

Cyberbullying Interventions Through a Developmental Lens

Overview



Dan Florell Eastern Kentucky University

> Texas Association of School Psychologist Annual Convention – Houston,TX November 4, 2022

1

• Major developmental milestones in adolescence • Popular social media and usage patterns Overview of cyberbullying

• Cyberbullying interventions





Brain Areas to Know

- Hippocampus (Hippos on Campus)
 - Behavior inhibition
 - Attention
 - Long-term memory formation





HIPPOCAMPUS

4



Brain Areas to Know

- Amygdala (Emotional Amy)
 - Well developed
 - Process emotional content
 - Remember danger levels
 - Activate and prod basal ganglia into action



5

Brain Areas to Know

- Basal Ganglia (Basic Gorillas)
 - Control motor movement

Typical state of gorillas

• Leads person to act before thinking













Second Great Brain Growth

- Puberty results in:
 - Motor and sensory areas fully develop
 - White matter increases
 - Myelination increases



8



Early Adolescent

Adult

The Brain

Brain Development

 Frontal lobe development
 Capable of abstract reasoning

 Difficulty reading and understanding emotions
 Difficulty controlling impulsiveness

- Immature brain = trouble
- More susceptible to engaging in high-risk behaviors
- Abstract thinking
 - Imaginary audience
 - Personal fable
 - Optimistic bias

11

C



- Identity development
 - Main goal of adolescence is to figure out;
 - Who you are
 - How you fit into society
 - Where you are going
 - Autonomy
 - Empathy
 - Attachment /Relationships





Autonomy

- <u>Societal goal</u> adolescents to begin distancing themselves from parents and be able to do things on their own.
- Manifested by immersion in teen culture and wanting space to be with their friends and not around other parents or adults.



Attachment & Relationships

• Influence of first relationships

Roughly 60-70% of children

Attachment
 Secure

• Insecure

13

C

14



Attachment & Relationships

- Family
- Friends

Dating







PC

17



Empathy

Ability to relate to others and anticipate

• Many social cues missing in internet

• Disconnect of internet having real world

• Requirement to go to the next level of

Media Impact on Development

 Social media can assist with many developmental issues including:

 Relationships – Friends & Dating
 Social media can inhibit other developmental issues including:

what others are thinking. • Perspective-taking

communication.

moral thinking.

impact

Identity Autonomy

• Empathy

• Relationships - Family

• Movement to more video use in all outlets.



Streaming services
 Most watch videos and shows on

streaming sites

19

• Us gr olu • Te hr fee • s

Use of Social Media Trends

- Use of social media is growing among 8-12 yr. olds in last two years.
 - 38% used social media
 18% use social media "every





 34% of teens say enjoy using social media a lot.



(Common Sense Media, 2021)

20

How Much is Too Much?

















Youth with a stronger emotional investment in media are likely to have higher levels of anxiety



26



Social Media -**Double Edged** Sword



tly 1











Positives of Social Media

- Connect with friends and family
- Participating in group school projects
 Receiving and offering emotional support
- emotional support
 Learn about current events and cultural issues
- Find opportunities for community involvement



JAMA Peds (2022)

29

Positives of Social Media Adolescent Perspective



- Helps build relationship and extend peer support.
- Assist in protecting their mental health.
- Source of mental health information.
- Peer support is valued.

O'Reilly, Levine, et. al. (2022)

Social Media Impact

- Offline Friends high quality
- Benefits
 - Increased self-esteem
 - Perceived social support
 - Increased social capital
 - Safe identity experimentation



 Increased opportunity for self-disclosure

31



Social Media Impact

- Offline Friends lower quality
- Harmful effects
 - Exposure to violence
 - Social isolation
 - Loneliness
 - Cyberbullying



32

Dangers of Social Media – Extreme Attitudes

- Influence on Attitudes
- Adolescents
- Vulnerable to extremist content
- Often come across extremist content
- Trouble identifying content as extremist
- Toxic Masculinity views
- Andrew Tate example



s et al., 2021



Development Implications



- Friendship focus on quantity over quality.
 - Focus on finding like-minded friends and not merely close proximity
 - Some movement away from this (Snapchat) for more privacy with friends.
 - Split identities two social network accounts
 Wider audience image management
 - Close friend aliases allow for unfiltered view
 Use of closed groups and hidden apps to protect privacy

Development Implications

- Social Networking & Phones
 - Permit constant contact with peers and significant others.
 - Permit more frequent contact with family.
 - Allow more autonomy while providing a safety net.
 - Permits constant feedback for identity formation.

