

Spring 5-17-2019

# A Brief Bystander Training Program: Promoting a Positive School Climate

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A Brief Bystander Training Program: Promoting a  
Positive School Climate

A Plan B Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty of  
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in  
School Counseling

May 2019  
Moorhead, Minnesota

**Abstract**

Ensuring that our most vulnerable, marginalized students are surrounded by a positive school climate is a vital task for our future educators. In line with the American School Counseling Association Standards, school counselors should identify ways to engage in leadership roles and promote a positive school climate for all students. While much research has identified the relationship between school culture and positive student outcomes, recommendations for school counselors remain vague and fail to promote leadership in these school improvement efforts. In review of the literature, the author argues that the use of a bystander intervention group is a proactive way a school counselor can engage in a leadership role for improving school climate. A comprehensive group manual is presented in the proposal.

*Keywords:* bystanders, bullying, school climate, school counseling,

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## Introduction

As the landscape of our communities become more divisive and our public dialogue more abrasive, some of our most disadvantaged, vulnerable, and marginalized students may have an increased risk for dealing with intra and interpersonal conflicts. Literature has consistently documented that these students already face diverse social and emotional challenges which interfere with their learning opportunities and personal wellbeing. Consequently, the task of creating a positive school culture is becoming more paramount and should move to the forefront of our educational agendas.

Though a positive school climate has been associated with a plethora of encouraging student and organizational outcomes, it is increasingly challenging for school counselors to promote positive systemic change in the face of growing responsibilities, limited resources, and a high student-to-counselor ratio. Because federal laws such as the “Every Student Succeeds Act” of 2015 continue to emphasize high stakes testing, leadership initiatives aimed at improving school culture may become secondary to other school improvement efforts.

Despite this, the American School Counseling Organization (ASCA, 2016) maintains that counselors engage in leadership roles and promote positive learning environments for all students. In accordance with this professional standard, Kurt (2017) argues that if districts are going to effectively attend to their mission of supporting every students’ success, then schools should promote climates that support the wellbeing of all their students. Enhancing a positive school climate not only brings into focus a holistic understanding of our students’ health, development, and wellbeing, it also helps counselors align their school organization with the mindsets and behaviors outlined for student success by ASCA (2014). Highlighting other

research, Smith and Shouppe (2018) argue that “school leaders must begin to focus more closely on their climates which augment the school’s mission, vision, purpose, and student achievement” (p. 15).

While there remains a clear leadership role for school counselors to undertake, many recommendations for improving school climate place the school counselor in a tertiary position or provide vague suggestions. For example, Kurt (2017) maintains that school counselors advocate for clear anti-harassment policies which specifically prohibit harassing language and behaviors with guidelines for clear and consistent enforcement policies. Consequently, school counselor’s advocacy efforts remain at the mercy of their principals who are likely to oversee discipline. Among their endorsements identified in their literature review, Smith and Shouppe (2018) recommend establishing genuine relationships, connecting learning to real-life situations, and providing an enjoyable atmosphere for students to connect to each other as a means to improve the school climate, but fail to provide any concrete direction for school counselors. As such, school counselors may be equipped with the awareness but lack the necessary preparedness to undertake school improvement efforts geared towards culture improvement.

The disconnect between knowledge and applicability directed my literature review as I wanted to identify a tangible approach for attending to and improving school culture. Within the last two decades, increased attention has been given to the role of bystanders in reinforcing healthy behavior and prosocial norms. Given the apparent overlap between school culture and social norms, I broadened my investigation to include bystander intervention to determine if bystander training could aid in the development of a positive school climate. The following will address the reviewed literature.

### **School Climate**

Utilizing school culture to measure the success of a school organization is not a novel approach. In their historical examination, Chirkina and Khavenson (2018) highlight Arthur C. Perry's 1908 influential work, *The Management of a City School*, which accented the importance of school climate in promoting productive, functional schools. In conjunction with this work, early organizational climate research unveiled a relationship between the climate of an organization, employee motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction. Following this initial phase, the study of organizational cultural underwent a paradigm shift wherein the administrative structure of schools came into focus. Since then, school-based climate research has expanded to include many different features such as school/teacher-based factors, interactional and instructional norms, and the perceptions, values, and beliefs held in throughout the school. Chirkina and Khavenson (2018) further highlight that the evolution of school climate research has resulted in many different definitions with some focusing on objective characteristics, others emphasize subjective ones, and some falling between the two.

Though the concept of school climate remains multifaceted, with no universal definition being solidified within the research, the National School Climate Center (NSCC) has drawn from an abundance of studies to define school climate as the following:

“School climate is the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life; it also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structure” (National School Climate Council, 2007).

To help focus schools’ efforts in improving their climate, The NSCC (nd) developed their Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) which identifies 13 different dimensions

which are organized into six broad categories: safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, institutional environment, social media, and staff related factors. A closer look reveals that of the 13 dimensions identified in the CSCI, the school rules and norms, physical and social-emotional security, social and civic learning, respect for diversity, social support among students and adults, and school connectedness-engagement directly align with the role of the school counselor. Furthermore, research has linked these factors with a diverse range of positive outcomes including academic achievement, student attendance, prosocial behaviors, and healthy student development. For the purpose of this proposal, we look at these factors as they relate to school climate.

Before moving forward, it is important to note that while the terms culture and climate are used interchangeable in my review, literature has begun to differentiate between the terms culture and climate such that culture is considered a more stable construct which maintains norms whereas climate is a more fluid construct which is in indication of the underlying culture (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). For example, a school culture might maintain unwritten rules that guide professional behavior while climate is the behaviors perpetuate that very culture. As such, this review focuses on the more changeable concept within a school, climate.

In their study of 43 elementary and middle schools, Smith and Shouppe (2018) concluded that schools' performance reports on their math and reading Criterion Referenced Competency Tests were positively correlated with better scores on the Georgia School Climate Star Rating (SCSR). Further investigation determined that the SCSR utilized perceptions of school connectedness and interpersonal relationships/norms (Georgia Department of Education, 2018). Though the relationship was not as strong when the schools Title I status was incorporated into the data analysis, the authors argue that results indicate "a need for an increased focus on



improving school climate in schools with higher levels of poverty” when academic deficits may also be related to life circumstances and living in poverty (p. 19). Likewise, when comparing students, parents, and teachers’ perceptions to schools Missouri Achievement Program (MAP) scores, Sherblom, Marshall, and Sherblom (2006) determined that schools’ climate was positively associated with schools reading and math MAP scores. Factors related to school belongingness and interpersonal relationships/norms showed a strong relationship with academic performance metrics. These studies align with reports citing similar outcomes in academic and skill improvement (Smith & Shoupe, 2018; Riekie, Aldridge, & Afari, 2017).

While these results demonstrate a promising relationship between school climate and academic outcomes, other school-based performance metrics such as absenteeism and discipline are also reflective of a school’s success. Because it is likely that attendance and prosocial behaviors contribute to increased instructional time for teachers and students alike, these measures are likely indicative of a school’s organizational health. With that being said, reports have demonstrated a positive relationship between school climate and decreased chronic absenteeism and behavioral problems. After identifying both student- and school-wide level climate profiles, Van Eck, Johnson, Bettencourt, and Johnson (2017), determined that there was a strong association between school climate and attendance at both the individual and school level profile. That is, chronic absenteeism was less prevalent for students who reported their schools had a positive school climate as well as schools which had a better school climate profile (e.g., less students who perceived the climate negatively/moderately). The study’s survey utilized multiple subscales to address school culture; those of which are of particular importance for school counselors include perception of safety, aggressive behavior at school, and school connectedness. The perception of prosocial behaviors become increasingly important to consider

as reports indicate that “7.1% of high school students report missing school in the past 30 days out of fear for their safety either at school or traveling to school (as cited in Van Eck et. al., 2017, p. 91).

Similarly, Demanet and Van Houtte (2012) investigated the interaction between school level cohesion, individual level of school connectedness, and school misconduct. Interestingly, individual levels of school connectedness such as peer attachment was only shown to have an association with school misconduct when school belongingness and perceived teacher support were controlled for. Consequently, rates of school misconduct appear to be associated with school culture rather than just levels of peer attachment. In this regard, school counselors should seek to improve the context of those relations in a manner that promotes students’ overall school belongingness in conjunction with promoting peer attachments.

