

Book Review

Bullying Among Older Adults: How to Recognize and Address an Unseen Epidemic, by Robin P. Bonifas. Baltimore, MD: Health Professions Press, 2016, ISBN: 978-1-938870-09-5, 179 pages, \$29.99, paperback.

Reviewed by Jane Lyons

Walden University

In the book *Bullying Among Older Adults*, Bonifas examines bullying among older adults in senior centers and residential care facilities. Bonifas clearly describes bullying behaviors and presents a practical guide for assessment of bullying and antibullying intervention.

In the book *Bullying Among Older Adults: How to Recognize and Address an Unseen Epidemic*, Bonifas examines bullying behaviors among older adults in adult care centers and community centers and offers a variety of intervention techniques to help reduce and prevent bullying among older adults. The book is divided into three sections: *Part 1: An Overview of Bullying Behaviors Among Older Adults*, *Part 2: General Interventions to Address Bullying Among Older Adults*, and *Part 3: Creating Caring Communities*. There is a list of downloadable resources provided at the beginning of the book that includes the Bullying Questionnaire and the Bullying Policy Statement. There is also a list of website resources at the end of the book. Included in various chapters and in the appendices are examples of survey forms, questionnaires, and report forms for use in identifying bullying behaviors.

In Part 1, Bonifas, a social gerontologist, begins by defining bullying and describing various types of bullying behaviors. She includes activities to help determine whether an action is bullying or a more general challenging behavior. Bonifas stresses the importance of understanding factors that may cause bullying as well as the older people who bully and those who are bullied. Control and loss are factors that may contribute to bullying. Older adults who bully may be seeking greater control over their lives even as they are feeling particularly powerless and experiencing major losses in their lives. Many older adults have never experienced communal living, and the loss of independence and control that comes with a move to assisted living may be particularly distressing and may result in bullying. That same communal lifestyle may result in targets for bullies. Those who tend to be passive and emotional may become targets for bullying. Diversity including race, religion, and disability may create vulnerability for bullying, as some older adults may have difficulty tolerating individual differences, particularly in a communal living environment.

In Parts 2 and 3, Bonifas and contributors examine a variety of bullying assessment strategies and intervention. Bonifas stresses that there is a three-tiered bullying equation that must be addressed that includes the organization, the bully, and the target. Each tier must be included in bullying assessment and antibullying interventions. Modified peace-learning circles, civility training, bystander intervention training, and antibullying policies and procedures are discussed as part of organizational intervention. Foundational approaches to intervention for those who bully, those who are bullied, and witnesses to bullying are examined. Empowerment of targets of bullying and those who witness bullying by helping develop self-advocacy skills is critical to intervention. Bonifas stresses that the skills cannot simply be described, they must be practiced and suggests role-playing

as a way to practice self-advocacy. It is important to note that Bonifas emphasizes that bullies, those who are bullied, and those witnessing the bullying must take responsibility for helping to alleviate bullying behaviors. Bonifas emphasizes the importance of respect when dealing with the bullying situations.

A clear strength is the first-hand experiences that are related throughout the book. Bonifas, who worked in adult facilities for many years, interviewed facility staff, residents, families, and other caregivers to gain an understanding of bullying by older adults and the effects of that bullying. The book is written in clear and concise language that the lay reader will find easy to understand. The strategies for intervention are practical and clearly described.

A weakness noted is that, although = Bonifas mentions differences in behaviors related to cognitive impairments and bullying, little is written about how to deal with situations in which an individual may feel bullied by someone cognitively incapable of bullying. Many adults living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities suffer from age-related cognitive impairment, so more attention given to those behaviors that appear to be bullying but are not would benefit the reader.

Bonifas has provided a well-researched book about bullying among older adults. She promotes a better understanding of why older adults might bully and how the bullying behaviors may be manifested. She also provides clearly described activities that can be implemented to help reduce and prevent bullying among older adults. This is a practical how-to guide for those who work with older adults.

This book is written for anyone who works with older adults. Administrators, nurses, activity directors, and aids who work with older adults in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, senior centers, and anywhere that older adults congregate on a regular basis will benefit from reading this practical guide for understanding bullying behaviors and for implementing effective intervention.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in working with older adults and to all of us who may someday face communal living in an adult care facility. This book helps readers understand losses that may come with age and what those losses may feel like to those who experience them. I recommend reading the book and passing it on.

The *Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences* is an open-access, peer-reviewed, online interdisciplinary journal focusing on research findings that address contemporary national and international issues. Its objectives are to (a) encourage dialogue between scholars and practitioners in the social, behavioral, and health sciences that fosters the integration of research with practice; (b) promote innovative models of interdisciplinary collaboration among the social, behavioral, and health sciences that address complex social problems; and (c) inform the relationship between practice and research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences.

Walden University Publishing: <http://www.publishing.waldenu.edu>