35



Developmental Implications

- Phones and internet use
 - Inhibit face to face social feedback
 - Decreases empathy
 - Increases depersonalization of communication



Developmental Implications



<u>Streaming Services</u>

- Exploration of endless media options for identity formation
- Autonomy increased as can choose any content you desire
- Way to cope with anxiety and loneliness
- Friendships enhanced by viewing common content and collaborating making new content
- Allows distancing from parents

37

Bullying

• Form of aggression in which a more powerful individual or group repeatedly inflicts negative act upon individuals who are less powerful (Olweus, 2001)



38

Types of Bullying

- Physical bullying
 - Hitting, kicking, pushing, taking personal belongings
- Verbal bullying
- Taunting, teasing, threatening
- · Emotional and Psychological bullying
- Spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships
- Cyberbullying
 - Sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the Internet or other digital technologies

RC

Bullying Characters

- Bully
- Victim
- Bully-victim
- Bystander



40

Development and Rise of Bullying

- Identity issues
 - Bullying peaks in middle school
- Autonomy issues
 Not report as admit weakness
- Relationship Friends
 - Establish hierarchy in friendship groups
 Establish social dominance hierarchy
- Relationship Dating
 - $^{\circ}$ Establish boundaries for who can date who





Defining Cyberbullying

Bullying and Cyberbullying

Correlation overlap in meta-analysis (2014)
Traditional bullying and cyberbullying

Relational aggression and cyberbullying

Defining attributes

.469 perpetration
.402 victimization

.69 perpetration.57 victimization

- electronic form of contact
- aggressive act
- intent
- repetition (publicity)
- harm of the victim

 Definition - Willful and repeated harm inflicted through aggressive actions through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices
 (Hutson 2016)

44



Frequency of Cyberbullying

Recent Cyberbullying Over Time (Nationally representative samples of U.S. 13- to 17-year-olds)



Meta-analysis (80 studies) rate of bullying is 35% and cyberbullying is 15% (Modeki et al., 2014)



Prevalence of Online Teen Bullying



46



Technology Magnifying Effects

Belief technology amplify harm





- Find technology only least harmful
- Combination of in-**person and online** most harmful

47



Making Fun of the Sasquatch



- Julie was with her friends shopping and they were taking pictures with their phones.
- Julie saw a boy from school and she took a picture of him too.
- When she got home, she decided to upload her pictures to her Snapchat Story so her friends could see.



Making Fun of the Sasquatch



- As Julie was labeling her friends in the photo she ran across the boy's photo.
- She thought it would be fun to label him Sasquatch.
- Her friends loved it on her private story! Everyone started calling the boy Sasquatch.
- Julie thought nothing of it until she saw the boy crying on his way to school a week later.



Lesson of the Invisible Man

- Invisible Man Effect
 - No accountability
 - No punishment
 - Free to engage in any behavior
- Behavior and Comments run out of control!







Why It Happens: I Can't See You

 <u>I can't see you</u>: When people go online they don't receive tangible feedback about consequences of their actions. Lack of feedback interferes with empathy and leads to the misperception that no harm has resulted.





Why It Happens: You Can't See Me- I Can't See You

• <u>Everybody does it</u>: The perception of invisibility and lack of tangible feedback support irresponsible online social norms, including:

• "It's not me, it's only my persona."

• "What happens online, stays online."



53

Anatomy of a Cyberbullying Incident

Profanity

• Self-image

Context





Profanity and Cyberbullying

- Profanity is
 - processed differently than other content
 - <u>Taboo</u> words not supposed to be said
- <u>Arousal</u> elicit strong emotions

Processes taboo and high arousal words

ocampus

55



Areas of Self-Image

- Scholastic competence
- Social acceptance*
- Athletic competence
- Physical appearance*
- Job competence



- Behavioral conduct
- Close friendships*



50

Frequent Topics of Cyberbullies

- Romantic
- relationships
- Friendships
- Sexual activity
- Skills/talent
- Personal appearance
- Weight
- Sexual orientation



Inside a Cyberbullying Episode

- George is at home on his iPhone and gets a DM message on Instagram from a classmate.
- It says ura fukim idiot DIE!!!
- Later die worthless pos go choke
- George's brain goes into overdrive.

58



Brain Process Profanity & Threat





59

George's Possible Responses

- A. Launch counter-offensive with friends
- B. Threaten offending classmate
- C. Ignore it
- D. Report it to parents / school officials
- E. Block classmate from DM











Anonymity of DM

 What if George did not know who sent the repeated DMs?

