

Ethnicity and Bullying

Bullying is a problem that most children and youth are involved in at some point in their school years. It is a form of aggression used from a position of power. One such form of power arises from targeting another based on ethnic differences. Children and youth who are vulnerable or marginalized in our society may be at high risk for victimization, which, in turn, can lead to involvement in bullying.

Key Research Findings

- Black* adolescents report a significantly lower prevalence of victimization than white and Hispanic students.¹
- Biracial and multiracial youth are more likely to be victimized than youth who identify with a single race.²
- Asian youth are more likely to be victimized than youth who identify with other ethnic groups.³
- Youth who were born in their home country, but whose parents were born outside of the country report the highest rate of ethnic victimization, but not general victimization.⁴
- Twice as many ethnic minority youth in elementary school report being bullied because of their ethnicity than majority youth. Conversely, there were no differences in the victimization experiences of youth in high school.⁵
- There are no significant differences in perpetrating ethnically-based bullying for ethnic majority and minority youth in elementary school. In high school, however, ethnic minority youth report more perpetration than ethnic majority youth.⁶
- 44% of elementary school students and 33% of high school students who report being victimized because of their ethnicity also report bullying others for the same reason.⁷
- School satisfaction and performance are negatively associated with bullying involvement for white and Hispanic students.⁸
- There are long term consequences associated with racial discrimination, such as stress and anxiety, exclusion from groups and low motivation in adulthood.⁹

Key Themes

- Biracial, multiracial, and ethnic minority youth represent groups of students who are at high risk for victimization.
- Ethnic minority youth experience more victimization than ethnic majority youth during elementary school and engage in more perpetration during high school years.
- Many ethnic minority youth who are bullied because of their ethnicity also bully others for the same reason.

**It is recognized that communities use various terms to identify with a particular race or ethnicity and in this document we have chosen to utilize the term "Black", as we feel it is the most inclusive.*

Implications

Education

- The victimization of ethnic minority youth may reflect the systemic belief, within a school or community, that ethnic minority status represents vulnerability. Adults can help facilitate healthy relationships among ethnic minority and majority youth by teaching and modeling tolerance and appreciation for cultural differences.

Assessment

- Assessments of bullying should include questions on racially, ethnically, and/or culturally based bullying and victimization.
- Evaluations of interventions designed to address issues of ethnic discrimination and harassment within the school or community are not yet available and need to be conducted.

Prevention and Intervention

- Ethnic minority youth tend to be victimized early on in life, and tend to bully others later in life. Addressing the victimization of these youth in the early school years may prevent or decrease their likelihood of moving to later perpetration.
- Current bullying prevention programs are limited in addressing racial bullying. An assumption of one-size-fits-all in prevention and intervention programs can impede their effectiveness.

Policy

- There is a need to address racial/ethnic diversity, tolerance, and respect for all others in bullying prevention policies and programs.

¹ Spriggs, A. L., Iannotti, R. J., Nansel, T. R., & Haynie, D. L. (2007). Adolescent bullying involvement and perceived family, peer and school relations: Commonalities and differences across race/ethnicity. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 41*(3), 283-293.

² Stein, J. A., Dukes, R. L., Warren, J. I. (2007). Adolescent male bullies, victims, and bully-victims: a comparison of psychosocial and behavioral characteristics. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 32*(3), 273-282

³ Mouttapa, M., Valente, T., Gallaher, P., Rohrbach, L. A., Unger, J. B. (2004). Social network predictors of bullying and victimization. *Adolescence, 39*, 315-335

⁴ McKenney, K. S., Pepler, D., Craig, W., & Connolly, J. (2006). Peer victimization and psychosocial adjustment: The experiences of Canadian immigrant youth. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology, 4*, 239-264.

⁵ Pepler, D., McKenney, K. S., Craig, W., & Connolly, J. (2006). Bullying: The Risks for Ethnic Minority Youth. Symposium presented at the Society for Research on Adolescence Conference, San Francisco.

⁶ See note 5 above.

⁷ See note 5 above.

⁸ See note 1 above.

⁹ Fisher, C.B., Wallace, S.A., & Fenton, R.E. (2000). Discrimination distress during adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 29*(6), 679-695.