



2018

## Understanding the Complexity of School Bully Involvement

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### Recommended Citation

Espelage, Dorothy L. (2018) "Understanding the Complexity of School Bully Involvement," *The Chautauqua Journal*: Vol. 2 , Article 20.

Available at: <https://encompass.eku.edu/tcj/vol2/iss1/20>

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DOROTHY L. ESPELAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF SCHOOL BULLY INVOLVEMENT

### *Introduction*

Bullying perpetration and victimization are issues of increasing concern for researchers, educators, clinicians, parents and youth today (Espelage, 2012; Espelage & Swearer, 2011). Bullying broadly refers to aggressive behaviors including *physical* aggression (hitting, shoving, tripping, etc.), *verbal* aggression (teasing, name-calling, threatening) as well as *relational* aggression (rumor spreading, exclusion, isolation from clique).

Bullying is thought to differ from normal peer conflict in that it is often repeated and involves a difference in power between the bully and victim. Bullying behaviors also extend to the use of the internet and cell-phones to harass and intimidate recipients.

Bullying through these mediums is commonly referred to as cyberbullying. Although initially studied in the context of schools, bullying research has since been extended to sibling relationships, workplace interactions and dating and intimate relationships.

### *Definition*

A significant amount of research has been conducted on bullying and multitudes of bullying prevention programs are being developed. However, a standard definition of the term ‘bullying’ has yet to be agreed upon. One of the first predominant definitions of bullying that continues to be supported in the literature declares that “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students” (Olweus, 2010, p. 11). Other definitions have been more explicit. For example, Smith and Sharp write, “A student is being bullied or picked on when another student says nasty or unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a student is hit, kicked, threatened, locked inside a room, sent nasty notes and when no one ever talks to him” (Sharp & Smith, 1991, p. 1). More recent definitions of bullying emphasize observable or non-observable aggressive behaviors, the repetitive nature of these behaviors and the imbalance of power between perpetrator and victim

(Espelage & Swearer, 2011). An imbalance of power exists when the perpetrator or group of perpetrators have more physical, social or intellectual power than the victim. The American Psychological Association defines bullying more broadly as persistent threatening and aggressive behaviors directed towards other people, especially those who are smaller and weaker (VandenBos, 2007).

The lack of a clear and standardized definition of bullying is a barrier to advancing our understanding of the complex problem of bullying. Varying definitions are a symptom of a muddy construct. Inconsistent conceptualizations of a construct lead to poor operationalization. This creates discrepancies in research findings and interferes with strong theory building. This, in turn, hampers effective prevention and intervention efforts. In fact, a recent meta-analysis of the effectiveness of sixteen bullying prevention and intervention programs across six countries found small to negligible effects on bullying behaviors (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008). The meta-analysis included six studies on programs being implemented in the United States. Null findings could be attributed in part to the difficulty of operationalizing and measuring bullying, especially when most of the measures rely on self-report.

### *Participants of Bullying*

Research on bullying broadly includes the study of six categories of individuals. The first three fall along a continuum and include bullies, bully-victims and victims (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Bullies are those individuals who are only involved in the perpetration of bullying behaviors. Victims are only on the receiving end of bullying behaviors. Bully-victims, on the other hand, are students who are both victimized and perpetrators of victimization. In addition to the individuals involved in the bullying, three additional categories of individuals have been implicated in bullying behaviors: bystanders, defenders and uninvolved students (Salmivalli, 2010). Bystanders are individuals who are not directly involved in bullying but report observing bullying behaviors. They do not interfere in the bullying they witness. Defenders are individuals who intervene within the observed bullying behaviors and aim to prevent or stop it. Uninvolved individuals are

those who are unaware of bullying occurring in their environment, either because they are not present when bullying occurs or because they do not perceive it as bullying.

