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Vulnerability & Victimization: Populations at Increased Risk for Bullying

May 28th, 2015

Meeting Orientation Slide

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Presenters

Jaana Juvonen, Ph.D.
Professor, Developmental Psychology
UCLA

Robert Faris, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology
University of California at Davis

When does bullying hurt the most?

Jaana Juvonen, Professor
Department of Psychology, UCLA

Getting bullied hurts

Silent symptoms:

- Anxiety & depression
- Headaches & stomachaches
- Disengagement in school
- Increased irritability
- Lack of interest in social events

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Goal of the presentation

- When are internalizing symptoms heightened?
  - Social environment in which bullying takes place
  - Beliefs of the bullied of why they are targeted

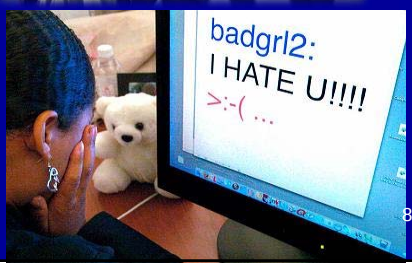
→ How can we help the bullied?

6

Polling questions

7

Types of bullying & level of distress



8

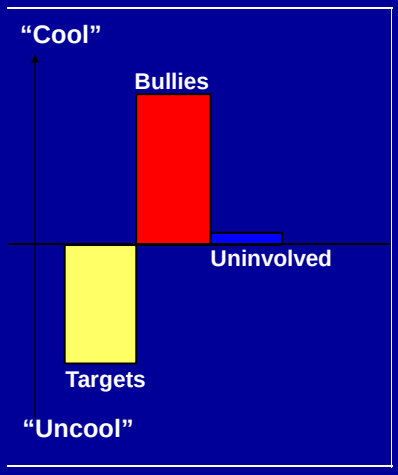
Bullying experiences in the larger social context

- Bullied youth are not only mistreated by the perpetrator, but also likely to be
  - rejected by peers (Hodges & Perry, 1999)
  - lack friends and social support (Hodges, Malone & Perry, 1999)
  - considered uncool (Juvonen et al., 2001)

9

Power imbalance reflected in social status at 6th grade

Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2001



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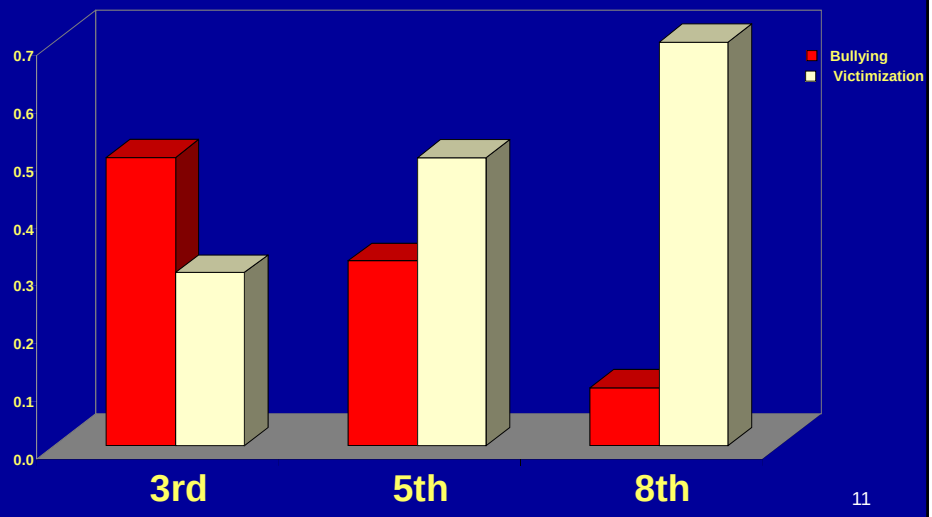
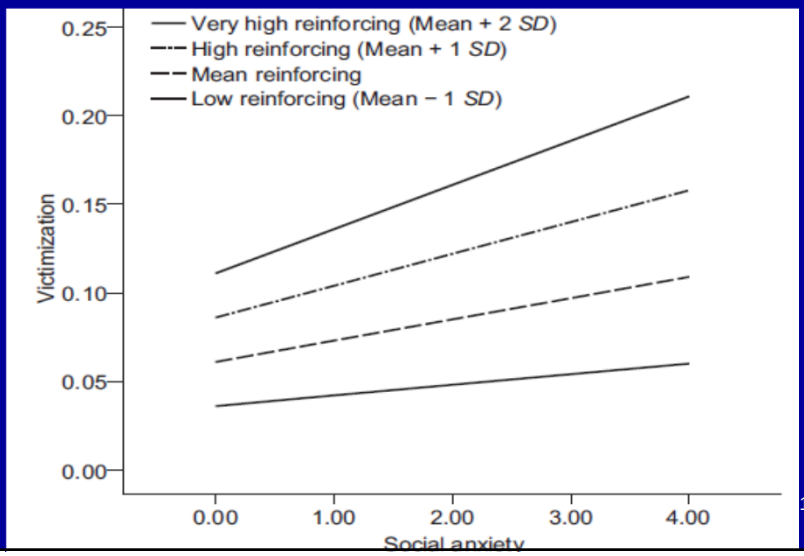
Correlation between peer rejection & bullying vs. victimization across grade levels



11

When bullying behaviors are reinforced, victimization & social anxiety strongly linked (Karna et al. 2010)



12

What helps alleviate the distress of the bullied?

- Friendship: ONE friend can protect against emotional distress (Hodges et al., 1999)
- Bystander compassion & protection vital for feeling supported