Apart from being associated with desired academic related outcomes, school culture has been shown to have a positive relationship with students’ personal development. Riekie et al., (2017) identified a positive association between school culture and students’ wellbeing, resilience, and moral identity. More importantly, school connectedness, a positive indicator of school climate, was found to be the only indicator of a healthy school climate to have a direct relationship with student wellbeing and was determined to have the most significant impact on student resilience. Similarly, peer connectedness was correlated with improved resilience and moral identity. Perceptions of affirming diversity was also linked with improved moral identity. Although other links were found to have a significant impact on student outcomes, school connectedness, peer relationships, and affirmation of diversity are measures of school culture that directly align with the goals and responsibilities of the school counselor. The authors argue that “to enhance moral identity formation, it is important for schools to help students internalize

the community's goals and norms" (Riekie et al., 2017, p. 112). The authors further advocate for interventions aimed at peer connectedness and leadership.

On the other hand, researchers demonstrated that as students' perceptions of their school climate declined throughout middle school, wellbeing worsened as levels of depressive symptoms and behavioral problems increased, and levels of self-esteem decreased (Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). Though a majority of the school culture measures in this study assessed aspects related to teachers and administrators (e.g., teacher support, student autonomy, clarity/consistency of rules), school counselors should remain aware that perceptions of peer support declined as well. While it is suggested that school culture is a stable concept (as cited in Chirkina & Khavenson, 2018), Way et. al. (2007) highlight that students are likely to perceive their school's climate more negatively as they progress through middle school. These results further highlight the need to systematically attend to school culture at the middle and high school level. Though it is possible that adolescent development through middle school is associated with increased mental health challenges in general, Shochet, Dadds, Ham, and Montague (2006) utilized a longitudinal study to determine that school connectedness was not only associated with future self-reports of poorer mental health, but also that school connectedness predicted mental health functioning one-year later after controlling for previous levels of symptomology. These findings suggest that declining mental health was not merely a byproduct of adolescent development, rather, it was correlated with school culture metrics.

While there are many indicators of a healthy school climate, these studies highlight how imperative it is to sustain a healthy school climate to further encourage a variety of positive student outcomes. Of particular interest for school counselors is the role that school connectedness, school belongingness, student relations, perception of safety, and affirmation of

diversity all have in supporting these outcomes. Given that these factors are strongly interrelated and reflect the quality and characteristics of the interpersonal dynamics within the school, improvement efforts on behalf of the school counselor should be aimed at enhancing prosocial behaviors that support these dimensions.

### **Student Development**

Individuals undergo major developmental transformations throughout their school-aged years. This is a period when children are increasingly exposed to influences outside the scope of the immediate family. Peers continue to play a larger, more influential role in student's lives while they seek to secure a more autonomy, self-direction, and mastery of their surroundings. While schools largely attend to cognitive changes in children and adolescents, attempt to support students' nonacademic self-concepts, or characteristics they identify with are often secondary. Erikson (as cited in Broderick & Blewitt, 2015) highlights that childhood and early adolescents is not only a time when individuals seek to develop a sense of competency in their academic skills, but they also seek to establish a sense of self within their social contexts. Likewise, Hubner and Stanton (as cited in Broderick & Blewitt, 2015) suggests that late childhood and early adolescents is a period when a person develops self-concepts in both academic and non-academic domains. Failure to attend to these may result in negative outcomes and poor self-concepts.

During this time, children and adolescents not only develop a sense of identity, they also begin to establish their sense of what is right or wrong within intra- and interpersonal contexts. Some research has highlighted that differences in moral behavior stem from characteristics such as altruism, empathy, perspective taking, assertiveness, and self-efficacy beliefs (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015). While these characteristics are important considerations, Kohlberg (as cited in

Broderick & Blewitt, 2015) maintained that school-aged children's sense of morality was guided by different motivations depending on their stage of moral development. Elementary students at the preconventional, concrete level of moral development were largely guided by their self-interests and hedonistic sense of securing their own needs. Middle school students at the conventional, social relational level were motivated by a sense of connectedness and shared feelings with their peers. Consequently, the context and norms within those relationships are increasingly influential.

As Kohlberg (as cited in Broderick & Blewitt, 2015) maintained that children don't start to integrate the values and beliefs of the larger community into their moral framework until late adolescents early adulthood while others don't ever fully embody the later stages of moral development which encompass more universal, ethical principles, it is likely that a person's moral trajectory is influenced by factors other than personal characteristics and external motivations. Bronfenbrenner (as cited in Broderick & Blewitt, 2015) argued that all development occurred in the context of proximal processes wherein the individual influences and is influenced by their immediate environment. As children enter their school-aged years, their interactions with their peers, schools, and other microsystems maintain a reciprocal relationship wherein both interact and affect each other. With this in mind, we have to consider how the microsystem impacts a person's moral trajectory.

Though Bronfenbrenner (as cited in Broderick & Blewitt, 2015) emphasizes the role of environmental stimuli, he continues to maintain that individual characteristics mitigate the influence of the environment. As in the case of moral development, a person's sense of altruism and empathy may affect how peer norms influence their own moral development. For example, if an adolescent in the conventional, social relational level of moral development has

characteristics which values altruism and perspective taking is immersed by a peer group whose norms permit immoral behaviors, that peer group will have less of an influence on the person's moral development. Conversely, if an adolescent in this stage of moral development does not have a strong sense of empathy or self-efficacy is surrounded by a similar peer group, that peer group will likely have a larger impact on that individual's moral behavior. Consequently, when looking at development, more specifically moral development, the person's individual characteristics and social environment must be taken into consideration.

### **Student Concerns**

It can be argued that while prosocial dynamics are associated with a positive school climate and healthy moral development, antisocial or aggressive behaviors are likely associated with a negative school climate and amoral development. As such, these behavioral dynamics are worthy of consideration. While an exhaustive investigation is outside the scope of this review, I draw from research which addresses one form of aggressive behavior, bullying. With that being said, it is important to note that unhealthy social norms likely sustain other more extreme forms of aggressive behavior such as sexual and intimate partner abuse.

Bullying is a general term used to describe a pervasive form of aggression that has multiple modes of behavior. Drawing on the work of Olweus, Denny et. al. (2015) defines school bullying as "an intentional, repeated pattern of physical, verbal, or relational aggression characterized by an imbalance in the power between the perpetrator(s) and the victim (p. 246). While some research has identified verbal bullying as the most common form of aggression experienced by school youth (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005), others have argued that social bullying was the most common form (Cappadocia, Pepler, Cummings, & Craig, 2012). Discrepancies could be attributed to types of reports and/or verbal bullying could be considered a

form of social bullying depending on the reporter. Despite this, bullying in schools has included physical assaults, verbal abuse, harassment, threats and intimidation (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005).

Regardless of form, bullying remains a pervasive problem that affects many students. According to self-reports of 853 undergraduate students, 26% of students had experienced being bullied frequently prior to high school whereas 25% experienced victimization during high school (Newman, Holden & Delville, 2005). Likewise, Kvarme, Aabø and Sæteren (2013) cite reports that show upwards to 30% of student's experience bullying in different European countries and the United States. Consequently, roughly one in four students are at risk for experiencing aggressive social interactions. The prevalence of aggressive interactions become more concerning when accounting for marginalized youth who are historically pathologized. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, and transgender (LGBTQ) report fear of social rejection, mistreatment, or abuse from peers and are common targets for bullying and harassment (as cited in Kurt, 2017).

Research has indicated that experiencing aggressive interaction is correlated with increased psychological and academic difficulties. Newman et al. (2005) report that, when comparing student's rates of bullying to their stress related responses with the 33-stress symptom questionnaire (e.g., depression, anxiety, dissociation, sexual problems, and sleep disturbance), responses indicated that both males and females reported a positive association between stress related responses and the frequency of bullying. The effects were most significant during high school years. Compared to their counterparts, victims of bullying demonstrated higher levels of distress as measured by the 12-item version of the health questionnaire (Cassidy, 2009), and related to increased depression related responses, suicidal ideation, and the likelihood of a

previous suicide attempt as measured by the Beck Inventory, Suicide Ideation Questionnaire, and previous suicide screenings respectively (Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould., 2007). With their longitudinal study, Juvonen, Yueyan Wang, and Espinoza (2011) concluded that academic achievement was negatively associated with rates of bullying wherein “peer victimization can account for up to an average of 1.5 letter grade decrease in one academic subject across the three years of middle school” (p. 167).