### *Prevalence*

The problem of bullying is common in American schools. A nationally representative study found that thirty percent of students were involved in bullying either as a victim, a perpetrator or a bully-victim within the last term of their school year (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton & Scheidt, 2001). Bullying is reported as early as pre-school and becomes an established phenomenon in elementary school. However, it is most prevalent in middle school populations. A recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 32% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 reported being bullied within the 6 months prior to being surveyed (NCES, 2010). Of the students surveyed, 62% reported having been bullied once or twice a year, 21% once or twice a month, 10% once or twice a week and 7% reported being bullied *every day*. Bullying experiences did not differ by gender in these findings. However, 10% of students aged 12–18 years reported being called a derogatory word related to race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sex or sexual orientation within a period of 6 months (NCES, 2010). Thirty-five percent reported seeing hate-related graffiti at their school related to race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sex or sexual orientation within a period of 6 months (NCES, 2010). Despite these numbers, findings from other studies indicated that 71% of teachers or other adults in classrooms ignored bullying incidents (MPAB, 2000). Adults are often unprepared to intervene or hold beliefs that bullying is a normative experience in schools (Parker-Roerdon, Rudewick & Gorton, 2007). However, an analysis of high-profile school shootings revealed that 71 % of the shooters felt bullied, persecuted, attacked, or injured by their peers in school (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum & Modzeleski, 2002). Several bullying-related suicides have also been highlighted in the media, shining a spotlight on the psychological harm bullying can cause. This attention undoubtedly reinvigorates and facilitates research on the topic of bullying. It also highlights the imperative to study this problem in an evidence-based, scientific manner.

### *Outcomes and Correlates*

Bullying perpetration and victimization are associated with a range of negative emotional, psychological and educational consequences (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Victimized adolescents experience more anxiety than their non-victimized counterparts, especially social anxiety (Cook et al., 2010; Gladstone, Parker & Malhi, 2006; Humphrey, Storch & Geffken, 2007). Although victims report more internalizing behaviors, bully perpetrators are more likely to engage in externalizing behaviors like anger and impulsivity. They also experience more conduct problems, engage in more delinquent behaviors and are more likely to engage in substance use as compared to their peers (Haynie, Nansel & Eitel, 2001; Luk et al., 2010; Mitchell, Ybarra & Finkelhor, 2007; Niemela et al., 2011; Sullivan, Farrell & Kleiwer, 2006; Tharp-Taylor, Haviland & D'Amico, 2009). Research also has indicated poorer psychosocial development and/or adjustment (e.g., making friends, unhappiness at school, self-esteem) among those involved in bullying (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer & Perry 2003; Nansel et al., 2001; Wilkins-Shurmer, O'Callaghan, Najman & Bor, 2003). In the most comprehensive meta-analysis of the correlates of bully involvement among children and adolescents, Cook and colleagues (2010) found overlapping and distinct individual correlates across 153 studies of bullies, victims and bully-victims. Overall, bullies were found to have elevated levels of externalizing behaviors, social and academic challenges, negative attitudes and negative self-cognitions; whereas, victims were found to have elevated levels of internalizing behaviors, negative self-related cognitions and poorer social skills. Although there are negative outcomes for all individuals involved in bullying, bully-victims are potentially the most vulnerable group of the three because they experience the combined negative outcomes associated with perpetration and victimization. For example, Kumpulainen and colleagues (2001) found that 18% of bully-victims, 13% of bullies and 10% of victims in their study had been diagnosed with a depressive disorder.

Additionally, victimized youth have been found to have suppressed immune systems (Valliancourt, Duku, deCatanzaro, MacMillan, Muir & Schmidt, 2008) and consequently experience poorer physical health (Knack & Valliancourt, 2010). Fekkes and colleagues (2004) found a positive association between bullying and psychosomatic complaints (e.g., headaches, sleep disturbances).

Moreover, peer victimization through bullying has been associated with extreme violent behavior such as school homicides (Anderson, Kaufman & Simon, 2001; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). Victims of bullying may be at increased risk for suicidal behavior, even into young adulthood (Klomek, Sourander & Niemela, 2009), but it appears the association between victimization and suicide behaviors is partially explained by depression and delinquency (Espelage & Holt, 2013). Bully perpetrators are at risk for long-term negative outcomes as well. Studies in Europe found that bully perpetrators are more likely to be convicted of crimes in adulthood (Olweus, 1993). They are also more likely to be involved in other forms of aggression (Espelage, Basile & Hamburger, 2012). Involvement in bullying, therefore, has significant negative consequences for youth, both in the short and long term.