→ Interventions need to teach bystanders awareness & responses

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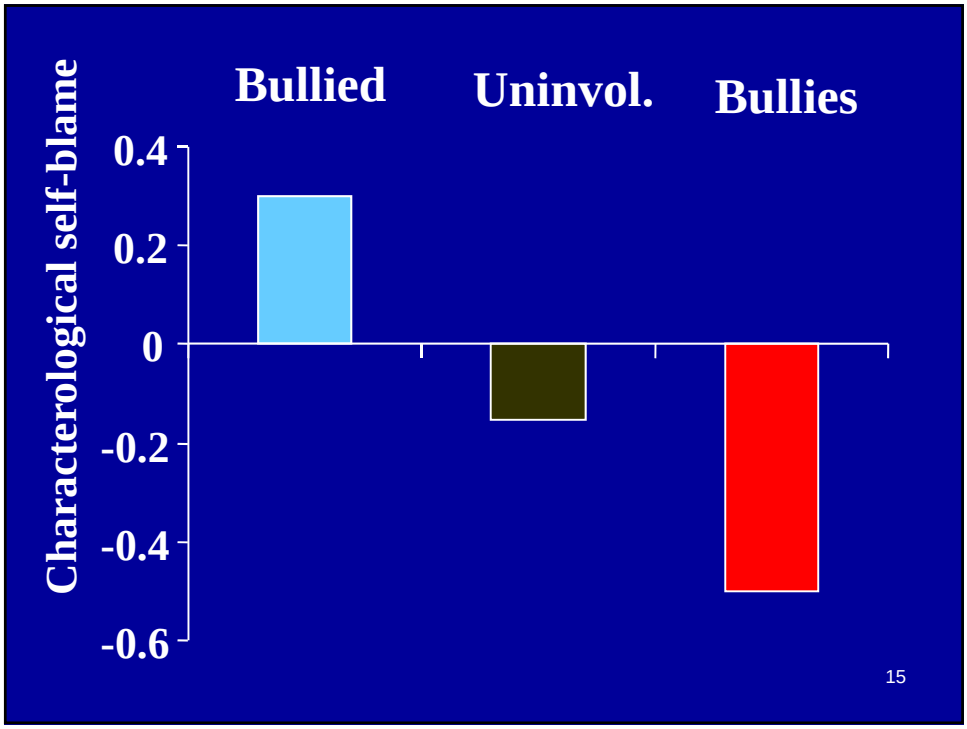
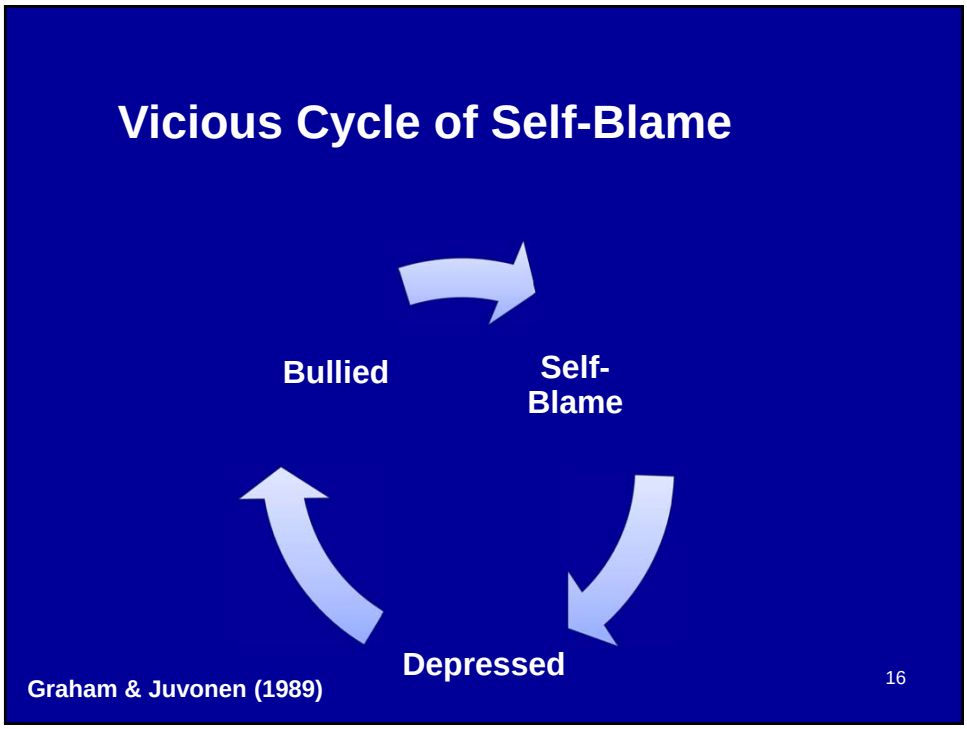
"Why do I get bullied?"

- How do targets of bullying construe their plight (especially when no one helps)?
- Most blame themselves: "It's my fault and there is nothing I can do about it"

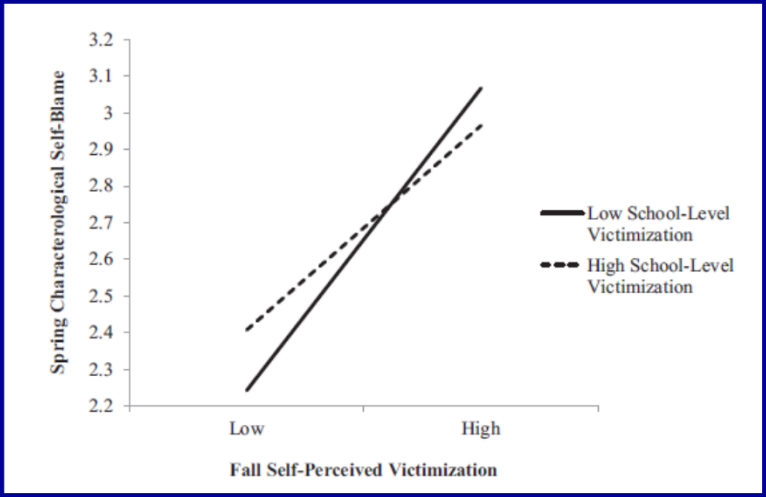
= characterological self-blame

14


Bullied
Uninvol.
Bullies
Characterological self-blame
0.4
0.2
0
-0.2
-0.4
-0.6
15


Vicious Cycle of Self-Blame
Bullied
Self-Blame
Depressed
Graham & Juvonen (1989)
16

Bullied youth feel more distressed and self-blame in schools with *lower* levels of victimization



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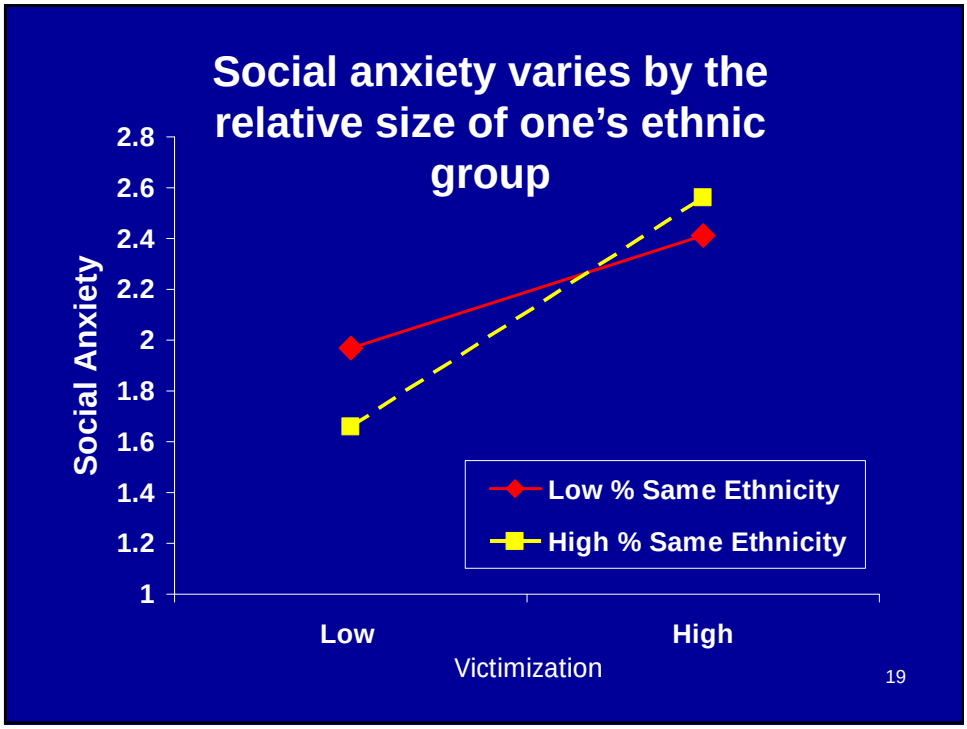
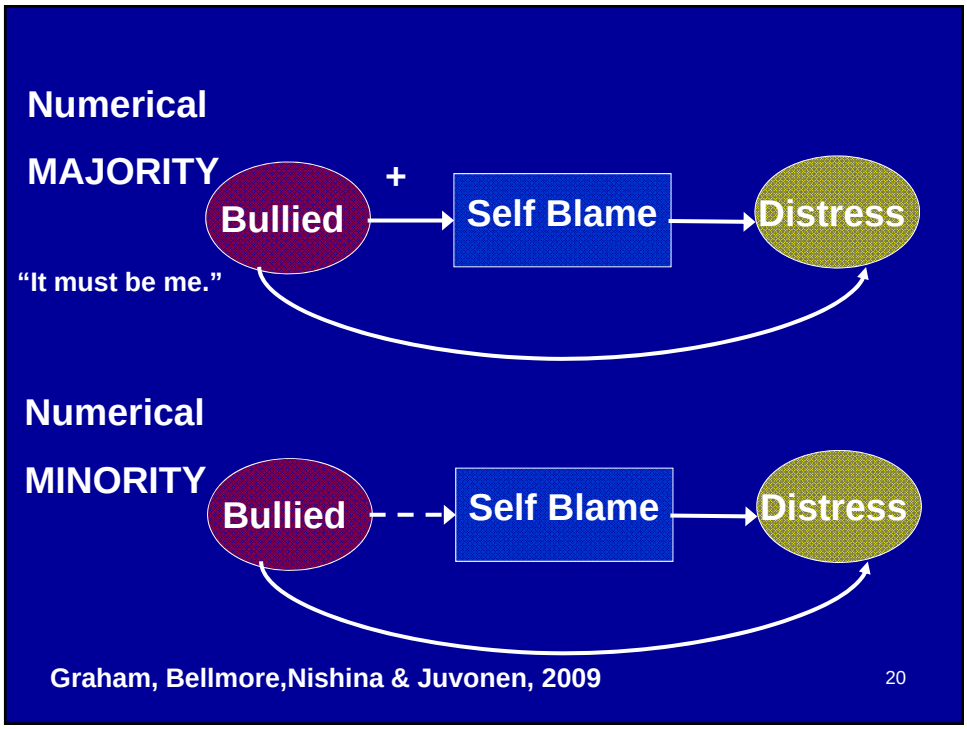
Challenge for Interventions

