PSYC 177a
Psychology Research into School Bullying:
Issues in Methods, Morality and Intervention

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Course Description:
This course addresses three main questions of school bullying behaviors in psychology: What is the bullying behavior? Why do we have this behavior? How can we solve the problems of bullying? Through three modules, each responding to one of these questions, students will learn the psychological perspectives in current issues of bullying behaviors, and (2) understand developmental perspectives to address the reasons behind bullying behaviors in identity and morality issues and (3) analyze intervention programs and campaign to suggest constructive solutions. As a final project, students will integrate the findings covered in this course and conduct "make-a-change" project to actively involve their learning and analysis to real-world bullying settings and corresponding research. Students will propose an evidence-based intervention component or social campaign to fill in the gaps between what we know about bullying and what we do about bullying in the real settings. This course will double count toward the advanced seminar and the advanced research intensive seminar requirements of the psychology major.

Learning Goals:
Given growing attention to this social issue, it is important that students understand school bullying behaviors from a psychological and developmental perspective and reap benefits for their own healthy interpersonal relationships and to be a responsible member of society, as well as for their knowledge and learning in child and adolescent development.

This course focuses on the psychological perspectives in the current issues of bullying behaviors, with the objective of helping students to understand the reasons that bullying develops from the developmental perspective and intervention approaches to reach constructive solutions from the perspective of morality and justice. This course will engage students more in social issue and justice related to bullying behaviors. More specifically, this course will help students apply values, virtues, morality, discipline, and character education to explore possible solutions by applying interdisciplinary research findings in different areas (e.g., restorative justice, collective efficacy, and moral responsibility) to engage children and adolescents more in morality and to defend the victims against the bullies. With this bullying education, students can develop a sense of justice and apply this to other social issues.
**Textbook (Chapter readings):**


(Optional) Each necessary chapter below will be selected and provided to students.

**Course Requirements:**

- **Journal Entries/Participation (10%)**
  For each class, students are required to write a short journal entries about one or two articles (1 page) for the active class discussion about the main questions that were asked. Each entry should include their thoughts, criticisms, questions, or insights about the reading assigned for that class. When students hand in each entry, they get 1 (a full credit). If not, they get 0.

- **Class Presentation (15%)**
  For each class, students will lead the presentation and discussion of one or two reading among the article readings.

- **Hypotheses-driven Tests in Evaluating Bullying Behaviors (15%)**
  In the first module, as part of the learning process, students will inspect and try to make insightful psychological hypotheses in a short introduction through three core articles the instructor used for her current published/ongoing studies. The students should introduce their topic by incorporating the results from the core articles by identifying the gap in literature, tell why it is important and interesting to study and summarize relevant previous findings. Then, they should develop and present a new hypothesis on the topic. The instructor’s ongoing project including introduction and hypotheses related to timing and duration of bullying behaviors will be introduced to students as well. *The ongoing paper was recently presented in SRA (Society for Research on Adolescence)

- **Moral Narrative in Bullying Behaviors (15%)**
  In the second module, after learning moral development, students are required to write their stories of a situation, conflict, problem, or dilemma they have faced related to bullying behaviors in their lives that required them to make a moral or ethical decision. Students need to identify what they thought, what they felt, and what they did, and then reflect on the outcome. The purpose is to encourage them to apply their own experiences to dialogue with the theories, themes, and issues covered in this class, and for students to be actively engaging with bullying behaviors in our society. At the end of the paper, students will suggest a creative way to engage children and adolescents in morality and to defend the victims against the bullies from the perspective of justice.
- Bullying-related TV Programming Analyses (15%)
  During a class of the third module, students will analyze one episode of anti-bullying educational TV programming (i.e., the Arthur episode) or one episode of popular TV show in Korea (i.e., infinity challenge) and evaluate positive aspects and critiques from the perspectives of what they have learned in psychological and developmental perspectives. Students will assess what messages this show is giving to a child and how the chosen show might influence the growing child.

- Make-a-Change Projects (30%)
  At the end of the course, while learning about bullying intervention programs, students will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of two bullying interventions and give their suggestions for each bullying program. They will assess the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying programs (i.e., KiVa, Second Step, Yale’s RULLER & whole school approach) and identify the gap between what we know from the literature and what we do in real settings, and suggest a direction for bullying programs. Students will create a short social campaign or a component of a bullying intervention program to fill the gap between literature and reality. After finishing the projects, students will have the opportunity to present their ideas to the whole class and learn from others’ methods, solutions, and programs.

