BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION WHAT DO WE KNOW?

G. Joey Merrin, Ed.M.
Doctoral Student, Child Development Division; Educational Psychology
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
merrin1@illinois.edu

Dorothy L. Espelage, Ph.D.
Professor, Child Development Division; Educational Psychology
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
espelage@illinois.edu

teacher bias

Definition of Bullying (Swearer, 2001)

- Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over.
  - Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
  - Spreading bad rumors about people
  - Keeping certain people out of a "group"
  - Teasing people in a mean way
  - Getting certain people to "gang up" on others
  - Use of technology

power over the victim

Four-Square Relational Model

| Bullying Behavior | Ally |
| Bystander | Target |
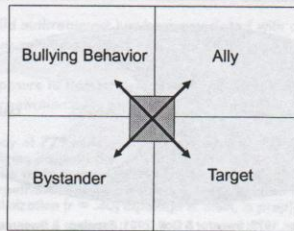
Teaching Respect for All, Women's Educational Media

Bully/Victim Continuum

- Bully — reports bullying others
- Victim — reports being bullied by others
- Bully-victim — reports bullying others & being bullied
- Bystander — reports observing others being bullied
- No Status/Not involved — does not report any involvement with bullying

Bullying Prevalence

- Among 3rd – 8th graders:
  - 15% Chronically Victimized
  - 17% Ringleader Bullies
  - 8% Bully-Victims
  - 60% Bystanders
    - Only 13% intervene to help victim
    (Espelage & Swearer, 2003)

Cyber-Bullying (= Digital Abuse)

"Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others."

(Bill Belsey: www.cyberbullying.ca)

Cyber-Bullying Prevalence

- Illinois Middle School Students
  - Online Victimization in Last Year:
    - 14.9% received rude comment
    - 7% had rumor spread about him/her
    - 2% threatened by a student
    - 11% received rude text message
      - 13% girls; 7% boys
    - 6% received sexually related text
    - 1% received sexual picture text
    - 1-3% rarely did someone solicit sex online

Homophobic Language & Bullying

- Approximately 22% of middle school students ($n = 4,302$) report teasing another student because he/she was gay (16.6% girls, 26.1% boys; Koenig & Espelage, 2003)
- 17.7% of high school students ($n = 4,938$) reported teasing another student because he/she was gay (9.2% girls, 26.2% boys; Koenig & Espelage, 2003)
- Bullying and homophobia perpetration strongly related among middle school students ($r = .61$; Poteat & Espelage, 2005)
- Homophobia victimization was reported more by males than females (Poteat & Espelage, 2007)

biased - based bullying

Why should we care?

- 66% of youth are teased at least once a month, and nearly one-third of youth are bullied at least once a month (Families and Work Institute, 2002).
- 6 out of 10 American teenagers witness bullying at least once a day (National Crime Prevention Council, 2003).
- Nearly ¼ of students across grades report that they had been bullied or harassed because of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability in the past year (2001-2002 California Student Survey).
- Unchecked bullying/harassment has been linked to 75% of school shooting incidents (US Secret Service Report, May 2002).

→ can't change

Social-Ecological Perspective

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swearer & Doll, 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

same factors → pattern

Individual Correlates of Bullying Involvement

- Depression/Anxiety
- Empathy
- Delinquency
- Impulsivity
- Other forms of Aggression
- Alcohol/Drug Use
- Positive Attitudes toward Violence/Bullying
- Low Value for Prosocial Behaviors
  - For review (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

Family & School Risk Factors

FAMILY	SCHOOL
– Lack of supervision	– Lack of supervision
– Lack of attachment	– Lack of attachment
– Negative, critical relationships	– Negative, critical relationships
– Lack of discipline/ consequences	– Lack of discipline/ consequences
– Support for violence	– Support for violence
– Modeling of violence	– Modeling of violence

For review (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Espelage & Horne, 2007)

school to prison pipeline
- resembling like prison

Peer Group Factors

- Inter- and intragroup norms for aggression.
- Status and power within the peer structure.
- Hierarchical peer group structure.
- Social sanction and social regulation of others.
- Peer support/lack of peer support.

Sibling Bullying

- Sibling bullying is tied to school-based bullying in many countries (Espelage & Swearer, 2003 for review)

- Study of 779 middle school students, association between bullying perpetration and sibling aggression perpetration was strongly associated (girls $r = .52$, boys $r = .42$; Espelage & Stein, in prep)

Relation Between Bullying & Other Victimization Forms

- Child maltreatment has been associated with difficulties in peer relations (Jacobsen & Straker, 1992; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001)

- Exposure to domestic violence has been linked to bullying perpetration (Baldry, 2003)

- Study of 779 middle school students, association between bullying perpetration and family violence victimization was moderately associated for females $(r = .31)$ and bullying perpetration was also related to neighborhood violence victimization $(r = .40$; Espelage & Stein, in prep)

Adolescence Development

- **Biological transitions:** Puberty, increases awareness of sex and sexuality, changing bodies, gender roles.
- **Cognitive transitions:** abstract thinking, perspective taking, egocentrism, increase in understanding of social systems/hierarchy.
- **Social transitions:** Increased power of peer group, conformity and belongingness critical, identity development, peer group structure.