Research has shown that bullying is not an aimless form of aggression as perpetrators often maintain a sense of intent, actively seeking reinforcement in their actions. In their qualitative study with 28 early adolescents, Houghton, Nathan, and Taylor (2012) identified three motivational themes that emerged from their semi-structured interviews: initiating a reputation, promoting a reputation, and maintaining a reputation. One student mentioned:

“I chose my place carefully. I mean why get somebody if no one is going to see you do it. You get nothing from that. When others do see you, it makes you feel great because they know not to mess with you. You got to mean it.” (Houghton et. al., 2012, p. 509)

Whether students want to assert themselves over another or establish a desired social status, these aggressive behaviors are often rooted in social motivations. Studies have indicated that 32% of students attributed other students’ bullying to be motivated by social positioning (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2010) whereas aggressors tend to be selective in their actions in an attempt to increase peer support (Salmivalli, 2014). Despite the wide range of possible motives for aggressive behaviors, studies have identified social dynamics as a contributing factor.

### **Bystanders**

Though roughly one-fourth of student’s report being bullied, the incidents often include witnesses and peer groups with roughly three-fifths of pupils reporting having witnessed peers



being bullied (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009) while reports cite that bystanders were present during a bullying incident 85% of the time (as cited in Padgett & Notar, 2013).

Consequently, bystanders are in a position to influence social norms by promoting prosocial behavior or reinforcing aggressive conduct. Reactions like laughing along with the aggressor can signify support whereas intervening on behalf of the victim reflects an overt rejection of such norms.

Despite that most children disapprove of antisocial behaviors (Rigby and Johnson, 2006) and often endorse prosocial behavior of bystanders who intervene on behalf of the victim (Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, and Franzoni, 2008), many students do not intervene on behalf of the bullied students (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). The discrepancies between peer attitudes and bystander (in)action brings into question the types of behaviors peers demonstrate during aggressive interactions.

While categorical variations remain in the research, basic behavioral characteristics for bystander behavior generally fell into four categories: assisting or supporting the bully, reinforcing the bullying behavior through social reinforcement, defending the victim, and remaining uninvolved with the incident, with roughly an equal percentage of individuals falling into each construct (Rivers et. al., 2009; Gini et. al., 2008; Hawkins et. al., 2001) With that being said, it can be argued that remaining uninvolved is a form of passive support in favor of the aggressive behavior and could better be conceptualized as upstander, reinforcer, and passive bystander even though the basic characteristics remain the same (Datta, Cornell, & Huang, 2016; Choi & Cho, 2013; Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011). In this light, about three-fourths of individuals either directly support or reinforce aggressive behaviors through their actions.

Research has indicated that the variability in bystander behavior is the result of multiple interactions. While adolescents continued to demonstrate negative perceptions about bullying, students' attitudes for the victim decreased in middle school years compared to primary school suggesting that beliefs about bullying are fluid and change with different developmental ages (Gini et. al., 2008). Similarly, research investigating grade and sex differences among bystanders with Canadian students grade fourth – twelfth indicated that bystanders intervening behaviors declined with age while gender differences correlated with variances in the types of bystanding behavior even though both decreased as student got older (Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse, & Neale, 2010). Alternatively, Korean American students indicated that even though age correlated with a variance in bystander behavior, students became more involved in bullying situations as they got older suggesting that ethnic differences and value systems could impact bystander behavior (Choi & Cho, 2013). For example, researchers found that expecting a positive outcome, sense of self-efficacy, and prosocial values were strong predictors of positive bystander behavior (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, and Salmivalli, 2012). Moreover, a person's value system was a moderating factor when compared with outcome expectations. Thus, bystander initiatives that fail to attend to the individual's value system may fall short.

On the other hand, bystanders have expressed some common motivations and challenges regarding their defending behavior. Hutchinson (2012) note that, not only did students voice challenges regarding their defending behavior, but that they felt they had a moral obligation guiding their actions. Peers deeply considered the dynamics of their social life as wells as the psychological consequences for choosing to stand-up for the victims or passively watch. The urge to maintain a positive school climate, a sense of empathy and responsibility, and overall severity of the aggression all played a factor in bystander behavior (Chen, Chang, and Cheng,

2016). Kvarme et. al. (2013) further highlight that some participants felt a fear of social rejection while others maintained positive feelings associated with a prosocial role. Participants stated:

“I was afraid of losing friends because I supported the victim. They became angry with us and hit us when we supported her. The boys especially became very angry when we supported her. They started to argue and talked behind our backs and that was very difficult. (Kvarme et. al., 2013, p. 426)

“You feel that you have helped someone. That gives you a warm feeling because you know you are a good friend. I feel that I am a nicer person now and I have learned a lot about how it feels to be bullied” (Kvarme et. al., 2013, p. 425)

The experiences of bystanders are particularly important as various studies have been cited highlighting the negative impact bullying can have on a bystander including anxiety and substance abuse (Polanin, Espelage, and Pigott, 2012). Rivers et. al. (2009) concluded that individuals witnessing bullying may experience a host of negative psychological consequences. As such, it is important to consider tertiary supports for student bystanders when implementing a psychoeducation program for bystanders.

### **Prosocial Behavior and Bystanders**

Positive bystander behavior has been shown to be associated with reduced bullying behavior. Salmivalli et. al., (2011) observed a significant association between bystander behavior and the frequency of bullying wherein classrooms with increased prosocial student support showed lower frequency of aggressive behavior while classrooms that demonstrated high reinforcing behavior were marked by increased bullying. Victims of aggressive behavior experienced a reduction in bullying and an improved sense of self-assertiveness/empowerment

after three months when individuals from school-based support group actively intervened (Kvarme et. al., 2013). Denny et. al. (2014) further note that “the only significant school-level characteristic was the variable representing schools where students report taking action to stop bullying which was associated with less bullying at the student level” (p. 258). Moreover, defending behavior positively influenced peer perceptions of the bullying scenario (i.e., empathy towards the victim) even though these perceptions varied with age (Gini et. al., 2008). These findings illustrate the potential effects bystanders have in mitigating the negative effects of antisocial behavior.

Likewise, schoolwide interventions aimed at promoting prosocial behaviors have been shown to positively impact student behaviors. In their two-phase, quasi-experimental study with 888 school grade cohorts, Kärnä et. al. (2001) determined that “after the intervention, the prevalence of bullying and victimization were lower in each grade level” (p. 802). Midgett, Dumas, Sears, Lundquist, and Hausheer (2015) further cite various studies which demonstrates the effectiveness of Kiusaamista Vastaaan (KiVa) and Bully-Proofing, two comprehensive school-wide bystander intervention programs.

While these results are promising, researchers shed some light on some potential drawback with school-wide initiative. Mainly, programs required much more involvement from school personnel and a larger time commitment from the whole school (Kärnä et al., 2011). Ahtola, Haataja, Kärnä, Poskiparta, and Salmivalli (2012) highlight that teachers were responsible for the delivering student lessons once a month and were required to meet with potential prosocial classmates to help mobilize these students as bystanders. Moreover, school-based team members were expected to meet with KiVa staff three times a year. Midgett et. al. (2015) exposes similar shortcomings, stressing that KiVa, along with Bully-Proofing, require

additional training, resources, and time commitments. Such fidelity may be beyond the scope of some schools. Appropriate school intervention often requires added collaboration and program education between multiple school personnel which is often not feasible given the time constraints already in place. With increased attention towards high-stakes testing, dedicating large amounts of classroom time to such specific topics can take away from other vital learning objectives that are pertinent to student success.

Considering these drawbacks, Midgett et. al. (2015) draws on the limited research evaluating the effects of stand-alone bystander interventions. One study investigating a program that trains students via 30-minute online sessions and provides family and staff guides reported “a decrease in bullying participation and identifying with the role of bully, target, and passive bystander” (as cited in Midgett et. al., 2015, p. 489). Similarly, the use of a limited version of the KiVa program focused on the in-class curriculum observed “positive short-term outcomes regarding student’s attitudes towards bullies and victims, perceived efficacy in intervening in bully-victim incidents, and actual rates of intervening behaviors” (as cited in Midgett, 2015, p. 489). Despite these promising results, research remains scarce and structured interventions limited.

