A row of pencils is shown against a dark, textured background. Most pencils are dark grey or black, but one pencil in the center is bright yellow. The pencils are arranged in a slightly curved line, with their tips pointing upwards. The yellow pencil is the focal point, standing out from the rest of the row.

The Role of Teachers in Reducing Bullying in Schools

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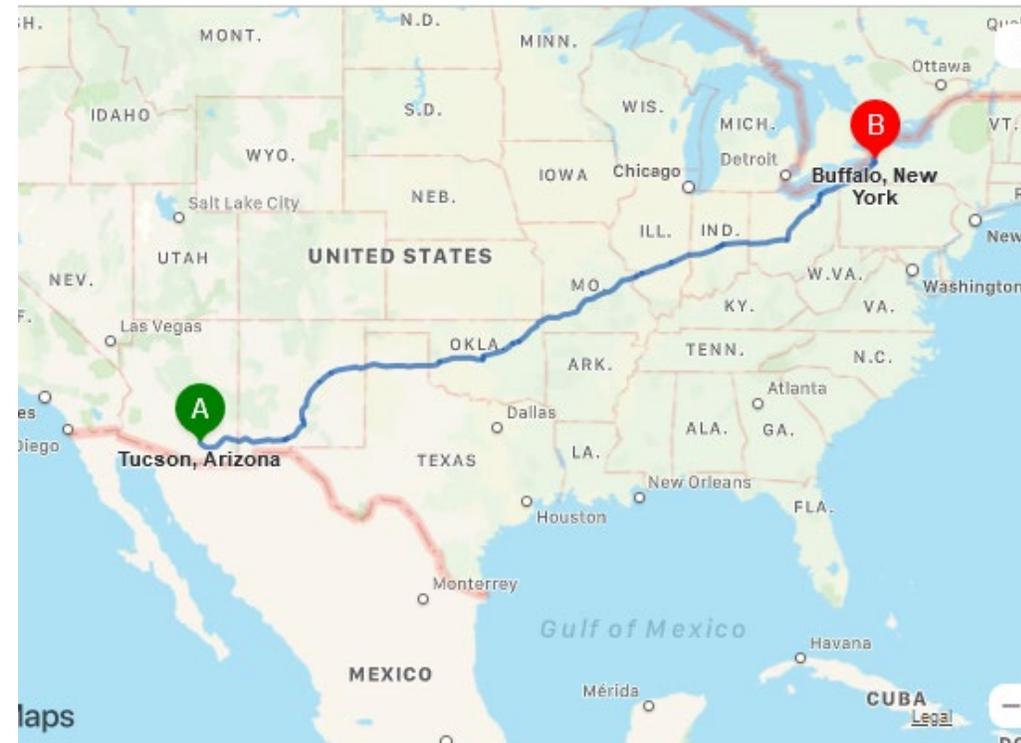
Virtual Colloquium – Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention

University at Buffalo

February 18, 2021

Roadmap for presentation

- Foundations
- What doesn't work to stop bullying
- Theoretical framework
- Research to date
- What works or is promising
- Questions and discussion



Disclaimer

- We cannot cover:
 - Bullying of and by teachers
 - Demographic differences
 - Critique of existing programs

Foundational Knowledge

- Bullying is a type of **aggression** in which harm is **repeatedly** inflicted on a target with less **power** than the perpetrator
- Bullying is a **group process**
- Bullying can be physical, verbal, relational, and/or cyber
- Bullying has harmful consequences include decreased academic performance, increased school absenteeism, negative psychosocial adjustment, symptoms of mental health disorders, and changes in brain development for victims, bullies, and bystanders. These effects may persist into adulthood (Bauman & Yoon, 2014;Quinlan et al., 2008; Vaillancourt et al., 2013).

What does *not* work?

Programs alone

Unsystematic approaches

Punishment

One-size-fits-all approaches



The Role of Teachers in Bullying

The role of teachers in a bullying dynamic is not yet understood (Salmivalli, 2016), despite theoretical and empirical support suggesting that teachers play a key role in students' social experiences (Troop-Gordon, 2015; Yoon et al., 2016).

Multilevel research methods demonstrate that classrooms differ in climate and the rates of victimization (e.g., Oldenburg et al., 2015).

Theoretical Frameworks

I. Teachers as Socializing Agents

- Direct influence by modeling, advice, and information (Wentzel, 2004)
- Indirect influence by communicating goals/values and rules/expectations (Grusec & Hastings, 2015)
- Providing experiences through which these goals and expectations are learned and internalized (Wentzel, 2004)

II. Goal Framing Theory

- Significant adults such as teachers are agents who activate the goals and norms when addressing specific situations (Lindenberg, as cited in Veenstra et al., 2014).