Grading:

Your course grade will consist of journal entries/class participation, hypotheses-driven proposals, moral narratives, bullying program analyses, and final make-a-change projects. For each component, you will receive a numerical score, then final score will be converted to a letter grade at the end of the course, based on this standard (i.e., A ≥93, A- ≥90; B+≥85, B≥80, B-≥75, C+≥70, C≥65, C-≥60).

Class Policies:

Disability Services - If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have reasonable accommodations made for you, please let me know.

Academic Honesty - Instances of alleged dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University.

Etiquette - Please arrive on time to settle down before class begins and remain until the end, and deactivate your cell phone to respect for others. Do not engage in activity which will distract our learning.

Privacy - This class requires the use of tools that many disclose your coursework and identity to parties outside the class. To protect your privacy you may choose to use pseudonym/alias rather than your name in submitting such work. You must share the pseudonym/alias with me and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

* Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 12 hours of study per week in preparation for class.
Course Schedule

* NOTE. Students read one or two article(s) for each class. Chapter readings are optional.

Module I: School Bullying in Psychological Perspectives

The first module is an introduction focusing on psychological perspectives of the current issues of bullying behaviors. In this module, students will first learn the basic concepts of bullying such as definitions of bullying, prevalence and types of bullying, and age and gender issues. Then, they will study ecologies of bullying, risk factors for bullying and victimization, characteristics of bullies and victims, and the methods to assess bullies and victims as well as pros and cons of peer nomination strategy. Students will be able to broaden their knowledge about bullying through the instructor’s recently published work in 2016 and ongoing study related effects of bullying behaviors and timing vs. duration in bullying and victimization. Students will also have the opportunity to develop research papers in this field by studying the key articles in the field.

**Topic 1. Introduction to Bullying Behaviors**

**Class 1**

**Question:** How can we understand bullying and its characteristics? How do we define bullying, and how is it distinguished from other forms of social or physical aggression?

**Learning:**

Social-ecological framework of bullying behaviors, Definition of bullying, Prevalence, trend, and type of bullying, Age and gender issues in bullying & bullying quiz (http://www.kenrigby.net/00-The-Quiz)

**Chapter Lecture:**

Espelage et al. Ch 1 (social-ecological framework of bullying behaviors)

**Readings:**


**Class 2**

**Question:** Who typically bullies and who gets bullied? Why does being bullied hurt so much with disabled students? How does family factor involve with bullying behaviors?

**Learning:** Bully/Victim Characteristics, Bullying among students with disability, and Family and other risk factors

**Chapter Lecture:**

Espelage et al. Ch 4 (bullying with students with disability)

**Readings:**

**Topic 2. Current Issues in Bullying**

**Class 3**
**Question:** What is the effect of bullying behaviors? Why does being bullied hurt so much? Does timing vs. duration matter differently?

**Learning:**
Effect of bullying behaviors, Timing vs. duration in bullying and victimization from the instructor’s recently published/ongoing projects

**Chapter Lecture:**
Espelage et al. Ch 5 (internalizing problems in bullying)

**Assignment:** Hypotheses-driven tests in evaluating bullying behaviors

**Readings:**

**Class 4**
**Question:** How has bullying been measured in research?

**Learning:** Assessment of bullying, Data collection strategies, Pros and Cons of peer nomination

**Readings:**

**Module II: School Bullying in Identity and Moral Development**

The second module examines the underlying developmental problems of bullying behavior from perspectives of both child and adolescent identity and morality development. The major issues covered are the development of identity, aggression, altruism, identity, morality, and other interdisciplinary research findings as possible solutions (e.g., restorative justice, collective efficacy, character education, and moral responsibility). In addition, students will apply theories to school bullying by investigating how the mechanism of moral disengagement, as driven by the power-oriented behaviors, relates to bullying and participant roles in bullying. At the end, students will suggest a way to engage children and adolescents in morality and more effectively to defend the victims against power-oriented bullying behaviors from the perspective of justice.

**Topic 3. Morality: Moral Disengagement & its solution**

**Class 5**
**Question:** How do children and adolescents develop aggression, altruism, and morality, from developmental perspectives? How is bullying distinguished from other forms of aggression? Why is moral emotions/motives important?