- Not enough to reduce the RATES of bullying and victimization (current "goal standard")
- Need to address the conditions under which the bullied are distressed & blame themselves

18


Social anxiety varies by the relative size of one's ethnic group
Social Anxiety
2.8
2.6
2.4
2.2
2
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1
Low % Same Ethnicity
High % Same Ethnicity
Low
High
Victimization
19


Numerical
MAJORITY
Bullied
+
Self Blame
Distress
"It must be me."
Numerical
MINORITY
Bullied
Self Blame
Distress
Graham, Bellmore,Nishina & Juvonen, 2009
20

Conditions when self-blame & distress heightened

- When fewer peers are bullied
- When belong to a numerical majority

= easily overlooked

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To summarize

1. Psychological distress does not necessarily vary by the type of bullying experienced (physical, relational, etc.), but some forms are more easily undetected.
2. It takes only one protective friend to reduce the distress of the target of bullying.
3. The bullied have psychological problems because they blame themselves for their social plight.
4. Bullying is most distressing in schools with low rates of bullying.

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To reduce the negative effects on bullying behaviors on the targets

1. to make sure bullying doesn't go undetected

2. to reduce the coolness of bullying

3. to make bystanders compassionate and teach them how to support the bullied

4. to prevent targets from blaming themselves and feeling hopeless

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Thank you

Juvonen@psych.ucla.edu

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The sometimes surprising link between victimization and vulnerability

Robert Faris, University of California at Davis

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Research Question

- Who bullies whom? Do the strong attack the weak?
- Use social network analysis to link aggressors with their victims
- Key networks concepts:
  - Dyadic analysis: uses all possible pairs of adolescents, ordered with a “sender” and “receiver”
  - Dyadic status difference = “sender” status – “receiver” status (so positive values mean sender is higher status than receiver)
  - Social distance
  - Centrality

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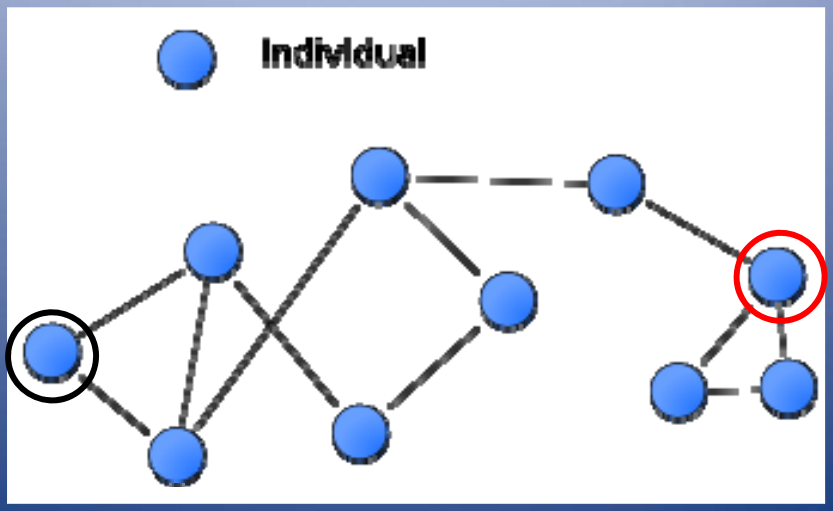
Social Distance



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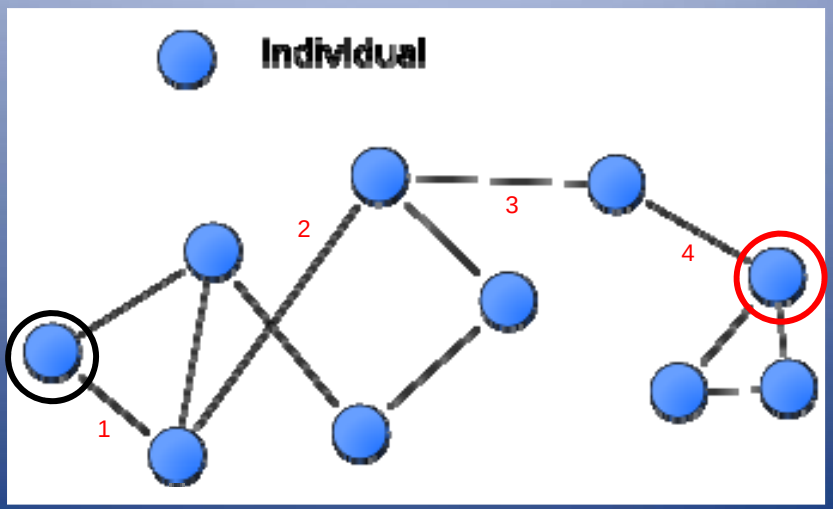
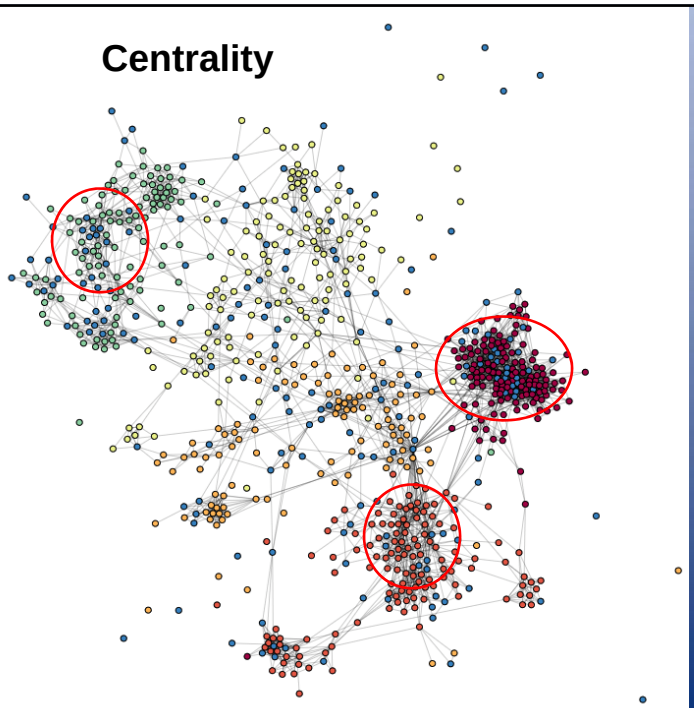
Social Distance