> Unpredictability + Lack of Control = Depression

62



Anxiety and Depression

Anxiety in Teens

Risk of depression Youth with social anxiety disorder are more likely

to become depressed later





Anxiety and Depression

- Major Depressive Episodes
- · 8.7% teens in 2005
- 11.3% teens in 2014



64



Anxiety and Depression

 Major Depressive Episode Trends

• Females

- Larger increase in MDE
- · Greater increase in suicides
- More exposure to depressive risk factors Cyberbullying
- More mobile phone use and
- texting

65



Cybervictims Characteristics

- More intense Internet users that create content
- Have a myriad of concurrent psychosocial problems offline*
- Have poor parental and peer relations
- · Poor peer relations start early on
- Lack of social support makes impact more pronounced
- Prior offline bullying victimization*
- Often reluctant to report for fear of losing tech privileges



At-Risk Students

- Kids who are at higher risk:
 - Poor social skills
 - Learning disabilities
 - Obesity
 - ADHD
 - LGBTQ+
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Autism





67

Students in Special Education

- Higher rates of victimization and cyberbullying.
- Risk factors
- Low social status
- Poor social relationships
- Lack social support
- Adjustment problems
- Feelings of rejection
- Symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Low self-esteem







Impact on Cybervictims

- Range of negative effects:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Psychosomatic problems



- Self-harm
- Suicidal Ideation
- Depression & anxiety reciprocate with victimization
- Impact often influenced by frequency, length, and severity of attacks

71



Impact on Cybervictims

- Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation
 - Meta-analysis indicated:
 - Cybervictims
 - · 2.35x to self-harm
 - 2.10x to exhibit suicidal behaviors
 - 2.57x to attempt suicide
 - 2.15x to have suicidal thoughts
 - · Cyberbully
 - · 1.21x exhibit suicidal behaviors
 - 1.23x to have suicidal thoughts



Impact of Cyberbullying at School

- Impact on classes
 - Fear of unknown perpetrators
 - Rapidly spreading gossip
 - · Hostile class environment



73



Cyberbullies

- Around 12% admit to cyberbullying others over lifetime.
- Intense internet users
- Often perpetrators in traditional bullying
- Poor empathy
- High social intelligence
- High levels of moral disengagement



74



Cyberbully Characteristics

- Often seen as popular but display conduct or behavioral problems
- At-risk for being target of cyberbullying and becoming cyberbully-victim





Cyberbully Characteristics

- High levels of impulsivity
- Support aggressive norms
- Prior offline bullying*
- Committing problem behaviors*





Why Do It?

- Internal
 - Revenge
 - Boredom



- · Redirected feeling
- External
 - Non-confrontational
 - No perceived consequences

Varjas, Talley, Meyers, Parris, & Curtis, 2010



- Range of negative effects:
 - Depression
 - Conduct problems
 - Substance Use
 - Lower self-esteem
 - Lower academic achievement







Cyberbully-Victims

- Can be traditional bullies or cyberbullies now being bullied online.
- Tend to be rejected by peers more than any other group and poorest peer relations
- Have conduct and behavioral difficulties including impulsivity and hyperactivity
- At-risk for most severe emotional, psychological, and social problems compared to bullies or victims.

79



Bystander

- Witness cyberbullying
- Largest group
- Influence how widespread cyberbullying
- information is spread
- Types
 - Upstander
 - Passive
 - Encourage

80



Upstander

- Assist cyber-victim
- Friends with cyber-victim
- Prior personal victimization
- · Elevated levels of affective empathy
- More often girls and older
- Have more social support
- Low level of loneliness



Passive Bystander



- Most bystanders empathize with victim but do nothing about it. Due to:
 - Bystander effect diffusion of responsibility
 - Blame victim for not standing up for themselves or deserving it
 - Bullying done by popular students and not feel confident to challenge
- Not perceived as being of a serious enough nature
- $^{\circ}$ Fearful of making themselves targets of a bully

82



Passive Bystander

- Other reasons
 - Higher levels of impulsivity
 - Lack of social skills (social, empathic, coping)
 - Older adolescents
 - Witness prior
 - cyberbullying less empathy





Bystanders - Encourage Cyberbully

- Have high norms of aggression
- High moral disengagement





General Prevention & Intervention Program

Broader school violence or bullying focus
 Components of successful program
 Systematic approach with focus on:

