



Working in the Community to Prevent and Reduce Bullying

Did you know middle school-age children who adopt traditional male masculinity are more likely use homophobic language and sexual harassment behavior?

Findings have shown that bullying perpetration and homophobic teasing were significant predictors for sexual harassment over time.

- Homophobic teasing: negative attitude and behavior directed toward individuals who identify or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered.(CDC)
- Sexual harassment: includes comments, sexual rumor spreading, or grouping (CDC)
- Traditional male masculinity: refers to a specific set of traits and behavior that are considered culturally appropriate for manhood, some of which can become harmful in certain cases

The role of male masculinity in bullying prevention

The research is starting to show the relationship between bullying, sexual harassment, and homophobic language is moderated by male masculinity.

The research suggests:

- Middle school age children who adopt traditional male masculinity are more likely to bully others which often leads to homophobic language and sexual harassing behavior
- There is a pervasiveness of anti-gay language in schools that suggest most (not all) school environments are hostile for LGBTQIA+ students and create a negative environment for heterosexual peers

Intervention strategies:

- Teach about the negative effects of traditional masculinity
- Create brave and safe spaces for preadolescents, adolescents, and older youth to talk with adult mentors, why children use homophobic language, the consequences of discriminatory and bias language and how to create a culture of inclusion and belonging
- Talk to preteens, teenagers, and older youth about gender socialization and multiple masculinities from a cultural and historical perspective
- Redefine strength. Being strong is not just about physical strength. It is about showing compassion, empathy, and taking risks to speak up, even in the moment it might cause some awkward interaction with your friends.
- Teach adolescents life and social support skills, not just knowledge about bullying