

Bullying against highly achieving students – a typical German phenomenon?



Carmen Gaida & Petra Buchwald
Bergische University Wuppertal, Germany

Background

- > Conservation of Resources Theory (COR theory; Hobfoll, 1998)

Bullying is a developing process, which starts with a test run that leads to action and ends with the pinnacle of pain for the bullied kid. (Coloroso, 2004) As soon as bullying starts, there has to be intervention in order to avoid the bullied to stay in the loss cycle.

- > Bullied kids are imputed to deviate from the norm. If eager students in Germany are defamed as “Streber” and even bullied, the norm might say that eagerness is not valued.

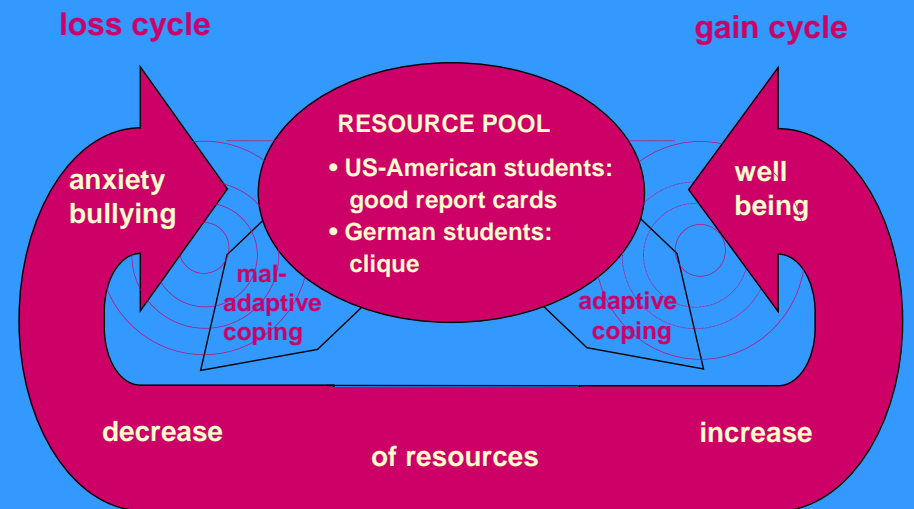


Fig. 1: Resource loss and gain at school (Buchwald & Hobfoll, 2004)

Research Questions

- Are there differences between US-American teenagers and German teenagers concerning moral concepts?
- ➔ Why is achievement not well regarded by peers in German schools ?
- ➔ Do German students show fear against their peers if they are hardworking students?

Method

Qualitative interviews

- Analyses of the intercultural research

Samples

N = 24 students
12 US-Americans 12 Germans
6 girls & 6 boys from each country
12 to 16 years

Results

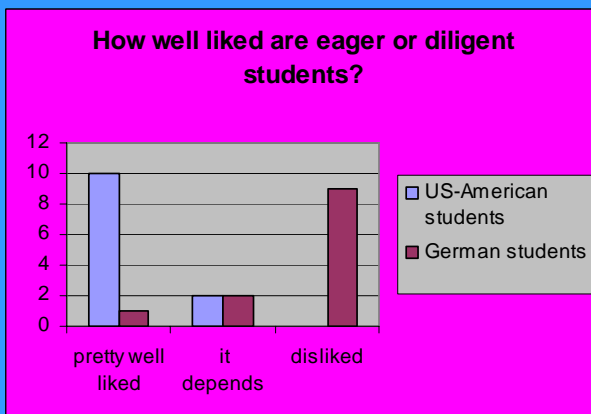


Fig. 2: Popularity of eager and diligent students

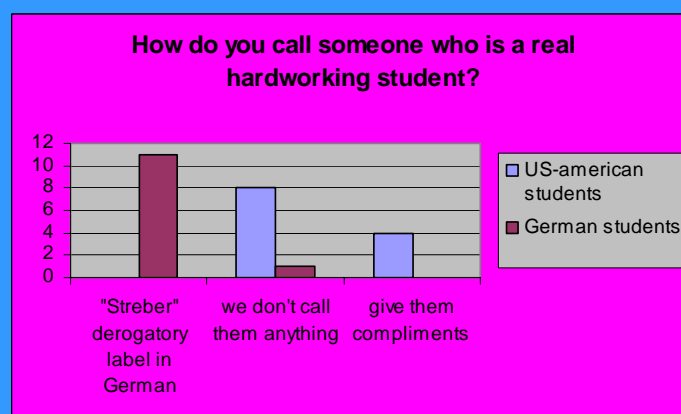


Fig. 3: Labeling of hardworking students

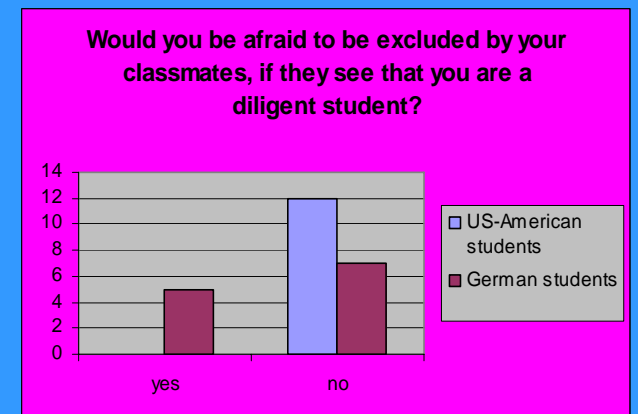


Fig. 4: Anxiety of possible defamation for eager students

Conclusion

The analysis of the qualitative interviews showed that US-American and German moral concepts differ in terms of school achievement.

- ➔ US-American students who show an eager learning attitude are popular among their peers and are viewed as an example, whereas German students who show diligence are being disliked and excluded by their peers.
- ➔ The well known German attitude against highly achieving students leads to anxiety and may even lead to refusal of performance.

The German “Streber” phenomenon is grounded in German society since the 19th century, therefore it is extremely difficult to lead a pedagogic discussion about it. Still, students should be reminded about the true value of achievement and the importance of achievement for their further live.

References

- Coloroso, B. (2004). *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*. New York: HaperCollins.
Hobfoll, S.E. (1998). *Stress, culture, and community: The psychology and philosophy of stress*. New York: Plenum.
Buchwald, P. & Hobfoll, S.E. (2004). Burnout aus ressourcentheoretischer Perspektive. [Burnout in the Conservation of Resources Theory]. *Psychologie in Erziehung und Unterricht*, 51, 247-257.
Olweus, D. (2002). *Gewalt in der Schule*. [Bullying at school] Bern: Huber.