28

Centrality



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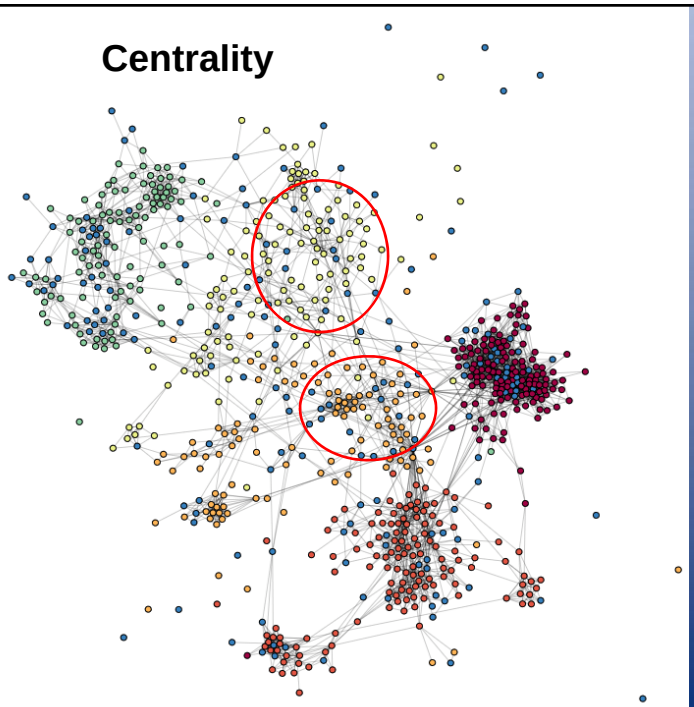
Centrality



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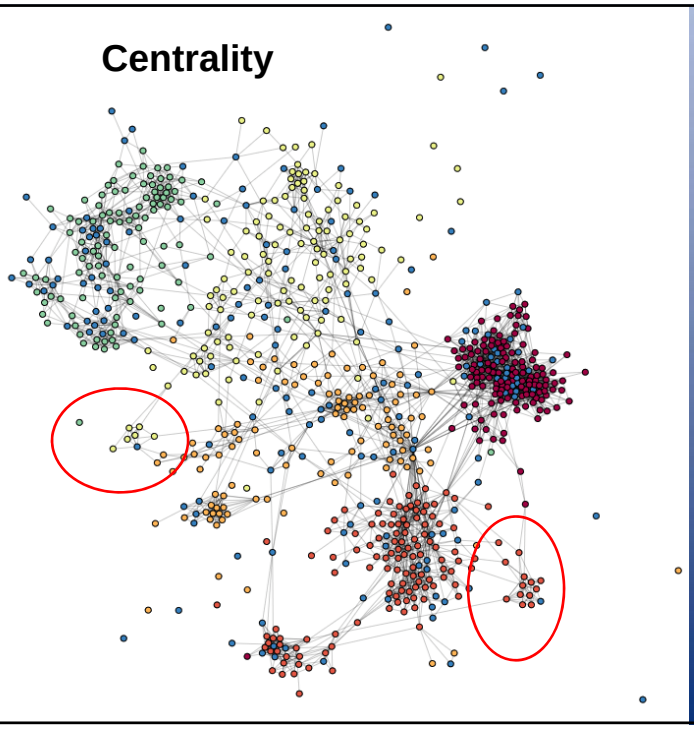
Centrality



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Normative targeting: The marginal harass the vulnerable

Bullies & Aggressors

- Previous research focused on psychosocial maladjustment of bullies & other aggressors
  - Low empathy
  - Problematic home lives
  - Emotional reactivity

Victims

- Victims tend to be observably vulnerable:
  - Delayed puberty
  - Gender non-conforming
  - Physical appearance
  - Social rejection/isolation

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Normative targeting: The marginal harass the vulnerable

Bullies & Aggressors

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Victims

- Victims tend to be observably vulnerable:
  - Delayed puberty
  - Gender non-conforming
  - Physical appearance
  - Social rejection/isolation

→Both aggressors and victims should fall on the periphery of the school social network
→Aggression should further marginalize both aggressors and victims
→Aggression should be directed toward the socially distant
→Aggression should be linked to psychological and family problems

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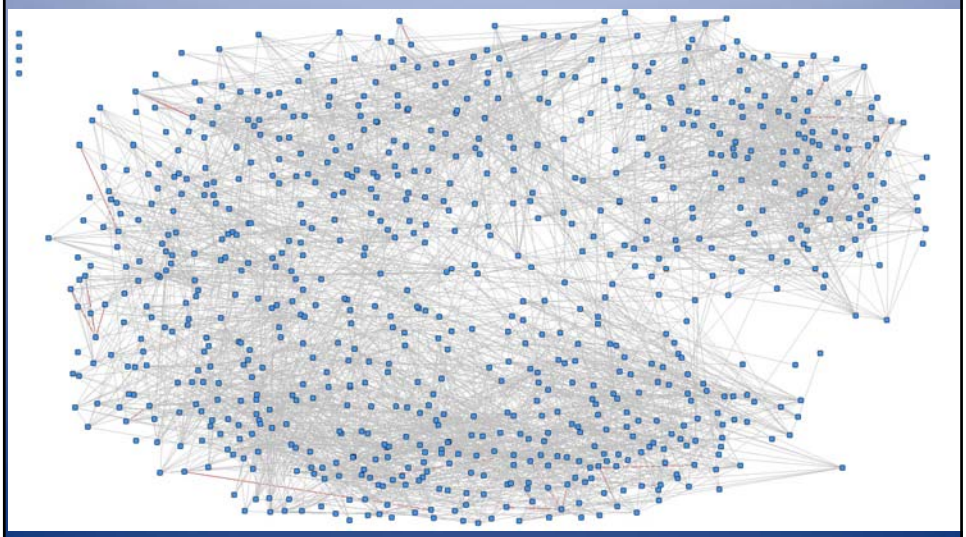

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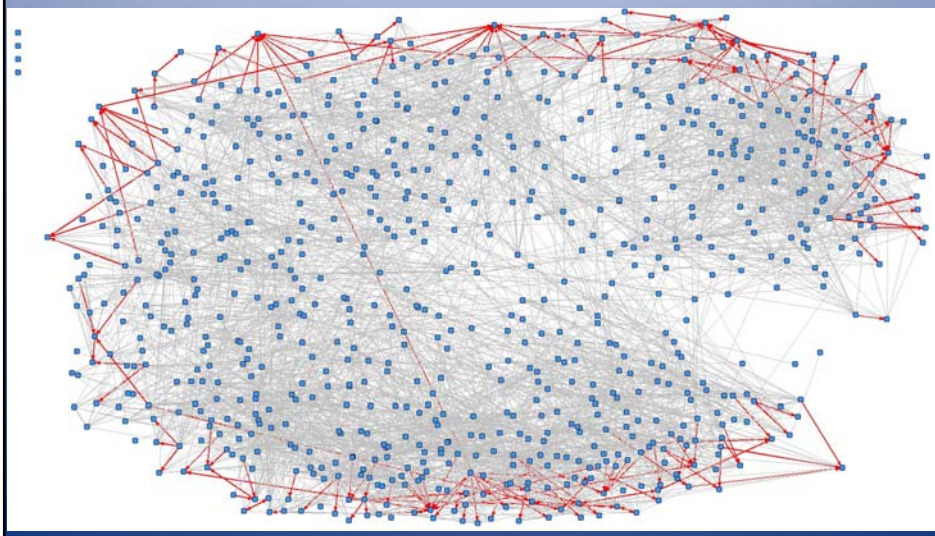

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Instrumental Aggression

- Is aggression also used purposefully?
- Specifically in the competition for social status?
- If so, aggression:
  - should be motivated by desire for status
  - should be associated with centrality, not marginality
  - Should desistance near the top of the social hierarchy
  - Should be directed toward high status peers, not socially marginal and vulnerable
  - Should be directed toward rivals—who are likely to be in the same friendship group

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The Context of Adolescent Substance Use

- Sample: ~4,000 adolescents in grades 8-10
- Three counties in NC, 19 schools
- Fall 2004 & Spring 2005
- Social network data
  - Friendship (name up to five best friends)
  - Aggression (name up to five schoolmates you "picked on or did something mean to")
  - Victimization (name up to five schoolmates who "picked on you or did something mean to you")
- Data on type and frequency of aggression
  - Physical attacks
  - Verbal abuse
  - Indirect aggression (rumors, ostracism, etc.)