### **Group Overview**

In light of the literature, I maintain that attending to specific facets of school climate are within the scope of a brief bystander psychoeducation group. While school climate is characterized by a variety of different dimensions, school connectedness/belongingness, student relations, perceptions of safety, and the affirmation of diversity are factors that can be addressed by the school counselor. As bystander training directly addresses students within the social

context, students' perceptions of these dimensions will likely improve as a result of the training and extend to the larger milieu of the school culture.

As school climate and bystander behavior has been associated with a range of positive outcomes, the use of a brief bystander psychoeducation group will directly support school counselor's leadership role in facilitating a positive school climate and overall school improvement initiatives. Such efforts become a primary concern when considering that bullying and antisocial behaviors continue to be a pervasive problem in school that impacts students academically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. The following will address the proposed brief bystander psychoeducation group.

### **A Brief Bystander Psychoeducation Group**

The following bystander psychoeducation group will be presented as a leadership group for seventh and eighth grade school students. Considering the nature of social responsibility inherent in the group, students will be screened and recommended by their teachers on the basis of potential leadership and prosocial characteristics. In light of the research documenting the differences in how males and females experience bullying, groups will be gender specific. Likewise, to help establish within class comradery, the groups will be grade dependent and will be capped at approximately eight students. In smaller schools, the group would be combine between seventh and eighth grade and dependent on a developmental maturity. To accommodate the school schedule, the group will take place either in the morning before classes start, at lunch, or at the end of the day and last approximately 30-minutes over the course of 7 meetings dates not including the initial meetings to establish report.

Though this group is designed primarily for seventh and eighth grade students, aspects of the group can be adapted and applied to students in different grades and/or with in schools with

different behavioral needs. For example, if this group were to be employed with high school students, the group could emphasize the civic nature of bystander behavior and focus on more intense forms of relational aggression such as sexual and intimate partner violence as these concerns better align with older students developmentally. Alternatively, if the group were implemented with elementary school students, then the group could focus on identifying emotions that accompany bullying and bystander behaviors and target more age appropriate forms of bullying such as exclusion and unhealthy peer-to-peer play. If the group were employed in a school where there were escalating racial problems or high rates of social alienation, the group could be adapted to meet those needs by adapting the types of relational aggression being addressed.

The purpose of the group is to recognize unhealthy social behaviors and equip them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to intervene and advocate for prosocial behaviors. As a result of the group, students will experience increased school connectedness/belongingness, student relations, perceptions of student safety, and affirmation of diversity. In accordance with national standards, the group will promote various mindsets and skills that align with the Mindsets and Behavior Standards for Student Success (ASCA, 2014).

The group will model the general format outlined by Midget et. al., (2015) wherein the group will utilize both a psychoeducation and experiential component. The didactic portion will focus on the definition, prevalence, and types of bullying (i.e., physical, verbal, relational, cyber), the different roles associated with bullying (i.e., target, bully, and upstander, reinforcer, and passive bystander), the negative consequences associated with bullying, and the potential outcomes associated with bystander behavior. In light of research on individual characteristics which moderate moral behavior, efforts will intentionally be made to elicit and promote personal

value systems (moral obligation/responsibility, altruism, empathy, perspective taking, and affirmation of diversity), psychological states (self-efficacy, expectation of positive outcomes, perception of severity, and belief in ability to impact social dynamics).

Additionally, the group will teach bystander approaches that model the STAC strategies adapted from the Bully-Proofing CARES model which will be discussed in more detail later (Midgett et. al., 2015). Although this group will adhere to the procedures outlined by Midgett et. al., (2015), this group will implement three key differences during the bystander training. First, when discussing different types of bullying, a discussion about indirect, aggressive behavior will be included. Indirect aggression would consist of aggressive/hurtful language and/or gossip/slander towards another individual while in an ‘in-group’ setting that does not involve the targeted individual directly. For example, a male student might be hanging out with his friends wherein one friend starts to talk badly about another student who is not present. The research argues that bullying is not merely a direct action but is a pervasive culture that permeates students’ social lives regardless of a victim being present. As such, to appropriately promote prosocial bystander behavior, students must be educated about the relationship between indirect, aggressive, in-group behaviors and bullying.

Second, while discussing bystander behavior, the students will be educated on bystander language that is consistent with Salmivalli et. al. (2011) bystander constructs; upstander, reinforcer, and passive. The research argues that these constructs are important to the bystander training because they indicate that uninvolved and inactive bystander behavior is still a sign of passive support. Moreover, affirmation through inaction may be as impactful as direct support of aggressive behavior.



Third, to accommodate the added emphasis on indirect, aggressive behavior, a fifth skill will be added to the STAC strategies being taught to the students. The original STAC strategies consist of stealing the show, turning it over, accompany others, and coaching compassion (Midgett et. al., 2015). Briefly, ‘stealing the show’ involves using humor to redirect students’ attention away from the aggressive situation while ‘turning it over’ entails informing an adult about the situation; especially if the incident is physical or the students are unsure how to intervene. ‘Accompany others’ is the process of reaching out to the targeted individual to express discontent with the situation, empathy for the student, and to let the student know that they are not alone and that the peer cares for them. Lastly, ‘coaching compassion’ is a more direct interaction wherein the bystander confronts the aggressor either during or after the incident to express that their behavior is not acceptable (Midgett et. al., 2015, p. 493).

To be consistent with the STAC strategies, the added strategy will be coined ‘signifying disapproval’; thus, the acronym STAC will be changed to STACS. This approach is comparable to ‘coaching compassion’ but instead, it does not involve confronting the behavior of the aggressor specifically. Alternatively, the bystander emphasizes their level of discomfort or rejection of the indirect slandering of an individual. Like the ‘coaching compassion’ strategy, students would be prompted to use this intervention strategy primarily if they are friends with the aggressor; especially when the antagonism occurs in an indirect setting (i.e., not in the presence of the targeted individual).

Following the didactic portion of the bystander group, the remaining group sessions will utilize an experiential aspect of the psychoeducation wherein students can practice identifying an unhealthy social situation, practice using the STACS strategies, make positive predictions for prosocial bystander behavior, and develop a plan to use these strategies in real-life. Like the

Midgett et. al., (2015) model, practice will consist of role-play activities that challenge students to think about how they could utilize the strategies they learned. For example, one scenario could be hanging out with a friend at school who starts to talk about another student using derogatory names aimed at minimizing their sexual identity. With these role-plays, students will discuss the types of bullying that was portrayed, how it felt to use the STACS strategies, and which one they would feel most and least comfortable with. Time for students to obtain feedback will also be incorporated.

The group will conclude with a discussion about what the students thought about the STACS strategies, other potential strategies that the students might utilize, and other potential scenarios that the students might feel were more relevant to them. Additionally, students will identify potential barriers that they might encounter while brainstorming possible solutions to support their efforts. Each student will be informed that follow-up with the counselor is available and recommended for students who are dealing with challenges related to prosocial bystander behaviors. Similarly, if multiple students are experiencing challenges related to prosocial bystander behavior, then the group can continue to meet throughout the school year to process through these challenges on an as needed basis.

For the week by week manual, please reference the appendix. The manual will include the group overview, an example informed consent, the week-by-week instructors guide, and supplemental resources related to each weekly activity.

### **Potential risks and limitations**

Due to the sensitive nature of the group, some students may experience difficulties with the topic or have negative outcomes associated with bystander behaviors. Whether students struggle to follow through with prosocial behaviors and experience a sense of cognitive

dissonance or find themselves becoming targeted for demonstrating such behavior, students will need to be informed that they can receive additional support from the school counselor if needed. Along with the informed consent, additional information should be sent to the students' guardians informing them of the nature of the group, potential risks associated with prosocial bystander behavior, and possible concerns that the student may be challenged with. This will help ensure that the students are supported both at school and by their guardians at home. The example of an informed consent, the group overview, and the group manual are in the appendix.

