Longitudinal Associations among Bullying, Sexual Harassment, & Teen Dating Violence Perpetration During Early Adolescence

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Family Context & Bullying

- Coercive exchanges between parents and children in the home often co-occur with abusive and conflictual family dynamics, which have been linked to bullying.

- Several cross-sectional (see Espelage, Bosworth & Simon, 2000; Ortega & Espelage, under review) and a handful of longitudinal findings (see Voisin & Hong, 2012), direct and indirect exposure to family violence is linked to bullying behavior.
Bullying, Sexual Violence (SV), & Teen Dating Violence (TDV) Overlap

- Bully-SV link theory – bullying perpetration predictive of sexual violence over adolescence time and share similar risk factors (Basile et al., 2009; Espelage et al., 2012).
- Miller and colleagues (2013) demonstrate how dating violence and bullying often co-occur, highlighting the need to recognize the interrelatedness of these behaviors.
- Limited number of longitudinal studies that unpack the mechanisms from contextual variables to bully perpetration.
- Few longitudinal studies that consider how bully perpetration is associated with the emergence of gender-based bullying, sexual harassment, and/or teen dating violence during early adolescence.
Developmental model of bullying, sexual harassment, & dating violence perpetration

- Child Abuse & Domestic Viol.
- Family Conflict & Sibling Aggr.
- Delinquency & Deviant Peers
- Bully Perpetration
- Sexual Harass. Perpetration
- Teen Dating Violence Perp.

Family Context ----- Middle School ------ High School
Demographics:
- 1,162 students (49.1% female)
- 3 cohorts (5th, 6th, 7th graders in 2008)
- Racially diverse (51% Black, 26% White)
- 60% Free/reduced lunch

7 waves of data collection – survey
(from spring 2008-spring 2013)
Series of Research Hypotheses

• Bullying perpetration and homophobic teasing perpetration would be causally linked over middle school years.

• Bullying perpetration and homophobic teasing perpetration would be associated with sexual harassment perpetration over time.

• Bullying perpetration would predict sexual harassment perpetration and teen dating violence perpetration in high school.
Bullying & Homophobic Teasing Perpetration

Model Fit:
RMSEA = .051 (.044 | .058)
NNFI/TLI = .964, CFI = .968

Figure 1. Standardized parameter estimates from the panel model of the relations among bullying and homophobic teasing.

(Espelage, Rao, & Little, 2012; Little, 2013)
Take-Away Messages

• Homophobic name-calling is prevalent in middle school.

• Youth who bully resort to homophobic name-calling over the middle school years.

• Bully prevention programs should include a discussion of language that marginalizes gender non-conforming and LGBT youth.
Longitudinal Results – Waves 2 & 5

Controlling for:

Espelage, Basile, & Hamburger, 2012
Teen Dating Violence in High School

• Bullying can be broadly construed as social interactions (or social dynamic) that are influenced, maintained or mitigated by relationships in the school, peer, and familial contexts (Pepler et al., 2006).

• Few studies have investigated family context of bullying perpetration (e.g., Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009), and the majority of the existing studies on the topic have been cross-sectional.

• Our research is predicated on a social-ecological model and a social interactional learning model in which family violence serves as an important context for understanding the relation between bullying perpetration and involvement in delinquency as predictors of sexual harassment perpetration and teen dating violence.
Addressing Research Gaps

Current longitudinal study addresses gaps in the literature by:

1) Testing an ecologically-driven model that incorporates the influence of peers, parents and familial factors,

2) Evaluating the changing influence of key socializing agents across early to late adolescence and

3) Examining the antecedents, correlates, and sequela of bullying, sexual harassment, and teen dating violence.
Developmental model of bullying, sexual harassment, & dating violence perpetration
(Final Path Model for Girls)

Model Fit:
RMSEA = .07 (0.06-0.08)

Family Conflict & Sibling Aggression

Delinquency & Deviant Peers

Bully Perpetration

Sexual Harass. Perpetration

Teen Dating Violence Perp.

Family Context ----- Middle School ------- High School
Developmental model of bullying, sexual harassment, & dating violence perpetration (Final Path Model for Boys)

Sibling Aggression → Delinquency & Deviant Peers → Bully Perpetration


Model Fit: RMSEA = .07 (0.06-0.08)

Family Context ----- Middle School ------- High School
Recommendations

• Research must consider multiple contexts to identify longitudinal predictors, mediators, moderators associated with outcomes for youth who bully.

• Bullying programs need to incorporate discussion of gender-based name-calling, sexual violence, and gender expression (homophobic language; Birkett & Espelage, 2010).

• Prevention of bullying & youth violence should address exposure to family violence & include opportunities for youth to address their attitudes supportive of aggression.

• Assess & address multiple forms of teen dating violence victimization & perpetration.

• Increase research attention to sexual coercion in dating relationships – especially for girls.