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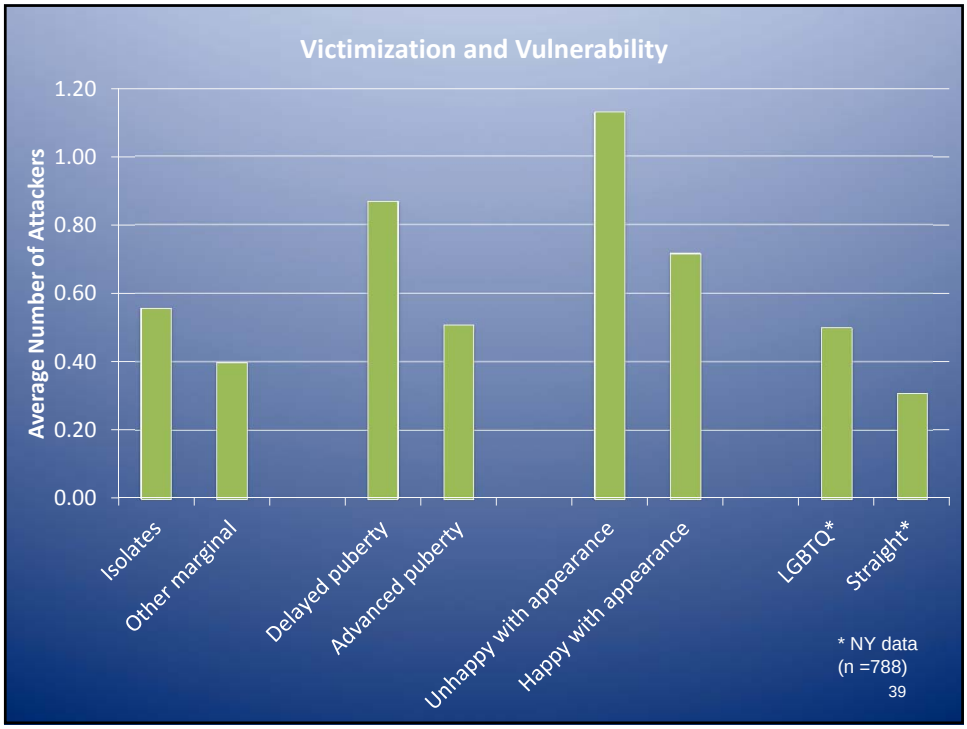
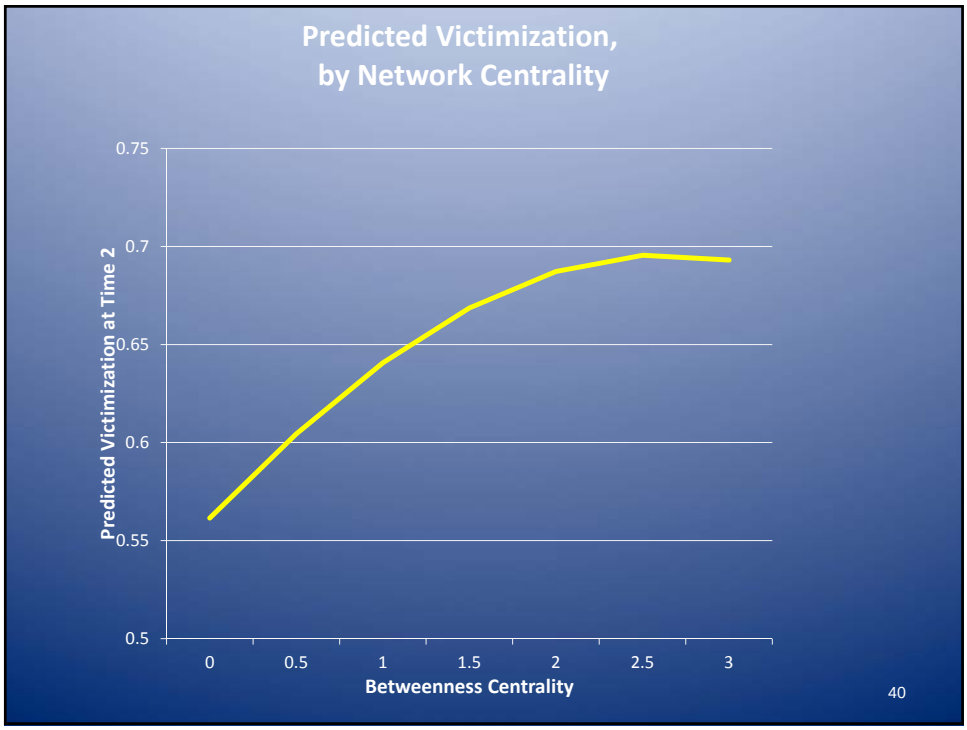
DIVERGENT PATTERNS OF VICTIMIZATION

38


Victimization and Vulnerability
Average Number of Attackers
1.20
1.00
0.80
0.60
0.40
0.20
0.00
Isolates
Other marginal
Delayed puberty
Advanced puberty
Unhappy with appearance
Happy with appearance
LGBTQ*
Straight*
* NY data
(n =788)
39


Predicted Victimization,
by Network Centrality
Predicted Victimization at Time 2
0.75
0.7
0.65
0.6
0.55
0.5
0
0.5
1
1.5
2
2.5
3
Betweenness Centrality
40

EVIDENCE OF INSTRUMENTAL AGGRESSION

41

Instrumental Aggression

- Motivated by desire for status

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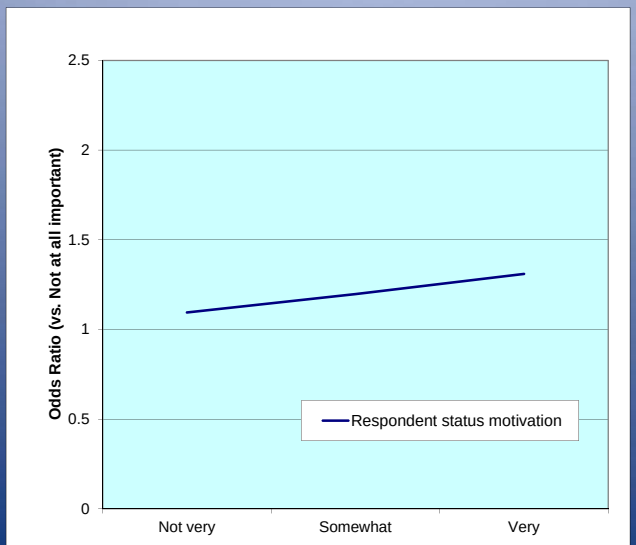
Escalation of Aggression, by Importance of Being Popular