**Learning:**
Development of aggression: Dodge’s information-processing model & aggression and
popularity Bullying, aggression and the importance of knowing the difference.
Development of altruism: Eisenberg’s empathy research
Cognitive development of morality from Piaget and
Kohlberg Moral emotions/motives & origin of morality

Chapter Lecture:
- Espelage et al. Ch. 9 (difference b/w bullying and aggression)

Reading:
Exploring the role of affect in moral behavior and moral forecasting. Psychological Science, 22, 553-558.

Class 6
Question: How is moral disengagement involved with bullying behaviors? How can we engage students more in morality?

Learning:
Bandura’s moral disengagement related to bullying behaviors
Cognitive process related to moral reasoning in bullying behaviors Character Education
Moral Responsibility

Readings:

Class 7
Question: What can be a solution from other area?

Learning:
Interdisciplinary findings
Sampson’s collective efficacy and responsibility for each other Restorative justice

Readings:
**Topic 4. Identity development: Bullying Roles and Power**

**Class 8**

**Question:** What motivates a bully to bully in a school environment? Why bullying occurs most in early adolescents? How does student identity develop in bullying behaviors?

**Learning:**

Peer contexts: Popularity and power (bullying as a social activity) Identity development and bullying behaviors

Application of Erikson’s theory + Actual, ideal, and false self in relation to bullying roles

**Chapter Lecture:**

- Espelage et al. Ch. 8 (dominance issue in the transition from the primary school to secondary school)

**Readings:**


**Class 9**

**Question:** Why do bystanders of bullying help or not? How does power and popularity vs. guilt and shame work on bullying and altruism?

**Learning:** Peer ecologies, problems and solution, Bystander’s role, power and popularity vs. shame and guilt issues

**Chapter Lecture:**

- Espelage et al. Ch. 7 (classroom peer ecologies)

**Assignment:** Moral Narrative in Bullying Behaviors

**Readings:**


**Module III: Bullying from Intervention Perspectives**

The third module explores the reasons for different school bullying strategies (proactive, peer support, and reactive strategies) and analyzes current anti-bullying programs (KiVa, Second Step, Yale’s RULLER, and Olweus programs). Students will have an opportunity to learn about Boston vs. Bullies Bullying Intervention Program and the evaluation of the program the instructor analyzed as a statistician. Finally, students will integrate their learning to propose a unique social campaign or bullying intervention component to respond to bullying behaviors, a project aimed at filling in the gaps between what we know about bullying and what we presently do about bullying.

**Topic 5. Bullying Intervention**

**Class 10**

**Question:** How do schools intervene in bullying behaviors? What was the outcome? How do the
proactive strategies, peer support strategies, and reactive strategies work? What are the major components of current anti-bullying programs?

**Learning:**
Rigby’s bullying interventions in schools: Six major approaches
Currently effective interventions based on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
Introduction to current bullying programs (Dr. Veenstra’s KiVa, Dr. Espelage’s Second Step, and Yale’s RULLER program) from the informative websites
Introduction to Olweus programs & Whole School Approach
Instructor’s analysis of bullying program effectiveness (Boston vs. Bullies programs- Joint work with instructor, Dr. Ronald G. Slaby from Harvard Medical School)

**Assignment:** Bullying program analysis#1

**Chapter Lecture:**
- Espelage et al. Ch 19 (overview of bullying program and its outcome)

**Readings:**

(Optional)

**Topic 6. Make a difference!**

**Class 11**

**Question:** What structures and norm from society (media) and classroom might reinforce or reduce bullying within schools?

**Learning:**
Harmful influence of society on bullying behaviors: Media effects
Pro vs. con about education TV program (i.e., one episode of the Arthur) Positive influence of class norm on bullying behaviors: Teacher effects

**Assignment:** Bullying program analysis#2

**Chapter Lecture:**
- Espelage et al. Ch 12 (classroom characteristics & bullying)

**Readings:**

**Class 12**

**Question:** What social campaign or programs were successful in making a difference in school bullying? How do they work from the perspectives of what we learned?

**Learning:**
Social Change Campaign or components for bullying
intervention Introduction of social campaign:
Pink t-shirt day anti-bullying campaign (students-activated movement) Popular athletes-victim connections program
Celebrity connection with victims in Korea (students-activated movement) Discrimination experience (like victims) program in Korea

Final Project
Make-a-Change Project Presentation
The students will fill the gap in current programs by developing specific components to supplement current anti-bullying programs or influential tools to promote actively involvement with anti-bullying campaigns.