Programs vary due to:
 Specific focus on cyberbullying

Significant relationships
Broader social contexts

Individuals

85

C

86

General Prevention & Intervention Program Themes

- Most programs use universal approach
- Raising awareness
- Education of students and parents
- Skill development
- Empowerment to be upstanders
- Adult involvement
 - Parents key to successful program
- Collaboration
- Policy Changes



General Prevention & Intervention Program Themes

- Education of students, parents, & teachers
 - Raising awareness of cyberbullying and knowledge of cyber-safety
- Program examples
 Viennese Social Competence (ViSC)

 (Gradinger et al., 2015)
 - Cyber Friendly Schools (Cross et al., 2016)
 - Tabby Improved Prevention and Intervention Program (TIPIP) (Sorrentino et al., 2018)

88



General Prevention & Intervention Program Themes

- Skills development build competency to apply in real time.
 - Cyber-safety skills
 - Coping with cyberbullying
 - Communication
 - Social engagement
 - Empathy
 - Digital citizenship



89



General Prevention & Intervention Program Themes

- Skills development
 - Program examples
 - Skills for Life (Fekkes et al., 2016)
 - Relationships to Grow (Guarini et al., 2019)
 - NoTrap! (Palladino et al., 2016)





- educational structures, values, practices and relationships
- Restorative Practices Intervention (Acosta et al., 2019)











Role of School Psychologist

- Take lead in effort to address school violence
- Lead efforts in promoting awareness of cyberbullying and psychological impact
- Assess prevalence and severity of cyberbullying in school
- Develop prevention programs and intervention strategies regarding cyberbullying



Digital Citizenship

 Good behavior – external to internal motivation



• Efforts need to be across multiple grades with integration into existing curriculum





Digital Citizenship



- Flexible model schools adopt to needs
- <u>Narrow to two areas</u>
 - Respectful behavior online
 - Online civic engagement
- High levels in both areas associated with less online harassment and positively related to helpful bystander behavior.
 - · (Jones & Mitchell, 2016)

98



Prevention / Intervention Efforts

- Less effective strategies when used in isolation:
 - <u>Punitive sanctions</u> imposing punishments such as detention or suspensions
 - Can serve to encourage students to hide their behaviors
 - Longer term more effective to focus on concern for victim more so than applying blame to bully.

Prevention / Intervention Efforts



• Less effective strategies for more severe cases of cyberbullying:

 Teach basic internet protection strategies

- Good for infrequent cyberbullying events
 - Keep passwords and login details secret
- Not disclose personal details

100



Teach Basic Internet Protection

 Bars on the windows philosophy



- Block or mute sender of DM or accounts
- Log off the account and spend time letting situation cool down
- Not responding to hurtful messages



101



Teach Basic Internet Protection

- Instagram Cyberbullying Prevention Tools
 - Navigate to Settings and go to Comments.
 - Turn on Enable Keyword Filters to add words that you'd like to restrict.
- If account public, can choose who can comment on posts, from every user to certain groups of people,
- Whether account is public or private, able to block other accounts from commenting on posts altogether.
- Learn more go to Instagram-Together.com.





Establish Mentoring Program

Prevention / Intervention Efforts

 <u>Restorative Conferences</u> – bring bully and victim together to discuss what has happened
 Limited effectiveness as systems requires

appropriate training of staff which does not typically

Can result in more harm and discomfort to victims

Less effective strategies:

happen

- Pair older students with younger students
- Encourages students to be proactive in addressing cyberbullying
- Encourages leadership skills in older students
- <u>Mixed findings</u> key is to have high level of training and ongoing support offered to young people selected as peer mentors.

104

Prevention / Intervention Efforts

- More effective strategies:
- Combine less effective strategies into comprehensive program
 - Use basic internet safety strategies as starting point
 - Role of coping strategies
 - Encourage reaching out to friends, parents, and teachers
 - Teach problem-focused coping
 - Encourage empathy development



Parent Interventions - Monitoring

- Start early with children
- Talk with adolescents about media content.

guidance and explanations

• Offer opinions of media content · Educate children on purpose of various media providing

106



Family Media Plan - AAP

- Helps parents create a plan on media use.
- Sets media priorities Media Balance
 - Kindness & Empathy
 - Communicating about Media
 - Digital Privacy & Safety
 - Screen Free Times and Zones
 - Choosing Good Content
- http://www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan







Involving Parents

- Parents serve as role models and teach children how to interact appropriately online without aggression and with respect and tolerance of others.
- · Have parents familiarize themselves with school policies on cyberbullying
- Increase parent awareness of signs of cyberbullying and possible impact

109



Whole School Approach

- Most effective where positive or prosocial behaviors from students are acknowledged and promoted
- School Policy
 - Have clear roles for school personnel to play
 - Establish committee that determine the specific needs of the school
 - · Purpose of policy is to protect students, staff, and educational environment of school and that cyberbullying is clearly prohibited.