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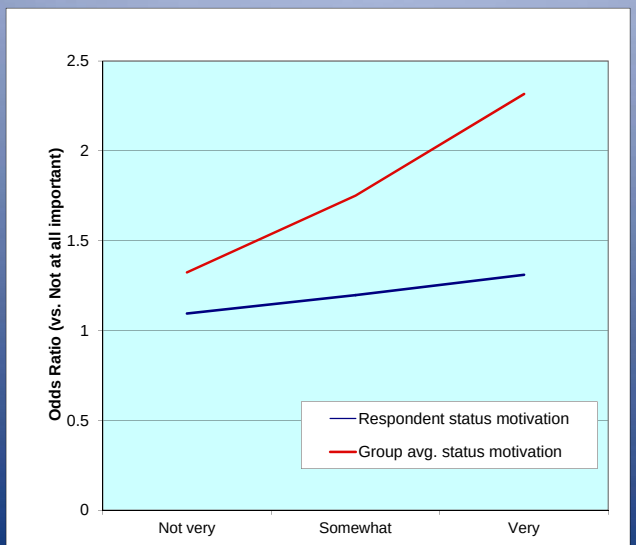
Escalation of Aggression, by Importance of Being Popular



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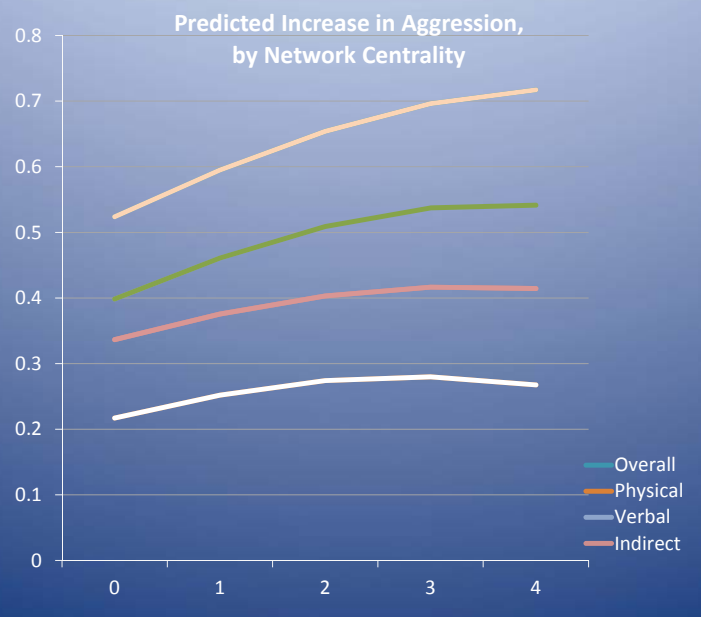
Instrumental Aggression

- Motivated by desire for status
- Aggression escalates as network centrality increases…but declines near the top of the social hierarchy

45



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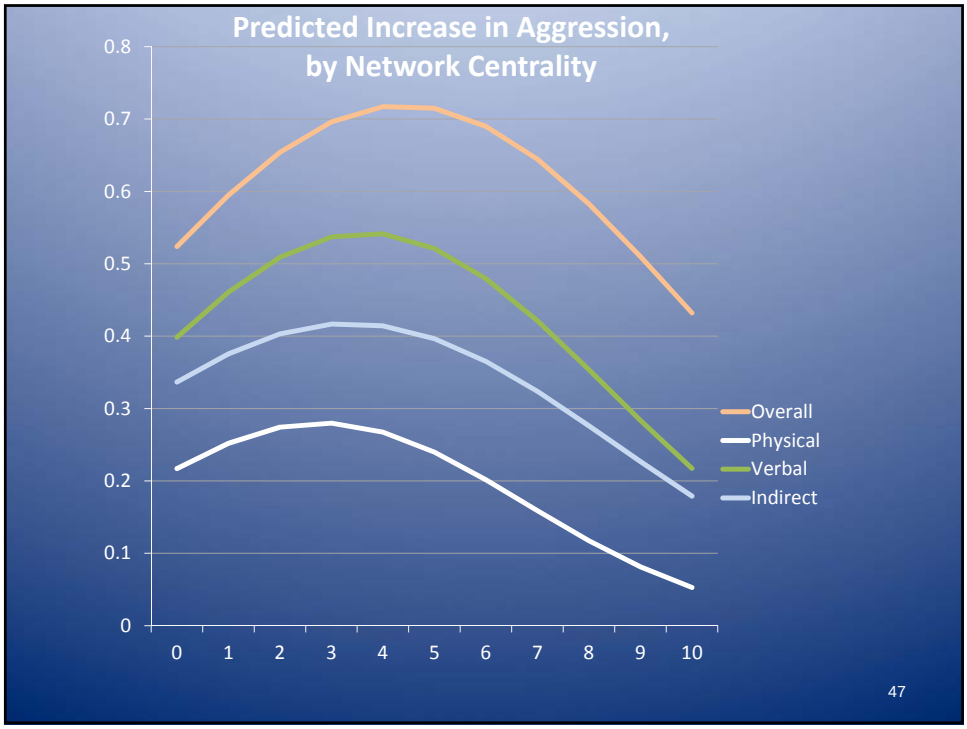
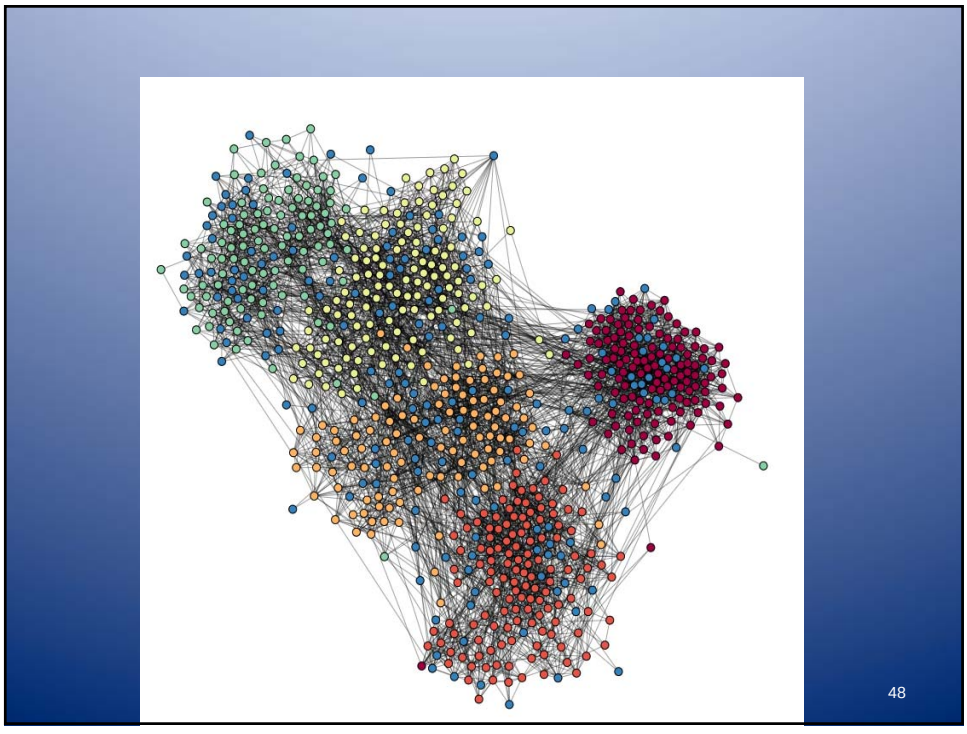