**Appendix:**

**Instructor's Guide:  
A Brief Bystander Psychoeducation Group**

**Bystander Intervention  
starts with YOU**



### **Group Overview**

**Type of Group:** Psychoeducational

**Purpose:** The purpose of this group is to have students who are transitioning into adolescence become empowered school leaders who value school connectedness and belonging, improve relationships throughout the student body, support the perceptions of school safety, and affirm diversity within our students. The group will help the counselor promote various mindsets and skills that align with the American School Counseling Mindsets and Behavior Standards for Student Success while supporting their leadership efforts for promoting a healthy school culture.

**Goals:** To goal of the group is to educate students about prevalence and effects of different types of unhealthy, aggressive social interaction while equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively intervene with safe and effective bystander behaviors. Students will be challenged to explore their own attitudes and behaviors while being encouraged to develop a sense of empathy and perspective for individuals at risk of aggressive behavior and belief in their ability and responsibility to establish desired social norms while defining what it means to have a safe and healthy school community.

**Format:** This will be a closed group wherein students will be screened for participation. The group will consist of both a psychoeducational and experiential component wherein students will learn about bystander behavior, practice different skills, and process through their own experiences, understanding, and thoughts about bystander behavior.

**Length and Duration of Group:** Each group will meet once a week for approximately 30-minutes for the duration of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks.

**Group Membership:** Students will be screened by their teachers and elected to join based on their leadership and prosocial characteristics. Groups will be gender and grade specific to reflect the different experiences encountered across genders and to account for individual development. Students will be expected to attend as many meetings as possible pending good academic standing.

**Disclosure:** For the purpose of this group manual, it is expected that the initial meeting(s) will be dedicated to establishing group cohesion, norms, and expectations while familiarizing the members of the group's primary goals and objectives. To ensure that the group facilitator establishes a sense of authenticity and genuineness within the group, the initial group will not be included in the group manual to promote creativity on behalf of the facilitator while meeting the Specific needs of the members of the group.



YOUR SCHOOL LOGO

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 \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Bystander Intervention Group: Informed Consent
 

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Date

Hello,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a School Counselor at \_\_\_\_\_. I graduated from Minnesota State University in Moorhead, Minnesota and this is my \_\_\_\_ year as a school counselor. I am passionate about promoting safety and inclusivity in school and utilize a strengths-based focus to aid in student development and growth. For part of the school year, I would like to run a bystander intervention group wherein we will work towards:

- (a) Developing empathy for individual at risk by identifying types of bullying behavior
- (b) Promote a sense of civic duty by increasing our perspective taking and responsibility for social expectations
- (c) Recognizing prosocial bystander behavior by identifying types of bystander behavior
- (d) Promote a sense of self-efficacy by demonstrating healthy bystander skills

The group will meet weekly over the course of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks. Students participation in this group is completely voluntary and they can choose to not participate at any point throughout the course of the group. To build a trusting environment for the student, our group will be a safe and confidential setting with the exception of the following:

- (a) To collaborate with other school personnel on a need to know basis to better assist the child, and/or
- (b) The child is in danger of harm to themselves or others

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this fun opportunity. My email is [matthew.meyer@mnsu.edu](mailto:matthew.meyer@mnsu.edu) or you can call me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX if you would like to speak with me.

Thanks so much!

Matt Meyer

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 Please sign and send this slip in with your student if you are ok that your student participates in the bystander intervention group.

Students Name:

Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Week One: Following introductory session(s)**

- Goal:
  - Establish a sense of empathy and perspective taking
- Objectives:
  - Define and identify types of bullying
  - Discuss motivations of bullying
  - Explore personal beliefs about bullying
- ASCA National Standards:
  - B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students
  - B-SS 4: Demonstrate empathy
  - B-SS 9: Demonstrate social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment
- Estimated Time: 30 - 45 Minutes
- Concepts Introduced:
  - Empathy
  - Physical, verbal, relational/social, and cyber bullying
    - General Definition: An intentional, repeated pattern of physical, verbal, or relational aggression characterized by an imbalance in the power between the perpetrator(s) and the victim.
  - Perspective taking
  - Social motivation: initiating, promoting, and maintaining a reputation
- Materials:
  - Ability to play video: My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self harm (YouTube)
  - Ball of yarn for Circle of String Activity
  - Scissors
  - Resource Pamphlet
- Instructions:
  - Have students watch video “My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self harm (YouTube): Length 8:55
    - Provide time for students to process how they are feeling after the video
    - Follow-up discussion questions:
      - What are all the ways Amanda Todd experienced bullying?
        - Verbal
        - Relational/Social
        - Physical
        - Cyber
      - Is it still bullying if it is not directed at the person – if people are just talking poorly about someone in a group a friend’s?
        - Indirect
      - At any point of her going through all of this, what do you think would have helped Amanda Todd?



- Why do some teens end up considering suicide as the answer when experiencing bullying?
- What do you think should be done about bullying? What should schools do to educate students about bullying?
- Other facts worth discussing:
  - Posted video September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and committed suicide October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010
  - There was a Facebook page called “Bitch Please, Do you Even Amanda Todd? With over 2,000 followers where people posted angry comments and mems mocking her after suicide
- Follow-up Activity: Circle of String:
  - General:
    - Provide each student the opportunity to pass and not respond if they choose not to
    - Process question(s): Let students choose which one they respond to.
      - What kinds of bullying have you experienced or witnessed at or outside of school? and/or
      - Why do you think people are motivated to bully others?
  - Activity:
    - Have student sit in a circle
    - One person takes the ball of string and holds the loose end from the ball and responds to process question
    - That person throws the ball to another person across from them in the circle while holding onto the loose end.
    - The person who catches the balls finds a part on the string to hold onto and answers the same process question:
    - After answering the process question, they throw the ball to another person across from them while holding onto the part of string.
    - Continues until each person has received the ball
    - At the last person, pass the ball back to the person who started with the ball of yarn to cut be tied to the start of the web.
  - Following Activity:
    - Have each student cut part of yarn they are holding onto and create a bracelet or whatever they students would like to make out of their piece of yarn.
- Provide each student with resource pamphlet for themselves and others: See example resource pamphlet

## Example Resource Pamphlet: Week 1

## What to do if someone is in immediate risk of harm or if someone is feeling helpless, hopeless, or thinking of suicide

### General Guidelines:

- If someone is in immediate risk, inform parents, school personnel, or contact 911 if other supports are not available.
- If you suspect someone is depressed or experiencing difficulties, follow up with them on a regular basis until additional help is needed
- It is better for a friend to become upset that you found help than for something worse to happen
- Recognize that you can take the best care of your friend if you are also taking care of yourself.

### School Support Staff

- Encourage them to talk to the school counselor to get help!
- If they do not feel comfortable or have trouble with the school counselor, help find other supportive staff in the building
- It is the school's policy that harassment, bullying, and aggressive behavior is not acceptable. If you experience or witness this going on, please inform an adult you trust in the school!

### Other Resources

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

- <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> or
- 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

#### Free Crisis Text Line:

- Text HOME to 741741 for any type of crisis and get connected with a crisis counselor

**Week Two:**

- Goals:
  - Develop sense of social responsibility
- Objectives:
  - Discuss the prevalence and effects of bullying
  - Explore bullying in relation to bystanding behavior
  - Identify outcomes related to bullying
  - Introduce the terms bystander and the bystander affect
  - Explore members knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about bystanders
- ASCA National Standards:
  - M1: Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional well-being
  - B-SS 2: Create positive and supportive relationships with other students
  - B-SS 5: Demonstrate ethical decision-making and social responsibility
- Estimated Time: 30 - 45 Minutes
- Concepts Introduced:
  - Bystander
  - Bystander effect
  - Social responsibility
  - Social norms
- Materials:
  - Buzzer
  - Paper & pencil
  - Video: The Bully Experiment (YouTube)
  - Outcomes related to bullying sheet
  - Myths & facts sheet
- Instruction:
  - Buzzer game: 5 Minutes
    - General:
      - Provide each student paper and pencil
      - Write down on a board “I have the right to feel positive about myself”
      - Only allow students the time to write a few words before sounding the buzzer.
    - Activity:
      - Instruct students that they will need to copy the sentence down on one side of the paper but when they hear the buzzer go off, they will have to stop and write their whole name on the other side of the paper
      - Once they finish writing their name, they will start over trying to write the sentence on the other side of the paper.
    - Discussion topics:
      - What were your thoughts about the activity?