Evolutionary Insights Into Risky Adolescent Behavior (Ellis et al., 2011)

Domain of Study	Sample Insights	Sample Implications for Intervention
Functions of risky and aggressive behavior	• Both Prosocial and antisocial behavioral strategies function to control resources. • Bullying is a common animal behavior that increases access to physical, social, and sexual resources • Adolescents are adapted to engage in bullying when the conditions are right	• Many antibullying interventions fail because they are based on false stereotypes about the social incompetence of bullies. • Interventions need to alter the cost-benefit ratio of bullying so that it is no longer an adaptive strategy in the school ecology. • Interventions should try to substitute more prosocial strategies that yield outcomes that are comparable to those achieved through bullying

Evolutionary Insights Into Risky Adolescent Behavior (Ellis et al., 2011)

Domain of Study	Sample Insights	Sample Implications for Intervention
Conditional adaptation to stressful environments	• Stressful experiences direct or regulate development toward strategies that are adaptive under stressful conditions • Exposures to harsh and unpredictable environments each uniquely increase risky adolescent behavior	• Interventions should be careful of declawing the cat. • Band-Aid solutions that do not address causative environmental conditions will not effectively change high-risk behaviors. • Interventions need to alter social contexts in ways that—through changes in the experiences of at-risk youth—induce an understanding that they can lead longer, healthier, more predictable lives.

Myths about bullying/ peer harassment

- Not in our school.
- Kids have to learn to stand up for themselves in life: being bullied is character-forming.
- It was just a bit of fun. No harm was done.
- Kids will be kids.
- They were asking for it. They got what they deserved.
- Teachers know how to handle bullying. It's their job.
- Bullies are thick kids from dysfunctional families picking on academic, nerdy kids with glasses.
- Kids grow out of this type of behavior.

(Sullivan, 2000)

Classroom and School Factors

- Coercive and harsh discipline policies/practices (stress controlling children and obedience to authority).
- Lack of order/control within the classroom/school.
- Teacher's attitudes and behaviors toward stopping bullying.
- Poor communication and relationships between teacher/students, administrators/teachers.
- Lack of developmentally appropriate opportunities for student autonomy and choice.
- Perception and messages about bullying/violence as normative and necessary.
- Lack of intervention in low levels of bullying (name-calling, teasing).
- Highly competitive environments that privilege certain types of identities over others (e.g., jocks, cheerleaders).
- Tracking and other sorting mechanisms within schools.
- Overall school atmosphere.

need outlet

Zero tolerance → not teaching, understanding

Implications for Prevention Programming

- ✱ Need to give kids life and social skills, not just knowledge about bullying
- Need to develop secondary and tertiary programs, not just primary prevention programs
- Bullying programs need to consider incorporating discussion of sexual harassment and (homophobic language; Birkett & Espelage, 2010).
  - 67 bullying prevention programs in US, only five discuss sexual harassment or sexual orientation issues.
- Peers influence has to be considered in developing and evaluating prevention/intervention programs
  - 67 bullying prevention programs, only one attempts to target and shift peer norms.

Implications for Prevention Programming

- Recognize that students are witnessing and involved in violence in their homes. We need to give them alternatives to violence for solving problems and conflicts.

- Consider how the use of technology is influencing relationships and talk to kids about responsible use of technology.

prosocial
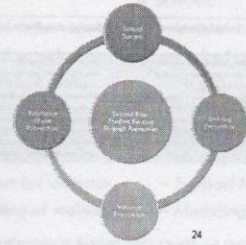
Second Step

Second Step
Student Success Through Prevention

New Middle School Program
by
Committee for Children

life skills

What is Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention?

All-in-one middle school prevention program

24

School to prison pipeline
- resembling like prison

bullies – ↑empathy vs. caring

Levels and Lessons

- 50 minutes to teach a complete lesson
- Each lesson is divided into two parts that can be taught separately

25

agressive vs. asertive
prosocial

Five Program Themes

- Each level includes the following five themes:
  - Empathy and communication
  - Bullying prevention
    - Sexual Harassment (grade 7)
    - Prejudice (grade 8)
  - Emotion management
    - Coping with stress (grades 7 and 8)
  - Problem-solving
    - Decision-making (grade 7)
    - Goal-setting (grade 8)
  - Substance abuse prevention

decisions – informed

Bullying in American Schools

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
http://www.erlbaum.com

BULLYING Prevention & Intervention

www.guilford.com

27

safe space
— without reprocussion

No mediation!
— nothing to mediate

snitching vs. reporting

Thank You!

- G. Joey Merrin
  - merrin1@illinois.edu
- Dorothy L. Espelage
  - espelage@illinois.edu

espelageagainstbullying.com

little jokes
reinforce norms