### *Social-ecological Framework*

Recently, the social-ecological framework has been applied to bullying and its associated risk and protective factors. This theoretical framework posits that the behavior of children and adolescents is shaped by a range of nested contextual systems, including family, peers and school environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Espelage & Low, 2012). Table 1 (below) provides a summary of the variables that will be discussed as critical components of bully prevention as informed by the social-ecological framework. These contexts with which children and adolescents have direct contact are referred to as the *microsystem*. The interaction between components of the microsystem is referred to as the *mesosystem*. Parent-teacher meetings are an example of a mesosystem. The *exosystem* is the social context with which the child does not have direct contact, but which affects him or her indirectly through the microsystem. Examples would be parents' work environment or availability of recreational activities in the community. The *macrosystem* may be considered the outermost layer in the child's environment. This layer comprises abstract influences such as cultural values, customs and laws (Berk, 2000). The macrosystem impacts the child through its indirect influence on the microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem. Finally, the dimension of time is included in this framework as the *chronosystem*. This system exerts itself directly upon the child, through external events

(e.g., the divorce of parents) or internal events (e.g., puberty). It also can exert itself indirectly upon the child through social and cultural trends. Cyberbullying could be an example of the chronosystem’s indirect influence on a child’s bullying experiences because of the recent increase in social networking sites and the affordability of text messaging.

**Table 1. Social-ecological variables associated with bullying involvement**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Example of variables</b>	<b>Potential Intervention</b>
Demographics	age, gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, socio-economic status, special education status, sexual orientation, gender expression, homelessness	Developmentally-appropriate interventions, bias-based curriculum that addresses race, ethnicity, special needs, sexual orientation, etc.
Microsystem	Family and parenting practices, peer influence, friendship networks, school norms and climate, teachers’ attitudes	Prevention and intervention that shifts peer norms that are supportive of bullying to those that are supportive of bystander intervention  Teacher and support staff professional development and ongoing training  School-wide positive behavior supports or social-emotional learning skills
Mesosystem	Parenting practices influence on friendship skills; family violence places child at-risk for victimization in other peer groups; school policies on risk for bullying involvement	Prevention of Child Abuse  School-wide prevention program
Exosystem	Opportunities for recreational and extracurricular activities in school and community; access to mental health services in school or community; parental unemployment or stress on sibling relationships; coaching practices	Prevention efforts at community and recreational facilities, with coaches, youth leaders and promote access to mental health services  Opportunities for volunteer experiences
Macrosystem	Gender norms in family; cultural expectations regarding aggression and defending oneself	Culturally-sensitive bully prevention programming
Chronosystem	Divorce of parents, puberty, economic recession, access to social networking	More research on transitions, disruptions and changes in access to media

Although complex, the social-ecological framework provides conceptual guidance for examining the equally complex problem of bullying. It is particularly relevant because it allows us to examine the direct, indirect and combined impact of these social contexts on bullying involvement. Although the social-ecological framework has been applied to child development issues broadly, its application to school-based bullying has been limited. In many ways, the framework has been studied as it relates to bullying in a piecemeal fashion. For example, some studies have found that individual attitudes and behaviors (micro) of bullying have been shaped by family and sibling relationships (micro), which represents a meso-system interaction, yet very few studies have examined comprehensively the social-ecological model. Thus, in this manuscript we will use the social-ecological framework to organize and inform our understanding of bullying perpetration and victimization, but will also point to major gaps in fully applying this framework.

### *Individual (Micro) Characteristics*

Certain individual characteristics have been implicated in increasing the risk for being a victim of bullying. Boys are victimized more often than girls (Cook et al., 2010; Espelage & Holt, 2001), although this depends somewhat on the form of victimization. Boys are more likely to experience physical bullying victimization (e.g., being hit), whereas girls are more likely to be targets of indirect victimization (e.g., social exclusion) (Jeffrey, Miller & Linn, 2001). One of the few studies that addressed influences of race on bullying found that Black students reported less victimization than White or Hispanic youth (Nansel et al., 2001). Other factors increase the likelihood of bullying others. Boys are more likely to bully peers than girls (Kumpulainen, Rasanen & Henttonen, 1998) and individuals with behavioral, emotional or learning problems are more likely to perpetrate bullying than their peers (Kaukiainen et al., 2002). Bullies, particularly male bullies, tend to be physically stronger than their peers. Juvonen, Graham and Schuster (2003) found Black middle school youth more likely to be categorized as bullies and bully-victims than White students. Another study found that the reported incidences of bullying perpetration

were slightly higher for Hispanic students than their Black and White peers (Nansel et al., 2001).