- How many times did you write your name and how did it change throughout the game?
- Emphasize that the buzzer is what it is like to never be able to get away from bullying and harassment
- Were you ever able to fully write the sentence “I have the right to feel positive about myself”? How is this similar to people who are bullied?
- How do you think that affects people? How does it impact their self-esteem, their identity, etc.?
- Discuss outcomes related to bullying: See outcomes sheet
- Video: The Bullying Experiment (YouTube) (5 Min)
  - Define what a bystander is after video
  - Discussion:
    - What are your thoughts after watching the video?
    - What would have if you were in the bystander’s position?
    - How did you feel after watching the person pull his phone out? What about when someone intervened?
    - Discuss “bystander effect”
      - Bystanders are in a position to influence a situation by helping or encouraging the behavior, or remaining uninvolved
      - Most people disapprove of bullying but...
      - People are not likely to intervene especially in the presence of others.
    - What responsibility do the bystanders have in promoting bullying?
- Conclude by discussing the myths and facts sheet

### Outcomes related to bullying (Week 2)

1. Kids who are bullied
  - a. More likely; to experience depression and suicidal ideation
  - b. More likely to have increased feelings of sadness and loneliness
  - c. More likely to have changes in sleep and eating patterns
  - d. More likely to have a loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
  - e. More likely to have difficulties persist into adulthood
  - f. More likely to have health problems
  - g. More likely to have lower academic achievement: On average students have a 1.5 grade average below those who report not being bullied
  - h. More likely to have negative self-image
2. Kids who bully others
  - a. More likely to engage in violent and other risky behaviors into adulthood
  - b. More likely to abuse alcohol and drugs in adolescence and as adults
  - c. More likely to get into fights, vandalize property, and drop out of school
  - d. More likely to have a criminal conviction as adults
  - e. Be abusive toward their romantic partners, spouses, or children as adults
3. Bystanders
  - a. More likely to use tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs
  - b. More likely to have increased mental health problems including depression and anxiety
  - c. More likely to miss or skip school

### Myths and Facts Sheet (Week 2)

Myth	Fact
Bullying is an isolated problem and only affects a small amount of people	Bullying affects about 1 out of 4 people everyday not including seeing it
Bullying usually occurs when no one is around or without others knowledge	A witness is present about 85% of the time
Bystander intervention doesn't help the problem	When bystanders intervene, bullying stops within 10 seconds 57% of the time
Bullying is caused by only a few people	About 30% of people admit to bullying others while about 60% of people have witnessed two or more times in the months period
Bullying often takes place somewhere I can't do anything about it	Bullying often occurs in public places such as the classroom, hallway.
There is nothing that can be done about cyberbullying	Many states have laws and policies pertaining to cyberbullying

**Week Three:**

- Goal
  - Explore and instill feelings of altruism and belief in positive outcomes resulting in bystander intervention
  - Develop a sense of urgency as it relates to bullying
  - Demonstrate understanding of bullying and the types that occur
- Objectives:
  - Introduce and define types of bystanding behavior
  - Discuss previous experiences as a bystander
  - Explore motivation and outcomes for different bystanding behavior
  - Develop an understanding of severity
  - Practice identifying the types of bullying
- ASCA National Standards:
  - M3: Sense of belonging in the school
  - M5: Belief in using abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes
  - B-LS 5: Identify long- and short-term academic, career, and social emotional goals
  - B-SMS 1: Demonstrate ability to assume responsibility
- Estimated Time: 30 - 45 Minutes
- Concepts Introduced:
  - Upstander
  - Reinforcer
  - Passive
  - Outcome expectations
  - Perception of severity
  - Social dynamics
- Materials:
  - Poster board divided into columns (upstander, reinforcer, passive)
  - Marker
  - Bullying scenarios
  - What would you do worksheet
- Instruction:
  - Discuss as a group each different bystanding role
  - If you were a bystander activity
    - General
      - Divide group into two subgroups
      - Provide each group with scenarios and a ‘what would you do’ worksheet for each scenario
      - Remind students to be honest about what they would do in each scenario.
    - Activity

- Read to the group the first scenario, having the groups follow along
- Have groups work together on ‘what would you do’ worksheet
- Discuss as a whole group the worksheet
- Identify different bystander roles within the scenario
- Repeat for following scenarios
- Discussion prompts
  - What did you take into consideration when making your decision?
  - What feelings do you have associated with acting vs. not acting?
  - How would it impact you if you knew the people involved versus not knowing them?
    - Target
    - Bully
    - Other bystanders?
  - What are your experiences in similar situations?
- Conclude with an open discussion on what contributes to people’s bystander behavior and general outcomes related to upstanding behavior
  - Discussion questions:
    - What makes people act in an upstanding behavior
    - Why do you think people choose not to act?
    - How do you think your actions would impact the situation?
      - Short-term
      - Long-term
    - What would improve the likelihood of you acting as an upstander
    - Read real-life scenarios about people intervening in a positive way.
  - Additional Notes
    - Acting
      - Altruism
      - Sense of responsibility
      - Empathy
      - Perspective taking
      - Respect for diversity
      - Believe that their actions will help
      - Perceive something as severe
      - Want to have positive relationships around them and in school
      - Value having a healthy climate
    - Not acting
      - Acting causes anxiety
      - Fear of social rejection and increased conflict
      - Don’t have the confidence that their actions will help
      - Don’t perceive the incident as severe
      - The person engaging in the bully is in a position of power.



- Outcomes:
  - Positive
    - Bullying tends to stop
    - The target feels supported and often mental health outcomes
    - In school, people feel more connected when supported by their peers
    - The social and school climate improves
    - Contribute to healthy social norms
  - Negative
    - Difficulties with friends
    - Become the target the next time
    - Experience own anxiety and depression

**Scenario's: Week 3**

1. A group of kids start spreading hurtful rumors about another student having sex with another student. You hear about it from another friend and receive a group text with a bunch of students in school. In the text people are using hurtful language and creating inappropriate memes with some of the students Facebook pictures.
2. A new student in your class is a refugee and other students are often overheard saying racist or offensive things such as "build that wall" around the other student. Even though they are not saying it directly to the student, it appears like the students are making sure that the new student hears their statements. The students create a Facebook page dedicated to bashing immigrants and invites many school students to the page, including you.
3. There is a student in your class who is known to have a disability and is often seen overreacting and becoming irritated throughout the school day. The student doesn't have any friends and is often alone. When students do interact with them, it is often in a confrontational way as the students are often overheard saying "chill out, you are acting like a freak", "it was just a joke, don't act like a baby". You have seen snapchat posts of the other students acting in an offensive way to mock the other student.
4. You are in class and a student and teacher begin to argue about something. The teacher tells the student that they are not going to amount to anything and proceeds to talk down to the students in front of the whole class. The teacher is often overheard talking to other students making statements about not wanting to get involved with "that" student, they are always up to no good. You also hear that teacher gossiping to other teachers about this particular student
5. You are at a party where students have been drinking. A student is passed out with other students around them laughing and making offensive remarks. You see one of the students posing next to the other taking pictures of them before overhearing one individual saying "they won't remember this anyway".

What would you do worksheet: Week 3

1. What type(s) of bullying was in the scenario?

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2. What would your group do?

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3. What were the bystander roles exhibited and who (general) displayed them?

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4. What could have been done to help with this situation earlier?

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5. What are some of the possible outcomes of acting? Not acting?

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**Real Life Scenario: Week 3**

I was at a college party with a friend and didn't know anyone else there. The host, "Anna," was very drunk by the time I had arrived, only making brief appearances between trips to the bathroom and her bedroom. I heard commotion outside Anna's bedroom door. A few guys were standing outside the door. They were laughing about how easy it would be for "Andrew" to "get laid" because Anna was "blacked out." They were standing guard of the door, as many people stood around laughing or seemingly unaffected by what was happening. I felt uncomfortable.

