Universal School-Based Prevention Programming and Peer Relationship Problems

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Presentation Outline

• Peer Victimization and Bullying
• Prevention Strategies
• WITS
• Recommendations for Educational Policy and Practice

Peer Victimization and Bullying

• Intentional, repetitive acts of aggression committed by one or more children against a physically or socially less powerful peer.
  • Physical, direct, overt harm
  • Verbal harm
  • Relational, social, indirect, covert harm
    • Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Underwood, 2004

Frequency of Peer Victimization and Bullying

• Approximately 1 in 10 children are persistently victimized by peers, with rates that range from 10-30% in elementary and middle school.
  • Archer, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993; Pepler et al., 2004

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  • Archer, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993; Pepler et al., 2004
Frequency of Peer Victimization: Grades 1-12 (Canada)


Frequency of Peer Bullying: Grades 1-12 (Canada)


Frequency of Concurrent Peer Victimization and Bullying: Grades 1-12 (Canada)


Stability Over Time?

- Physical forms peak in middle childhood.
- Relational forms become more frequent in late childhood but are apparent as early as preschool.
  - Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Underwood, 2003
- Young children are consistent in their use.
  - Vaillancourt, Brendgen, Boivin, & Tremblay, 2003
- Episodes become more chronic for selected children in late childhood to early adolescence.
Cause for Concern?

- Consequences associated with chronic victimization are often severe or enduring.
- Potent risks for social-emotional and academic problems.
  - Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Rubin, Bukowski, Parker, & Bowker, 2008

Prevention Strategies

School-Based Preventive Strategies

- **Universal**
  - Curriculum to all youth
  - Primary prevention; prevent harm

- **Selected**
  - Intensive, tailored curriculum to high risk small groups or individuals
  - Secondary prevention; reduce harm or risk factors

- **Indicated**
  - Intensive, tailored curriculum to youth identified or diagnosed with specific problems
  - Tertiary prevention; reverse harm
  - Greenberg et al., 1999

Prevention of Peer Victimization and Bullying

- Has attracted the attention of educators, policy-makers, and program developers.
- Web-sites marketing anti-bullying workshops and schools implementing anti-bullying programs have proliferated.
Prevention of Peer Victimization and Bullying

- While well-intentioned, few programs
  - have well-developed or articulated theories of change,
  - have been rigorously evaluated, and
  - assess fidelity of implementation
    - Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Berger, 2007

Black Box of Prevention:
Theory of Change

![Diagram showing the relationship between prevention program, change agents, and targeted outcomes.]

Prevention Program → ? → Targeted Outcomes
- Change Agents?
  - Attitudes
  - Adult supervision
  - Social cognitions

Prevention of Peer Victimization and Bullying

- The most commonly implemented and evaluated anti-bullying program is the school-wide Olweus Bully Prevention Program
  - Olweus, 1993, 2005

- Several more recent programs have sprung from Olweus’ approach
  - Steps to Respect
  - WITS

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

- Program Focus
  - Universal, school-wide program to reduce bullying.
  - Develop school rules against bullying.
  - Promote teacher awareness and cooperative learning strategies.

- Training and Curriculum
  - Train-the-trainer model.
  - School-, classroom-, and individual-level components.

- Methods
  - Comparison group evaluation.
  - 30 schools (grades 5-7).
  - Pre- and post-test.

- Results
  - Decreased bullying and antisocial behaviors.
  - Increased prosocial interactions, class climate, and attitudes toward school.
### Steps to Respect (Frey et al., 2005)

- **Program Focus**
  - Universal, school-wide program to reduce bullying.
  - Increase staff awareness and responsiveness.
  - Foster socially responsive beliefs and social-emotional skills.

- **Training and Curriculum**
  - Teacher orientation.
  - 10 1-hour semi-scripted lessons.
  - Implementation fidelity ~90%

- **Methods**
  - Randomized control design.
  - 6 schools (grades 3-6)
  - Pre- and post-test.

- **Results**
  - Increased adult responsiveness, beliefs against bullying, and observed prosocial interactions.
  - Decreased bullying (observed) and victimization (self-reported).

### WITS Rock Solid Program

(Leadbeater, Hoglund, & Woods, 2003)

- **Program Focus**
  - Universal, school-wide program to prevent victimization.
  - Foster adult responsiveness.
  - Promote developmentally appropriate strategies to deal with bullying.

- **Training and Curriculum**
  - Teacher orientation.
  - Embedded in language arts curriculum.
  - Messages reinforced by school personnel and community-based police officers and athletes.

- www.youth.society.uvic.ca or www.rocksolid.bc.ca

### WITS Evaluation: Design & Participants

- **WITS Design**
  - 3-year comparison group evaluation
  - 11 intervention schools, 6 comparison schools
    - low- and high-poverty schools

- **3-years and 4 waves of data**
  - Year 1 = fall & spring of 1st grade
  - Year 2 = spring of 2nd grade
  - Year 3 = spring of 3rd grade

- **432 children**
  - 49% girls, mean age = 6.1 years at baseline
  - 73% White, 13% Asian, 7% Aboriginal, and 5% other
  - family SES risks (no risks = 49.8%; 1-4 risks = 50.2%)
Measures: Victimization & Bullying

- Physical and Relational Victimization
  - Child-reports
  - 5 items per subscale; 3-point scale
    - “How often has another kid pushed, shoved or hit you?”
    - “How often has another kid left you out on purpose?”
  - Social Experiences Questionnaire (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996)

- Physical Bullying/Aggression
  - Teacher-reports
  - 3 items; 4-point scale
    - “How often does this child kick other children?”
  - Early School Behavior Rating Scale (Caldwell & Pianta, 1991)

Physical Victimization: WITS vs. Control Schools

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Relational Victimization: WITS vs. Control Schools

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Physical Bullying: WITS vs. Control Schools

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Summary and Limitations of WITS

- Promise of a universal, school-wide approach to reduce peer victimization and bullying.
- What are the mechanisms of change?
- Implementation fidelity?
- Causality?
- Generalizable?

Conflict Resolution Programming

- Can established anti-violence and conflict resolution programs that target aggression and violence also reduce risks for peer victimization and bullying?
  - “because LIFT is so effective in reducing aggression, it no doubt is effective in reducing bullying as well.”
  - Fight Crime, Invest in Kids (2001, p. 11)

Recommendations

- Support developmentally appropriate prevention programs with well-developed theories of change.
- Support prevention programs that target diverse forms of peer problems in the early grades when these problems may be most amenable to change.
Recommendations

• Universal, school- or classroom-wide programs that
  • target multiple outcomes,
  • are paired with selected components, and
  • involve parents and community groups.

• Demand rigorous, longitudinal evaluation of these programs and evidence of treatment fidelity.