Theoretical Frameworks

III. “Invisible Hand” of Teachers (Farmer et al., 2018)

- The process of teacher influence on classroom social dynamics and peer relationships
- Through teachers’ interactions and relationships with students
- Teacher attunement (e.g., group affiliation, isolation, hierarchy, reputations, norm)
- Social management with a goal of promoting students’ social adjustment and reducing risks for social difficulties
- Specific strategies (e.g., grouping, seating assignments, disciplinary practices, etc.)

Key Points from Theoretical Frameworks

Teacher influence on peer relationships

Ongoing consistent pattern of socialization

Teacher-student Interactions

Teacher-student relationships

Implications for Practice

Target of bullying prevention and intervention

Teaching practices and classroom dynamics

Teacher attunement and social management

Teacher training and support

What does research tell us about teachers' role?

- **What do teachers know/understand about bullying?**

- **Definition**

- (Nicolaidis et al., 2002; Oldenburg et al., 2016; Rigby & Barnes, 2002; Smith & Shu, 2000)

- **Types**

- (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Byers et al., 2011; Craig et al., 2000; Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007; Rigby & Barnes, 2002; Yoon, 2004; Yoon et al., 2016)

- **How well prepared to deal with bullying are teachers?**

- (Bauman et al., 2008; Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Bauman & Hurley, 2005; Byers et al., 2011; Eden et al., 2013; Lester et al., 2018; Mishna et al., 2005; Nicolaidis et al., 2002)

- **How well do teachers recognize bullying among their students?**

- (Ahn et al., 2013; Farmer et al., 2010; Mishna et al., 2005; Oldenburg et al., 2016)

What else do we know?

- **What responses to bullying and cyberbullying are used by teachers?**
(Bauman et al., 2008; Burger et al., 2015; DeSmet et al., 2015; Stauffer et al., 2012; Yoon et al., 2011)
- **How effective are teacher interventions?**
(Craig & Pepler, 1997; Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Holt & Keyes, 2004; Hoover & Hazler, 1991)
- **What factors influence effectiveness?**
(Garandeau et al., 2014, Garandeau, 2016; Veenstra et al., 2014; Wachs et al., 2019)

What works or is promising?

- Restorative Practices (Gonzalez, 2015)
- Support group/Method of Shared Concern (Young, 1998)
- Counseling (e.g., BSFC; Young & Holdorf, 2003)

What works or
is promising?

Teacher- Student Relationships

- Teacher-student relationship (TSR) characterized as caring, warm, and supportive

--Positive peer relationship and less victimization (Raskauskas et al., 2010; Richard et al., 2012)

--More defending (Jungert et al. 2016; Thornberg et al. 2017)

--Autonomous motivation (e.g., “because I like to help other people” or “because I think it is important to help people who are treated badly”) and negatively to extrinsic motivation to defend victims (e.g., “to become popular”) (Iotti et al., 2020)

Teacher- Student Relationships

*Supportive and sensitive teachers have classrooms:

1. With higher rates of reciprocated friendships (Gest & Rodkin, 2011)
2. With higher rates of prosocial behaviors (Luckner & Pinanta, 2011).
3. With lower levels of bullying (Wei et al., 2010)
4. With less rejection of aggressive children (Change et al., 2007)

*Conflicts with students is related to peer disliking and aggressive behaviors (Hendrickx et al., 2016)

What works or
is promising?

Teacher
Practices

- Teacher practices that promote positive peer relationships and discourage peer victimization
- Teacher attitude toward a student and peers' attitude toward the student
- Peer liking is related to how teachers react to students (White & Jones, 2000).
- Emotional tone of teachers with peer preferences

What works or is promising?

Teacher Practices

- Teachers' biased, negative interactions with minority students make a significant contribution to a peer ecology that reflects a hierarchy of power and privileges, thus making these students particularly vulnerable for peer victimization.
- Teachers' respect for diversity and student differences (e.g., racial diversity) predicted within-class decreases in victimization (Gage et al., 2014).
- There was less aggression in middle school classrooms when students participated in rule making and teachers cultivated cultural sensitivity (Reis et al., 2007).

What works or
is promising?

Teacher
Practices

- How teachers handle bullying incidents
- Classroom management
 - Less victimization (Casas et al., 2015)
 - Less victimization and also via social structure (Roland & Galloway, 2002)
 - Fairness (Eliot et al., 2010)

What's
promising?