Research from outside the United States has indicated that students who are enrolled in special education curricula are victimized and perpetrate more bullying than their general education peers (Whitney, Smith & Thompson, 1994). Few empirical studies have examined bullying and victimization rates among American schoolchildren within special education programs. However, a recent study by Rose and colleagues (2011) examined rates of bullying perpetration and victimization among middle school students ( $n = 7,331$ ) and high school students ( $n = 14,315$ ) enrolled in general education and special education programs. As hypothesized, students in special education reported greater rates of bullying perpetration and victimization than general education students. Students who were in self-contained classrooms reported more perpetration and victimization than those in inclusive settings.

#### *Family (Micro) Characteristics*

It has consistently been shown that characteristics of parents influence their children's well-being, including their potential to be involved in bullying as either perpetrators or victims. Bullies tend to have parents who do not provide adequate supervision or are not actively involved in the lives of their children (Georgiou & Fanti, 2010). Adolescents are likely to engage in bullying behaviors when their daily activities are not monitored by adults, when they are not held accountable for their actions, or when the family unit is not able to intervene and correct the bullying behaviors. In other instances, parents may encourage the use of aggressive and retaliatory type behaviors. Children who learn to be aggressive from their parents or learn that bullying is an acceptable means of retaliation, are more likely to be bullies in school (Georgiou & Fanti, 2010). The family environment can also influence whether children become victims of bullying. Children who are victims of bullying more often come from families with histories of abuse or inconsistent parenting (Espelage, Low & De La Rue, 2012; Georgiou & Fanti, 2010) potentially because they may not be prepared to counteract the bullying they encounter at school.

The family can also serve to aid in resiliency for children who are victims of bullying. When victims of bullying have warm relationships with their families they have more positive outcomes, both emotionally and behaviorally (Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffitt & Arseneault, 2010). These positive parent-child interactions may provide children with the opportunity to talk about their bullying experiences, or can provide guidance on how to cope with these events. Bowes and colleagues (2010) also found that supportive relationships with siblings could serve to aid in bully-victims resilience.

### *Peers (Micro) Characteristics*

Peers can be a source of enormous support for students, but when this peer connection is lacking this can make incidents of bullying more severe. Additionally, the way classmates respond to bullying has significant effects on whether the bullying continues. Bullying rarely takes place in an isolated dyadic interaction, but instead often occurs in the presence of other students (Espelage, Holt & Henkel, 2003). Students may serve to perpetuate bullying by actively joining in or passively accepting the bullying behaviors, while on the other hand students can intervene to stop bullying or defend the victim (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink & Birchmeier, 2009; Salmivalli, 2010). Inaction on behalf of other students seems to be more prevalent, where most students reinforce bullies by passively watching the bullying occur (Flaspohler et al., 2009).

Although decades of research point to the role of empathy in promoting prosocial behavior and inhibiting antisocial behavior, only recently have studies specifically extended empathy to willingness to intervene in bullying scenarios or defender behavior (Caravita, DiBlasio & Salmivalli, 2009; Endresen & Olweus, 2001; Gini, Albiero, Benelli & Altoe, 2007; Gini, Pozzoli & Haiser, 2011; Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi & Franzoni, 2008; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Nickerson, Mele & Princiotta, 2008; Stavrinides, Georgiou & Theofanous, 2010; Pöyhönen, Juvonen & Salmivalli, 2010). Taken together, these studies find that among early adolescent samples, defending behavior is associated with greater empathy (Gini et al., 2007; Gini et al., 2008; Nickerson et al., 2008; Stavrinides et al., 2010) and bullies appear to be morally competent but lack in morally compassionate behavior in comparison to victims or defenders (Gini et al., 2011). However, peer

influence appears to interact with individual behavior. Consistent with Rigby and Johnson's study, Pozzoli and Gini (2010) found that perceived positive peer pressure to defend a victim interacted with personal responsibility to predict defending. That is, students who held moderate or high levels of personal responsibility were more likely to defend a victim if they perceived their peers to hold a positive view toward defender behavior. Finally, only one recent empirical study found that greater bullying perpetration within one's peer group was highly predictive of less individual willingness to intervene, suggesting that any prevention efforts to address bystander or defender intervention must first reduce the level of bullying within peer groups (Espelage, Green & Polanin, 2011).

