Lunch Buddy Mentoring for Bullied Children

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What do we know about bullying

◆ 30-40% of youth reports some experience with being bullied

◆ Bullying peaks in middle school

◆ Remains high till 11th/12th grade

◆ Number of victims drops; more visible

◆ Chronic victims: 5-8% of all children
A Definition of Peer Victimization

- Repeated exposure to peer interactions that
  - convey harmful intent
  - produce harmful effects
  - are sanctioned (often implicitly) by groups of peers in which not intervening is considered the norm
"Beating up your classmates can be a lot of work. That's what I drink Gatorade."
The Value of Using Indirect Interventions

- Bullied children reluctant to ask for help
- Bullied children often resist help when it is offered
- Sometimes efforts to help can make matters worse, given the peer network that implicitly sanctions bullying
Lunch Buddy Mentoring

- Originally a control condition
- Based on theory that mentoring won’t work if there’s not a strong relationship
- Lunch Buddy mentoring was an attempt to water-down the relationship
  - All visits in the school cafeteria
  - Twice/week for < 30 minutes
  - A new mentor for each of 3 semesters
  - Minimally trained mentors
Outcomes

- Child-rated support was lower for Lunch Buddy mentors than community-based mentors.
- But children in both groups improved on teacher and parent ratings of aggression.
- No group differences immediately after the intervention.
- But significant differences at the 1-year and 2-year FU favoring Lunch Buddy mentoring!
  - Lower teacher-rated aggression
  - Higher teacher-rated behavioral competence
  - Higher teacher-rated scholastic competence
Additional Findings

- At the 1-year follow-up, Lunch Buddy children had higher levels of
  - school belonging
  - teacher-rated school engagement

- Lunch Buddy mentoring more effective in schools with high adversity (playground aggression, economic disadvantage, family mobility)
Do Bullied Children Experience Less Victimization after Lunch Buddy Mentoring?

**Summary Findings from Three Open Trials of Lunch Buddy Mentoring**
*(Elledge et al., Journal of Primary Prevention, 2010; Gregus et al., under review, 2014)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-post Comparison</th>
<th>1. Children who were bullied (N = 12)</th>
<th>2. Children who were bullied (N = 24)</th>
<th>3. Children who were bullies &amp; bullied (N = 23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-report, 1 semester</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-report, 3 semesters</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-report, 1 semester</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-report, 3 semesters</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-report, 1 semester</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-report, 3 semesters</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
So how might Lunch Buddy mentoring help children at risk?

◆ Enhanced reputation among lunchtime peers?

◆ Improved lunchtime peer interactions?

◆ Modeling of appropriate social behavior?

◆ Increased sense of school belonging?
“Some occasions there were kids who would ask me if I was his friend or parent. One time a student asked why did I want to sit with him. Each time I responded that he was my friend, and I thought it was pretty cool that I got to sit with him at lunch. The students who asked would looked like they were shocked, then they began to sit next to us on every visit. It was amazing how their little attitudes or thoughts towards my mentee changed by me saying I was his friend, and I like sitting with him.”
“I made sure that while the majority of my conversations were solely focused on my little girl, I included the other children in the conversations we were having. At first, I noticed each of the girls at the table tried to out talk one another in attempts to get my attention. Slowly but surely, however, the girls and my mentee started taking turns to say what they needed to say. Although they still sometimes interrupted one another, they improved greatly.”
Hypothesized Change Model for Lunch Buddy Mentoring

Consistent Visits & Minimal Conflict → Enhanced Lunchtime Peer Relationships → Decreased Peer Victimization
Is there Evidence to Support the Model of Change that Guides Lunch Buddy Mentoring *(Craig et al., under review, 2014)*?
Is there Evidence to Support the Model of Change that Guides Lunch Buddy Mentoring (cont.)?

◆ Gains in quality of lunchtime peer interactions, as rated by peers, predicted post-mentoring
  ◆ Increased class-wide levels of peer acceptance
  ◆ Decreased peer-reports of peer victimization

◆ Quality of the mentoring relationship did not predict any outcomes
Is Lunch Buddy Mentoring Harmful to Bullied Children?

◆ Ratings of perceived harm ((children, teachers, & parents) are consistently low.

◆ Is it harmful to rematch bullied children?
  ◆ Compared children with poor, mid-level, or high quality 1st match relationships (based on child and mentor ratings of support and conflict).
  ◆ Found only one significant difference in match quality for the 3rd Match.
    ◆ Children with poor 1st matches rated support from the 3rd match lower than children with mid-level or high quality 1st matches.
    ◆ All other comparisons of relationship quality for the 3rd match were not significant.
## Relationship Quality in the 3rd Match

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Match Relationship Quality</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T3 Child-report support</td>
<td>2.40</td>
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<td>T3 Mentor-report support</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mid-level</strong></td>
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<td><strong>High</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>T3 Child-report conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>T3 Mentor-report conflict</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Current Lunch Buddy Mentoring Projects

- Randomized controlled trial of Lunch Buddy mentoring for bullied children in grades 3 and 5
- Children randomly assigned to Lunch Buddy mentoring ($n = 35$) or no mentoring ($n = 30$).
- Children nominated by teachers as bullied, then verified by high self-ratings of being bullied
- Child- and teacher-ratings of peer victimization obtained pre-mentoring, post-mentoring, and at the 9-month follow-up
- Stay tuned....
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