A part of me felt that despite my anger and clear understanding that what was happening was wrong, that there were better people to intervene. These weren't people that I knew. I was hoping that Anna's friends would step in. A few minutes passed. I swallowed my fear and walked back down the hallway, sternly asking the guys in front of the door what was happening. They looked uneasy and offered varying stories, including "It is just a joke" and "It is no big deal, we're all friends; Anna doesn't mind." I told them to move, and they did. The door was unlocked, and I entered. Andrew was startled and I told him to leave. He appeared embarrassed, attempting to justify his intentions by explaining that "She's OK" and "I didn't do anything." Anna appeared to be only limitedly awake and coherent. She held my hand and said "I didn't want to do it. You saved my life. You saved my life."

As my college years continued, many of my friends and classmates would share similar stories, often referring to the people perpetrating these actions as "friends." Friends do not force or coerce each other into unwanted sex. Friends do not find humor or vulnerability in one's inability to give consent. Friends do not stand by and say that it is not their responsibility to intervene. Friend or stranger, uncomfortable or not, we are responsible to help each other. We are responsible to say that sexual violence, in any context, is not OK.

**Week Four:**

- Goals:
  - Develop safe, appropriate, healthy bystander behaviors
  - Become confident in ability to intervene and have positive outcome.
  - Demonstrate the ability to identify types of bullying
- Objectives:
  - Introduce STACS strategies
  - Role play using the first two strategies (stealing the show and turning it over)
  - Discuss experience using strategy
  - Get feedback from peers
  - Identify potential barriers to using strategy
  - Determine when it wouldn't be appropriate to use strategy
  - Identify adults in the school who you can reach out to.
  - Identify what kinds of bullying occurred
- ASCA National Standards:
  - M2: Self-confidence in the ability to succeed
  - B-LS 2: Demonstrate creativity
  - B-SMS 9: Demonstrate personal safety skills
  - B-SS 3: Create relationships with adults that support success
- Estimated Time: 30 - 45 Minutes
- Concepts Introduced:
  - STACS
  - Stealing the show
  - Turning it over
- Materials:
  - STACS strategy list
  - List of scenarios of bullying for students to practice using strategies
    - Listed after week six in the manual & to be used for weeks four, five, and, six
- Instruction:
  - Introduce STACS strategies:
    - Discuss as a group each STACS strategy
      - Give definition and provide examples: See list
      - Have group members provide examples where they may have used something similar or would use in the future.
  - Role play:
    - General:
      - Model out examples of both strategies being practiced
        - Stealing the show
        - Turning it over
      - Have students practice each one but let them choose which one to use in each scenario

- Activity:
  - Have a student pick out a scenario at random and have them read it to the rest of the group
  - Ask for volunteers to act out scenario (remind them it's supposed to be fun): fill in as needed:
    - Inform students acting as a potential adult to not always act in a responsive way (for turning it over)
      - Adult may tell the individual that it is not an appropriate time because they are busy
      - Adult may tell the student to handle it themselves
      - Adult may respond by saying it isn't their problem and they have a class to teach
      - Etc.
  - Have student practice using one of the focus strategies in front of the group:
    - Encourage feedback from students after role play
    - Have students identify what type(s) of bullying occurred:
      - Verbal
      - Relational/social
      - Indirect
      - Cyber
      - Physical
- Discussion
  - How did it feel using the strategy?
  - What are some barriers to using the strategy?
  - In what situations might another strategy be better?
  - What situation do you see yourself using this strategy?
  - When would you not use this strategy?
  - Turning it over:
    - Who are some adults in the school you could talk to?
    - How would you go about informing them of a concern?

**STACS Strategies: Week Four**

<p>Stealing the Show</p>	<p>Using humor to redirect students' attention away from the aggressive situation</p>	<p>Best used with friends and if you feel comfortable in you sense of humor</p>
<p>Turning it over</p>	<p>Informing an adult about the situation</p>	<p>If a situation because violent in any way or does not de-escalate with other support, find adult support as soon as possible</p>
<p>Accompany Others</p>	<p>Reaching out to targeted individual</p>	<p>This is a good tool to use when social bullying occurs or when you do not feel comfortable to confront the aggressor</p>
<p>Coaching Compassion</p>	<p>Confronting the aggressor either during or after the incident to express that their behavior was not acceptable</p>	<p>Good tool to use when you know the bully directly. Though it is best to reinforce that you don't support their behavior in the moment, sometimes approaching it later can be affective</p>
<p>Signifying disapproval</p>	<p>Emphasizing discomfort or rejection of the indirect aggression during in-group settings</p>	<p>This is used when around friends who are saying rude or disrespectful things about others and it doesn't have to be direct. Simply saying something isn't ok with you or not providing going along with it can be helpful</p>

**Week Five:**

- Goals
  - Develop safe, appropriate, healthy bystander behaviors
  - Become confident in ability to intervene and have positive outcome.
- Objectives:
  - Role play using the third and fourth strategy (accompany others, coaching compassion)
  - Discuss experience related to using strategy
  - Get feedback from peers regarding role-play
  - Identify potential barriers to using strategies
  - Determine when it wouldn't be appropriate to use strategy
- ASCA National Standards:
  - M2: Self-confidence in the ability to succeed
  - B-SMS 7: Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem
  - B-SS 8: Demonstrate advocacy skills and ability to assert self, when necessary
  -
- Estimated Time: 30 - 45 Minutes
- Concepts Introduced:
  - Accompany others
  - Coaching Compassion
- Materials:
  - List of scenarios of bullying for students to practice using strategies
    - Listed after week six in the manual & to be used for weeks four, five, and, six
- Instruction:
  - Review STACS strategies:
    - Briefly revisit each strategy with the group
      - Identify each one but have students describe them.
    - Inform students of what strategies they are going to practice using role play.
  - Role play:
    - General:
      - Model out examples of both strategies being practiced
        - Accompany others
        - Coaching compassion
      - Have students practice each one but let them choose the strategy they choose to use in each scenario
    - Activity:
      - Have student pick a scenario at random and have them read it to the rest of the group
      - Ask for volunteers to act out scenario (remind them it's supposed to be fun): fill in as needed



- Inform students acting as a potential adult to not always act in a responsive way (for turning it over)
  - Adult may tell the individual that it is not an appropriate time because they are busy
  - Adult may tell the student to handle it themselves
  - Adult may respond by saying it isn't their problem and they have a class to teach
  - Etc.
- Have student practice using one of the focus strategies in front of the group
  - Encourage feedback from students after role play
  - Have students identify what type(s) of bullying occurred:
    - Verbal
    - Relational/social
    - Indirect
    - Cyber
    - Physical
- Discussion
  - How did it feel using the strategy?
  - What are some barriers to using the strategy?
  - In what situations might another strategy be better?
  - What situation do you see yourself using this strategy?
  - When would you not use this strategy?
  - Turning it over:
    - Who are some adults in the school you could talk to?
    - How would you go about informing them of a concern?

### Week Six:

- Goals:
  - Develop safe, appropriate, healthy bystander behaviors
  - Become confident in ability to intervene and have positive outcome.
- Objectives:
  - Role play using fifth strategy (signifying disapproval) and additional strategy of group member choosing.
  - Discuss experience related to using strategy
  - Get feedback from peers regarding role-play
  - Identify potential barriers to using strategies
  - Determine when it wouldn't be appropriate to use strategy
- ASCA National Standards:
  - M2: Self-confidence in the ability to succeed
  - B-LS 1: Demonstrate critical-thinking skills to make informed decision
  - B-LS 9: Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decision
- Estimated Time: 30 - 45 Minutes
- Concepts Introduced:
  - Signifying disapproval
- Materials:
  - List of scenarios of bullying for students to practice using strategies
    - Listed after week six in the manual & to be used for weeks four, five, and, six
- Instruction:
  - Review STACS strategies:
    - Have group members identify and describe strategies.
    - Inform students of what strategies they are going to practice using role play.
      - They have to use signifying disapproval for one:
      - The second one they get to choose for whatever the scenario
  - Role play:
    - General:
      - Model out examples of both strategies being practiced
        - Signifying disapproval
        - Choice of any of the five strategies
      - Have students practice each one but let them choose which one to use in each scenario
        - Make sure that they have a scenario that fits the signifying disapproval strategy (create a pile of random bullying scenarios specific to this strategy)
        - Let them choose at random for the last one
    - Activity:

- Have student pick a scenario at random and have them read it to the rest of the group
- Ask for volunteers to act out scenario (remind them it's supposed to be fun): fill in as needed
  - Inform students acting as a potential adult to not always act in a responsive way (for turning it over)
    - Adult may tell the individual that it is not an appropriate time because they are busy
    - Adult may tell the student to handle it themselves
    - Adult may respond by saying it isn't their problem and they have a class to teach
    - Etc.
- Have student practice using one of the focus strategies in front of the group
  - Encourage feedback from students after role play
  - Have students identify what type(s) of bullying occurred:
    - Verbal
    - Relational/social
    - Indirect
    - Cyber
    - Physical
- Discussion
  - How did it feel using the strategy?
  - What are some barriers to using the strategy?
  - In what situations might another strategy be better?
  - What situation do you see yourself using this strategy?
  - When would you not use this strategy?
  - Turning it over:
    - Who are some adults in the school you could talk to?
    - How would you go about informing them of a concern?