Increasingly, school-based bullying prevention programs are focusing their attention on encouraging bystanders to intervene (e.g., students and teachers who are watching bullying situations or know about the bullying). Interventions are likely to be effective in reducing bullying rates in schools (Newman, Horne & Bartolomucci, 2000; Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Polanin, Espelage & Pigott, 2012; Salmivalli, Karna & Poskipart, 2010). Indeed, a recent small-scale meta-analysis found support for the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs' ability to alter bystander behavior to intervene in bullying situations (Polanin, Espelage & Pigott, 2012). This meta-analysis synthesized bullying prevention programs' effectiveness in altering bystander behavior to intervene in bullying situations. Evidence from twelve school-based interventions, involving 12,874 students, revealed that overall the programs were successful (Hedges'  $g = 0.20$ , C.I.: 0.11, 0.29,  $p < .001$ ), with larger effects for high school samples compared to K-8 student samples (HS ES = 0.43, K-8 ES = 0.14;  $p < .05$ ). A secondary synthesis of seven studies that reported empathy for the victim revealed treatment effectiveness that was positive but not significantly different from zero (ES = 0.05, CI: -0.07, 0.17,  $p = .45$ ). Nevertheless, this meta-analysis indicated that programs were effective at changing bystander intervening behavior, both on a practical and statistically significant level.

Despite this promising small-scale meta-analysis, much research needs to be conducted to understand the complex nuances of bystander intervention in order to give bystanders practical strategies for intervening effectively. In most of the prevention programs, bystanders or onlookers (sometimes called allies, upstanders, reinforcers) are encouraged to either report an incident of bullying or to confront students who are

bullying other students. In some states teachers can lose their teacher's license (see, for example, State of New Jersey, 2011) if they do not intervene effectively and in other states legislation is being considered for criminalizing students who do not intervene (Schneidau, 2011). Thus, it is imperative that both basic and applied research is conducted on bystander intervention.

### *Developmental considerations*

The association between peers and bullying can also look different depending on the age of students. For younger students in primary school (or elementary), there tends to be a lack of stability for the victim role, while students who engage in bullying tend to remain in this role for a longer, more stable period of time (Schäfer, Korn, Brodbeck, Wolke & Schulz, 2005). At this age, bullying perpetration seems to be directed at multiple targets, which results in multiple victims and lower stability. The environment of primary schools is such that social hierarchies are not as pronounced; therefore, students will more often confront a bully or retaliate when bullied. By the time students are in secondary school (or middle school), the bully and victim roles are relatively stable (Schäfer et al., 2005). Those students who are in the victim role are less likely to be able to maneuver away from this. In addition, students who occupy the bullying role appear to continue to target the same individuals (Schäfer et al., 2005). The social structure of students in secondary schools is more visible, which makes maneuvering to different roles more challenging.

### *Social status and reciprocal interactions*

The status that students have in school can also be an influential factor, particularly if they are younger students, such as 6<sup>th</sup> graders entering into middle school. Research indicates that lower status students tend to be victimized more frequently and likely fear ramifications including increased victimization if they chose to retaliate (Bradshaw, Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2009). Students who were victimized are also less popular with their peers. However, in contrast to bullies, victims were consistently preferred less regardless of whether the victimization rates were low or high (Sentse, Scholte,

Salmivalli & Voeten, 2007). While students who engage in prosocial behaviors are consistently liked by their peers, aggressive peers are accepted when the overall school climate is accepting of aggression.

### *Teachers, Administrators & Paraprofessionals.*

It has been noted that there are discrepancies between how teachers and staff perceive bullying in comparison to their students. Many teachers are unaware of how serious and extensive the bullying is within their schools and are often ineffective in being able to identify bullying incidents (Bradshaw, Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2007; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Divergence between staff and student estimates of the rates of bullying are seen in elementary, middle and high school, with staff consistently underestimating the frequency of these events (Bradshaw et al., 2007). In a study conducted by Bradshaw and colleagues (2007), these differences were most pronounced in elementary school, where less than 1% of elementary school staff reporting bullying rates similar to that reported by students.

Very few teachers reported that they would ignore or do nothing if a student reported an incident of bullying, instead many teachers reported that they would intervene with the bully and the victim (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Despite the good intentions of school officials, many students feel that teachers and staff are not doing enough to prevent bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2007). This belief of students that teachers will not be able to help them, or if they "tattle" the situation may become worse, are reasons many students hesitate to report incidents to teachers, which may also explain why teachers perceive a lower prevalence of bullying (Craig, Henderson & Murphy, 2000).