110



School Policy

- Address use of school's internet system as well as use of personal cell phones and computers while on campus.
- · Policy needs to address cyberbullying off-campus
- Need specific definition of cyberbullying and harassment
- · Graduated consequences and remedial actions
- Procedures for investigating
- · Clear statement that students will be disciplined if behavior results in considerable disruption of educational environment
- Procedures for educating students, teachers, staff, and parents about cyberbullying
- · Let teachers, students, and parents have input into school policy



Monitor At-Risk Students

- Kids who are at higher risk:
 - Poor social skills
 - Learning disabilities
 - Obesity
 - ADHD
 - LGBTQ+
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Autism



112



113

Impact of Interventions

- Most significant decrease in cyberbullying
- Interventions last 10 weeks to 1.5 yrs. in length
- $^{\circ}$ Reduce cyberbullying by 10-15%
- Most significant decrease in cybervictimization
 - Intervention last for 6 weeks to 1.5 yrs. in length
 - Reduce victimization by 14%







Impact of Interventions

- Empirically based programs
 - 76% probability of reducing cyberbullying
 73% probability of reducing victimization
- Specific focus on cyberbullying more effective reducing than general violence prevention.

Peer Group Interventions

- Involve bystanders by teaching students how to support victims in safe and constructive way.
 - Provide clear guidelines so it is clear in best ways for students to intervene in addition to preventing and reporting cyberbullying.
 - Students must be active in establishing antibullying policy and rules.



116

5-Step Bystander Intervention Model

- Notice that something is happening
- Interpret event as emergency
- Take responsibility for providing help
- Decide how to help
 Provide help



- Direct vs. indirect bystander intervention depends on factors such as:
 - Displacement of responsibility, moral justification, euphemistic labeling



KiVa Antibullying Program (Finland)

- Discourage bystanders to encourage cyberbullying behavior
- Encourage upstander behavior
- Results
 - Some reduction in cyberbullying
 - Higher self-efficacy for bystanders to effectively intervene

118



NoTrap! Program

- · School-based intervention, which utilizes a peerled approach to prevent and combat bullying and cyberbullying to:
 - Change individual cognitions, coping strategies, and values
- Experimental group showed a significant decrease over time in all target variables:
- Victimization, bullying, cybervictimization, and cyberbullying.
- At 6-month follow-up there was a lower dropout rate for students who participated in the NoTrap! program.

119



Classroom Intervention



- · Incorporate dedicated curriculum or one embedded within existing curriculum.
- Create a positive relationship between teachers and students
- Teachers need to be informed on school policies and clear guidelines on how to respond when they become aware of it.



C

Cyber Friendly Schools Program

School Climate

school authorities.

victimization by bullying.

 <u>Create an ethic of caring</u> – prosocial behavior is modeled and promoted by teachers and

• Note the important role of trusted adults in helping to buffer negative impact of

- Whole-school cyberbullying prevention and intervention program
- Aims to reduce cyberbullying by fostering positive behavior and using a harm minimization approach
- Mediating factors include empathetic responsiveness and moral disengagement

122

Cyber Friendly Schools Program



- Distal determinants of cyberbullying
 - School organizational factors
 - School ethos and social climate
 - Parental monitoring

0

 Program associated with significantly greater declines in cyberbullying victimization and perpetration than control schools.

Media Heroes (Germany)

- I day and 10 week versions
- Raise awareness about risks of tech use
- Increase empathy and social responsibility
- Teach strategies to defend oneself
- Reduced cyberbullying
- Reduced traditional bullying
- Increased affective empathy





125



Ways to Improve

- Few intervention programs provide maintenance after implementation
- Student reluctance to get adults involved in situation due to:
 - Fear of losing internet access
 - Be judged by peers
 - Cyberbullying occurs off school grounds



- SEL focus with indirect effect on cyberbullying
- ViSC (Autstria) anti-bullying program
 - · 6 months continue effects for cyberbullying
- Help-Assert Yourself-Humor-Avoid-Self-Talk-



Contact the Presenter

- Dan Florell, Ph.D. , NCSP
- Eastern Kentucky University
 - Dan.florell@eku.edu
 - Twitter: @schoolpsychtech
 - Facebook: "Like" MindPsi