Antibullying in
Existing
Curriculum

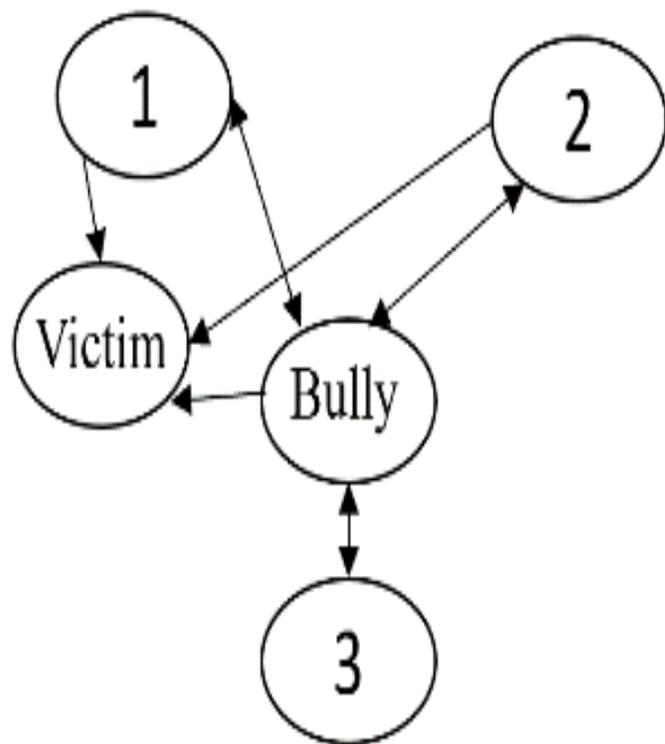
- The importance of integrating bullying prevention into classroom instruction (Swearer et al., 2009; Wang & Goldberg, 2017)
- What are the existing learning opportunities that can be used to bolster antibullying messages and to promote prosocial behaviors?
- Social Studies
- Language Arts (e.g., Bullying Literature Project, Wang et al., 2015)

Teachers' Attunement

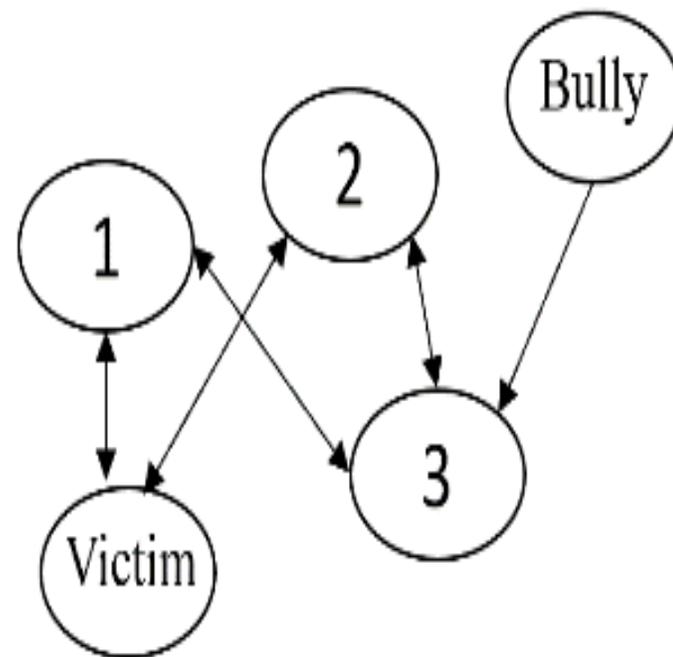
- Teachers' attunement to peer affiliation is associated with classroom functioning
 1. Stronger anti-bullying norm (Neal et al., 2011)
 2. Greater sense of belonging and willingness to defend victims (Farmer et al., 2011)
- Positive effects of a social dynamics training program on teachers' attunement (Hamm et al., 2011).

Figure 1

The Location of Bully



Central Bully



Isolated Bully

Summary

- Bullying is a problem around the world. Teachers are **key players** in efforts to reduce the prevalence.
- There is not a single definitive “best” way for teachers to respond to incidents of bullying. Many factors need to be considered (type, duration, severity, location of actors in social network), school policies and resources.
- Teachers need to know how to prevent bullying, how to detect it when it occurs, how to evaluate the severity of an incident, and how to customize interventions based on the social networks in the class.
 - Teacher training programs should teach a variety of anti-bullying strategies and approaches
- The teacher’s relationship and interactions with students are influential in the peer ecology
 - They are socializing agents
 - They create and manage a classroom climate that discourages (or allows) bullying
- Researchers are encouraged to continue to investigate how teachers can be best prepared to be effective anti-bullying agents.

Community of Collaborators

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Questions?

Thank you for joining us!

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