The action, or inaction, of teachers and staff also influences whether bullying perpetration will continue. Passive attitudes towards bullying or a lack of immediate intervention effectively serves to reinforce bullying behaviors because the perpetrator receives no negative consequences (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). In addition, when the teacher acts in a passive manner and does not intervene on a victim's behalf, the victimized student can feel as though teachers and staff are uncaring or unable to provide protection

and support (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). In contrast, when students are willing to ask teachers for help, reports of bullying are lower (Bandyopadhyay, Cornell & Konold, 2009).

### *Classroom Factors*

Students spend a majority of their school day in the classroom, which not only increases the opportunities for bullying in this area, but can also serve as an effective place to intervene. Evidence suggests that in classrooms where teachers separate students following bullying incidents (for instance changing seating arrangements if a student is picking on a classmate) there are lower levels of peer victimization (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Separating students is believed to help partly by preventing students from engaging in retaliatory aggressive behaviors, which then breaks a cycle of aggressive behaviors.

The environment of the classroom and adopted norms have an impact upon levels of both bullying perpetration and victimization. Additionally, when classrooms have rigid hierarchical social structures, victimization becomes more stable because there are few opportunities to maneuver into different roles or social positions (Schäfer et al., 2005). On the other hand, when classrooms are more democratic and the social power is more evenly distributed, a less hostile environment for students is created (Ahn, Garandeanu & Rodkin, 2010). When there are clear levels of power amongst students, victimized children may not have the resources or support to retaliate against bullies and bully behavior remains unchallenged.

### *School Structure & Climate*

The school climate has implications for not only how students perform academically and socially, but also how bullying is accepted or discouraged in schools. When schools have a “culture of bullying” this can serve as a catalyst to allow bullies to continue to behave aggressively without fear of sanction and while also encouraging passivity of bystanders (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). In schools where bullying is more prevalent, students are

less likely to seek help from teachers and staff than in schools where bullying is minimal (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). This can create a cycle where students who are bullied do not feel they can receive support or assistance from teachers and when students don't convey their concerns, teachers do not intervene and bullies are free to continue with their behaviors without consequences. Finally, the physical layout and structures of the school also plays a role in how bullying is carried out in schools. Across grade levels, the classroom and the cafeteria are locations where students are frequently bullied (Bradshaw et al., 2007).

### *Summary and Implications for Prevention Planning*

As stated previously, very little research has *comprehensively* evaluated the validity of the social-ecological perspective in relation to bully prevention and intervention efforts. Rather, most of the research has been conducted in a piecemeal fashion, where many of the studies have focused only on the microsystem. Thus, there is a call for research that pays particular attention to examining the other systems and the interactions among them. It should be noted that in order to test the social-ecological theory comprehensively, it requires large scale multi-informant studies. Although there are many national, longitudinal datasets that could be used to test this theory, many of them did not collect bullying measures. Thus, there is an urgency to include bullying assessments in ongoing longitudinal datasets. However, because very little research has considered the cumulative, interactive nature of these systems in predicting bullying involvement, there are many inconsistent research findings in the extant literature. These contradicting findings have created difficulty in targeting the most salient risk and protective factors.

However, what the research does suggest is that prevention programs need to consider intervening at multiple levels. A few examples are provided in the last column in Table 1 (above). Unfortunately, there is not a single program available to schools or communities to address all levels of the risk and protective factors of bullying involvement within the social-ecology framework of bullying prevention. It is clear from this review of the literature and the examples provided in Table 1 that it will take parents,

schools, community agencies, faith-based organizations, coaches, etc to prevent bullying in our society.

In addition, we have to move beyond primary (or universal) programs that are situated just in schools. More specifically, secondary prevention (when there are signs of a problem) and tertiary prevention (when there is a noted problem) programs need to be developed in schools as well as communities. We need to raise community awareness that bullying is not a normal part of growing up and make sure every citizen understands that even good kids can be bullies or bystanders that fail to intervene on behalf of victims. In addition, bullies, victims and bully-victims need to have access to mental health services, parents need to have access to parent training and support, teachers need training in creating safe classrooms and to connect with their students, practitioners need to understand how bullying involvement is complicated and embedded in a peer group structure and coaches and other youth leaders need to engage in conversations with their youth about bullying and evaluate their own modeling of bullying or coercive language and behavior. As our lives are continually shaped by media, social network sites and texting, it is imperative that bully prevention programming includes ongoing conversations about responsible use of media. Only when the full scope of the social-ecology is represented in bully prevention efforts will the United States begin to see a decrease in bullying among youth and adults.

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