-creating violent interactions in future relationships, both inside and outside of the family.

Implications for Mental Health Education It is essential for mental health education programs to consider the implications interactions with peers (whether they be within the family or outside of the family) have on attachment patterns with others throughout the lifespan. While the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the sample, the data suggests there are significant abusive relationships that exist fairly commonly, which are not presently addressed in clinical training. Further study should be encouraged within the academic arena of counselor educators related to both the short term and long term implications of abusive peer relationships from both within the family system and outside of the family system. Should the results of additional study continue to demonstrate the patterns indicated here, textbooks and experiential training need to be adapted to address the issues of sibling abuse and peer bullying, as well as the potential relationship between the two and the impact these experiences may have on well-being.

Implications for Research One area for continued research to build on the results of this study involves the exploration of potential correlations between being a survivor of one type of abuse, and a perpetrator of another. It would be extremely beneficial to replicate this study with a larger, more representative sample and add hypotheses considering relationships between surviving sibling abuse and perpetrating peer bullying as well as surviving peer bullying and perpetrating sibling abuse. Additionally, this type of study could tackle the issue of polyvictimization in greater depth through a sophisticated analysis of how experience with multiple types of abuse may impact the outcome.

Based on the results of this study, it seems clear there is a need for further research related to the potential relationship between experience with sibling abuse and experience with peer bullying. Not only would it be beneficial for additional studies to expand on this exploratory study, but also to conduct in-depth research related specifically to survivors and perpetrators of sibling abuse and peer bullying, respectively. In particular, the findings of this study suggest perpetration of one type of abuse may have a stronger connection to repeated patterns of perpetration; a concept not given as much attention in research as the repeated survivor role. Continuing this research will not only advance the study of abuse and violence, but it will aid in the practical application of interventions and prevention programs as well as provide a framework for addressing this issue within clinical training programs.

Compliance with Ethical Standards All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000. Informed consent was obtained from all patients for being included in the study.

Conflict of Interest None.

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