



SPR 18th Annual Meeting

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Location: Mt. Elbert (Atrium Tower/2nd Floor)

Time of Presentation: Jun 03 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Category/Theme: Context and Prevention

The Social Context of Bullying and Peer Victimization: Implications for Prevention and Early Intervention

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Bullying involves nearly 30% of school-aged youth (Nansel et al., 2001), and has significant short- and long-term negative impacts on children's social, emotional, and behavioral development. Therefore, bullying is a growing concern among parents, educators, and policymakers; there is great interest in programs that are effective at preventing bullying at school. While many studies have demonstrated mixed findings regarding the impact of universal bullying prevention programs, a critical element of effective prevention appears to be addressing the social context or climate of bullying (Olweus, 1993). Yet there has been limited research on factors that potentially contribute to a climate of bullying or influence perceptions of the social context of bullying.

This symposium includes research from two large-scale studies of bullying and youth violence to examine different aspects of the social context of bullying. Drawing on multiple theories (ecodevelopmental, social cognitive theory, social disorganization), the three studies aim to identify potential contextual targets for bullying and school violence prevention efforts. The first paper uses multilevel data from students, parents, and teachers to explore discrepancies between their perceptions of bullying and bullying behavior, and investigates how those views vary as a function of the school climate. These findings highlight the important role that parents and teachers play in bullying prevention. The second study uses multilevel data from urban high school youth to identify school-level factors associated with victimization. These findings illustrate the important link between victimization, mental health functioning, and academic performance. The third study examines the important social context of the parent-child relationship among a sample of urban lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school youth. Given the increased risk for bullying toward LGB youth, it is critical to examine the association between victimization and mental health problems, as well as the extent to which caregiver support moderates this association. All three presentations will be given by early-stage investigators, including a doctoral student, a post-doctoral fellow, and a new Assistant Professor; all are from different institutions. The presentations will highlight implications of the findings for the development and use of preventive interventions for youth at risk for involvement in bullying. Dr. Michael Furlong, editor of the *Journal of School Violence*, will serve as a discussant, thereby identifying common themes across the presentations, implications for prevention, and areas for future research.

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