**Bullying Scenarios: Weeks 4-6**

**\*\*This is just a general list of scenarios. Please add and or adapt any scenario to better reflect you students and/or school \*\***

1. Throughout the school year, a group of students has been consistently observed making fun of another student and generally harassing the student. Recently, their interaction appears to be becoming more abrasive as you observe them following the student in the hallway, throwing pencils at the back their head while aggressively telling the student to do something about it.
2. A group of students known for their general aggressive behavior gets into an argument with another student at school. At the end of the day, the group follows the other student home and blocking them from getting out of their car, intimidating them and threatening them. As you live next door, you observe this from the start of the interaction.
3. Another student is caught cheating with someone else from school. The person's partner finds out about it and proceeds to threaten the other individual throughout the week. Their interactions continue to escalate until the two get into a fight at school. At the onset of the altercation, the target is surrounded by the aggressor's friends, isolating them in a secluded part of the school. You observe this walking through the hallway to a class you are already running late for and have been warned about previously.
4. You and another student have been friends since elementary school. Recently, your group of friends stopped talking to the other student and have started to make fun of them. At first, your group of friends just harassed and talked poorly about the other student while hanging out together. While you didn't generally participate, you made no attempts to stop them. At one point, you were seen talking to the student by your group of friends and they quickly questioned you. You informed them that it was just a question for homework and had no intention of befriending them. The conflict between your group of friends and the other student quickly escalated to the point where they were threatening them on a regular basis. One day, you group of friends began following the student between classes, pushing the student, telling them to watch their back.
5. You are at a party when another student shows up who has a history of being harassed by a certain group of students because they are an immigrant. That group of students who have been drinking start to harass the student, telling them to go back to their own country and to get the hell out of the there. Thought the student tries to ignore

them, the group of students start to push the student, threatening to beat them up. Even though there are a bunch of students at the party, no one jumps in to say anything as they quickly pull out their phones to record the incident.

6. A student who identifies as homosexual is ridiculed by other students because of their sexual identity. During class, other students are overheard making comments about how they think homosexuals are going to hell ensuring that the other student overhears them.
7. A group of kids start spreading hurtful rumors about a student having sex with another student. You hear about it from another friend and receive a group text with a bunch of students in school. In the text people are using hurtful language and creating inappropriate memes with some of the students Facebook pictures.
8. A new student in your class is a refugee and other students are often overheard saying racist or offensive things such as "build that wall" around the other student. Even though they are not saying it directly to the student, it appears like the students are making sure that the new student hears their statements. The students create a Facebook page dedicated to bashing immigrants and invites many school students to the page, including you.
9. There is a student in your class who is known to have a disability and is often seen overreacting and becoming irritated throughout the school day. The student doesn't have any friends and is often alone. When students do interact with them, it is often in a confrontational way as the students are often overheard saying things like "chill out, you are acting like a freak" or, "it was just a joke, don't act like a baby". You have seen snapchat posts of the other students acting in an offensive way to mock the other student.
10. You are in class and a student and teacher begin to argue about something. The teacher tells the student that they are not going to amount to anything and proceeds to talk down to the students in front of the whole class. The teacher is often overheard talking to other students making statements about not wanting to get involved with "that" student, they are always up to no good. You also hear that teacher gossiping to other teachers about this particular student.
11. You are at a party where students have been drinking. A student is passed out with other students around them laughing and making offensive remarks. You see one of the students posing next to the other taking pictures of them before overhearing one individual saying "they won't remember this anyway".
12. While hanging out with a group of your friends after a school event, they start say hurtful things about another student who they often ridicule and make fun of while at

- school. While making fun of the student, they rudely comment on the fact that they often appear unkempt and that other family members have a history of getting in trouble with the law for drugs, theft, and violence. They continue to make comments about how that individual is probably going to end up just like their siblings. (indirect)
13. You and a group of students often hang out together after school, but recently, a few of your friends have become more vocal about some of the refugee students at the school by commenting "Americanness" followed by statements about wanting them to go back to their home country. Though you are not friends with these students, they are often seen by themselves and are not invited to many activities with other students. Whenever there are group activities for class, you see these students struggle to find people to work with (indirect)
14. You and a group of students all hang out together after your extracurricular activity or over the weekend. While everyone gets along really well, one of the students is often left out and not invited to hang out with everyone. While people aren't generally cruel to this student, no one makes any attempts to include the other student in anything. When people discuss this other student, they often make comments about them being weird and not liking them.

**Week Seven:**

- Goals
  - Extend the strategies to real-life scenarios
  - Prepare for potential difficulties related to bystanding
  - Conclude Group
- Objectives:
  - Develop a plan of action for using STACS strategies
  - Establish a support system for dealing with difficulties
  - Discuss group experience and ways to improve group
  - Assess group members knowledge following training?
- ASCA National Standards:
  - M2: Self-confidence in ability to succeed
  - B-SS 1: Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills
  - B-SS 6: Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills
  - B-SS 8: Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams
- Estimated Time: 30 - 45 Minutes
- Concepts Introduced:
  - NA
- Materials:
  - Paper and pencils
  - Poster board
  - Camera (Polaroid if accessible)
  - The Student-Advocate Scale:
- Instruction:
  - Start the group by allowing students to discuss any thoughts, questions, concerns, and/or suggestions for the group
    - What was the group experience like?
      - At the first meeting?
      - Middle?
      - End?
    - How would you change the group to make it better?
    - What were some of the benefits of participating in the group?
  - Letter to self: 10 Minutes
    - Instruct the students to write a letter to their future self about being a positive bystander: If students would rather not write it in letter format, it could just be some general statements they have for themselves.
      - Things group members could write about could include:
        - The importance of being an upstander
          - What are the social behaviors they want to see and be around
          - How do they want people to feel when at their school

- Connected?
    - Cared for?
    - Included?
    - Comfortable to be themselves?
  - How it felt to see people not help
  - Words of inspiration for dealing with difficulties
    - Action plan for dealing with those challenges
      - Who to reach out to if they are struggling
      - Adults they feel they can talk to about concerns
      - When to reach out
  - Etc.
- Action statement:
  - Collaborate as a group to develop an action statement for everyone to sign on the poster board:
  - Example:
    - I \_\_\_\_\_ will do my best to act as an upstander because I want people to feel comfortable, welcomed, and cared for in my school.
  - Have group members take a picture in front of the poster board to be sent home with them following group.
- The Student-Advocate Scale:
- Final discussion:
  - Final thoughts, feelings, ideas, etc.



**Student-Advocate Scale: Week 7 (Midget, Dumas, Sears, Lundquist, & Hausheer, 2015)**

**Questions 5 and 10 added to questionnaire to reflect additional strategy.**

Question	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree
1. I know what verbal bullying looks like				
2. I know what social/emotional bullying looks like				
3. I know what cyberbullying looks like				
4. I know what physical bullying looks like				
5. I know what indirect bullying looks like				
6. I know how to use humor to get attention away from the student being bullied				
7. I know how to reach out to the student being bullied				
8. I know how to ask for help from an adult and report bullying at my school				
9. I know how to offer suggestions for empathy when someone is bullying a student				
10. I know how to express my disapproval when someone is saying mean and hurtful things when in a close group of friends				
11. I feel confident in my ability to do something helpful to decrease bullying at my school				
12. I feel comfortable being an advocate to stop bullying at my school				
13. I feel like I can make a positive difference against bullying at my school				

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