Predicted Increase in Aggression,
by Network Centrality
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
0.1
0
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Overall
Physical
Verbal
Indirect
47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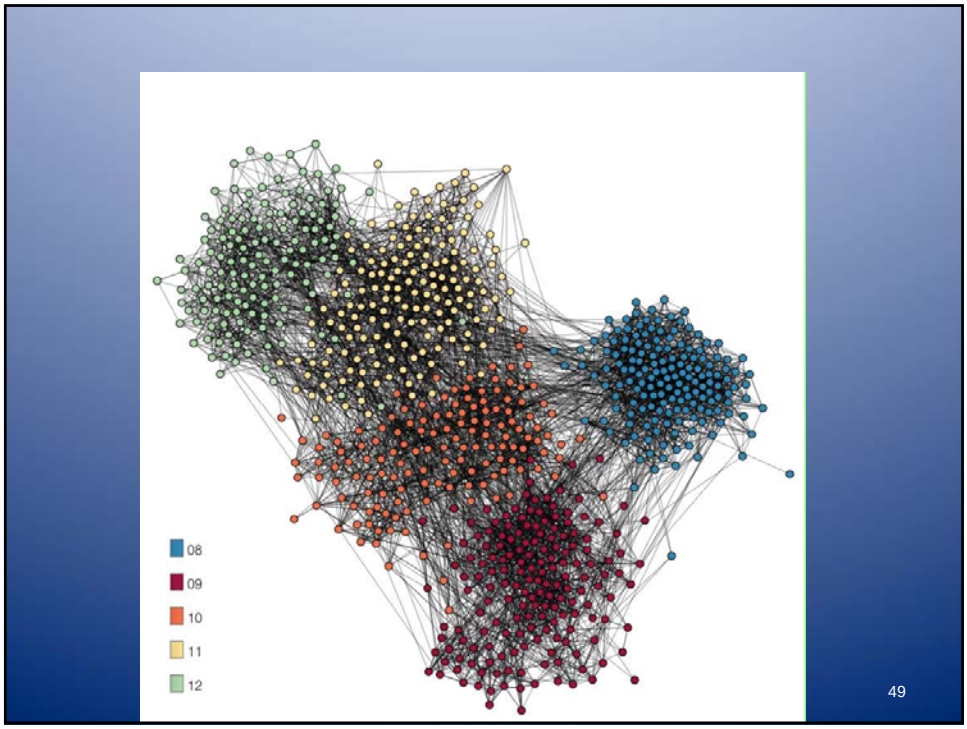
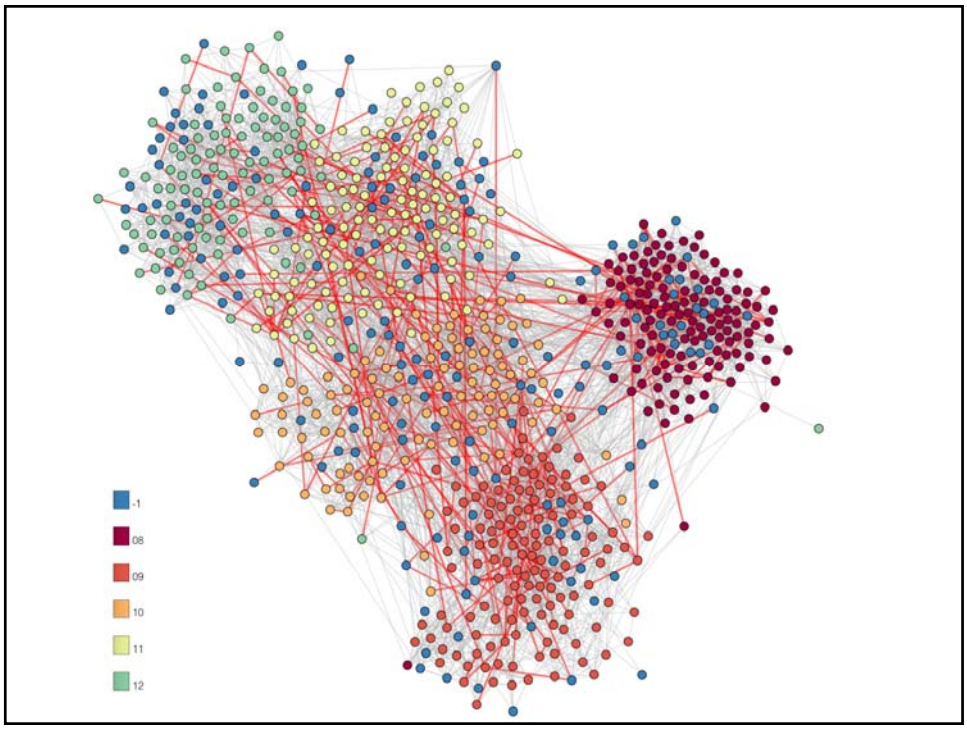

08
09
10
11
12
49


-1
08
09
10
11
12

Instrumental Aggression

- Motivated by desire for status
- Aggression escalates as network centrality increases…but declines near the top of the social hierarchy
- Aggression most likely within friendship group and between friends

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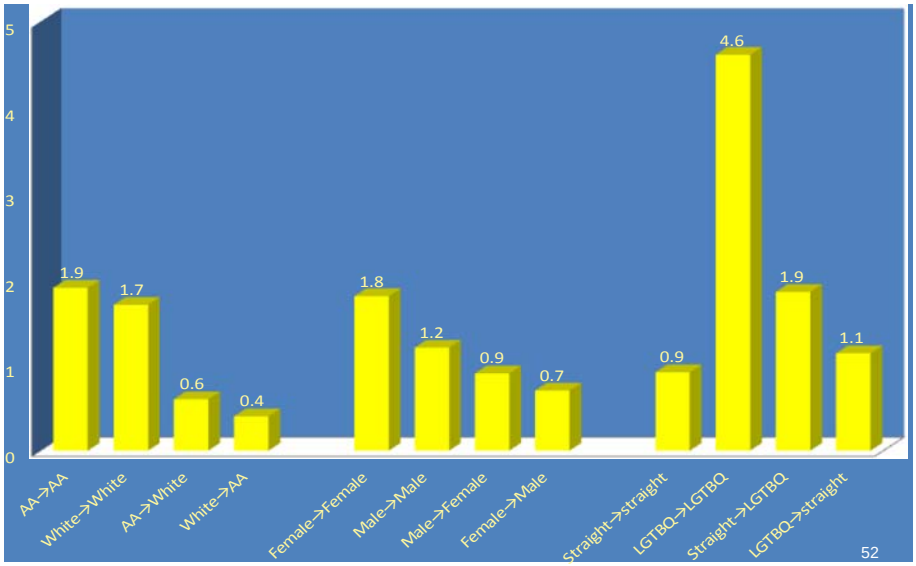
Rates of Aggression Across Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation



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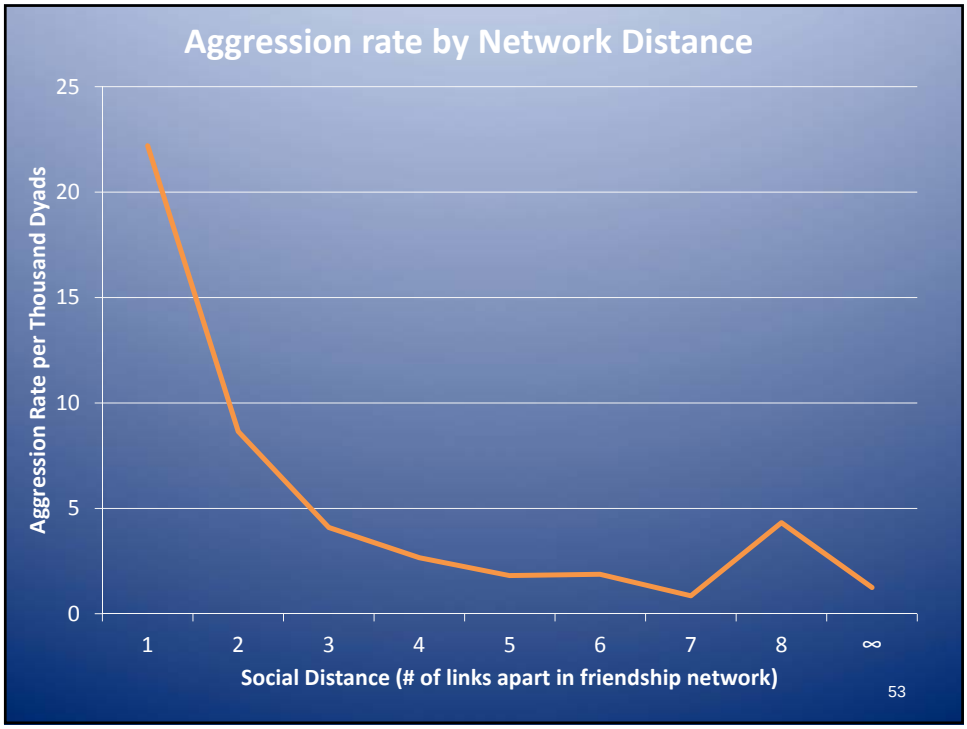

Narrative Evidence from bullying.org

- "I am in the eighth grade. There is this one group of kids who I am friends with except for one. He is not the kind of bully who takes your lunch money or beats you up. He is one of those kids who if you get on his bad side he makes your life a living hell. He turns everybody against you, even the other kids who also don't like him. When the others who are in that group aren't around him they are good kids, but when he shows up they all turn against me. The worst part is my parents think I am still friends with him and they always want me to invite the whole group over. I am afraid that he will embarrass me in front of my family so I make up these lame stories on why no one can come over. He likes to invite me over a lot just so they can mess with me when I get there."

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Narrative Evidence from bullying.org

- “Girls didn't want to be my friend because I wasn't cool or cute or I just didn't fit in. My friends didn't really like me; they treat me like I am slow or like I suppose to let them hurt me. Then 6th grade the problems escalated at the bus stop. They started calling me retarded. In six grade the girl that I thought was my friend started calling me retard.”
- “Today i went to my friends and when i got there not even in 1 minute they started bullying me please help me”

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Interaction / Opportunity?

R met S' parents	NS
Have been to each other's homes	NS
Hung out last week	NS
S met R's parents	NS
Parents have met	NS
Friend rank (best, second best, etc.)	NS
Emotional closeness	NS

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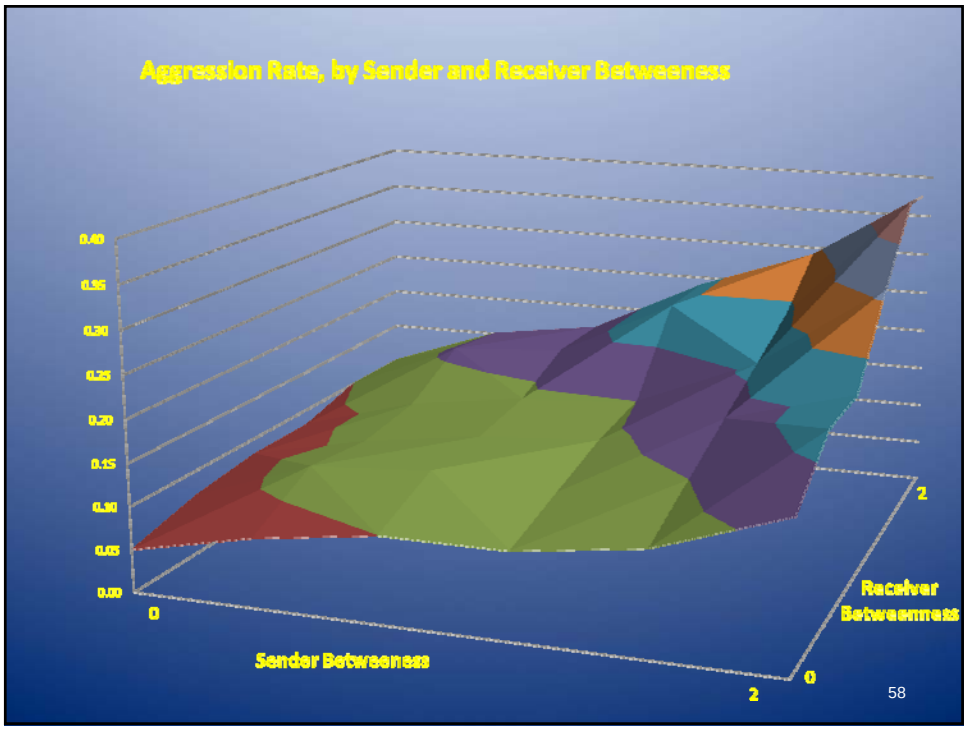
DO THE STRONG ATTACK THE WEAK?

57



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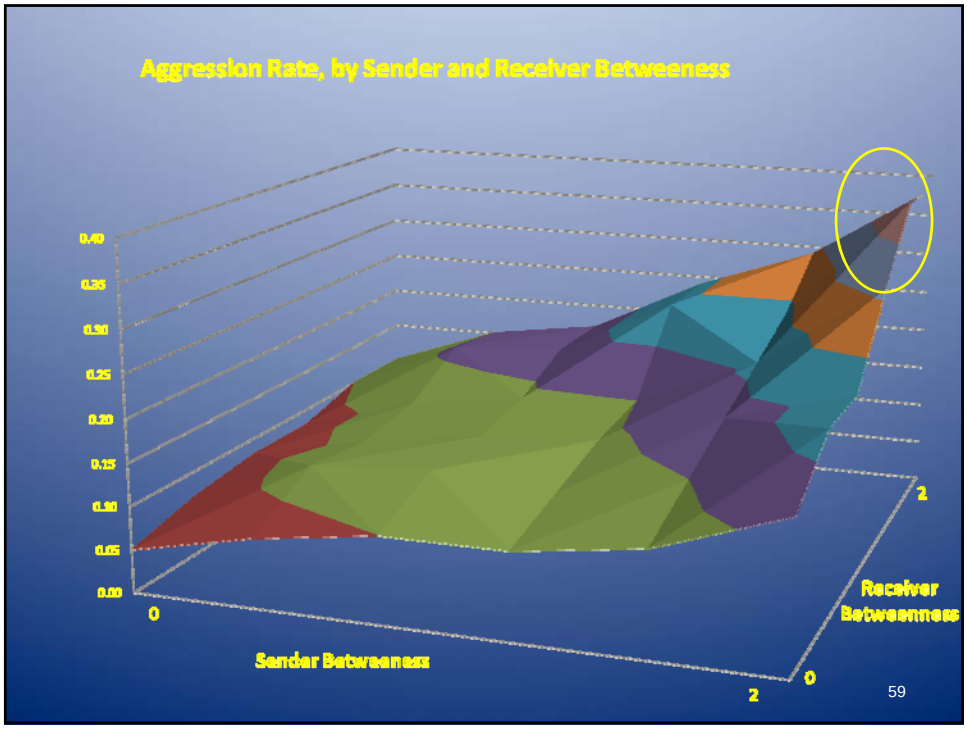
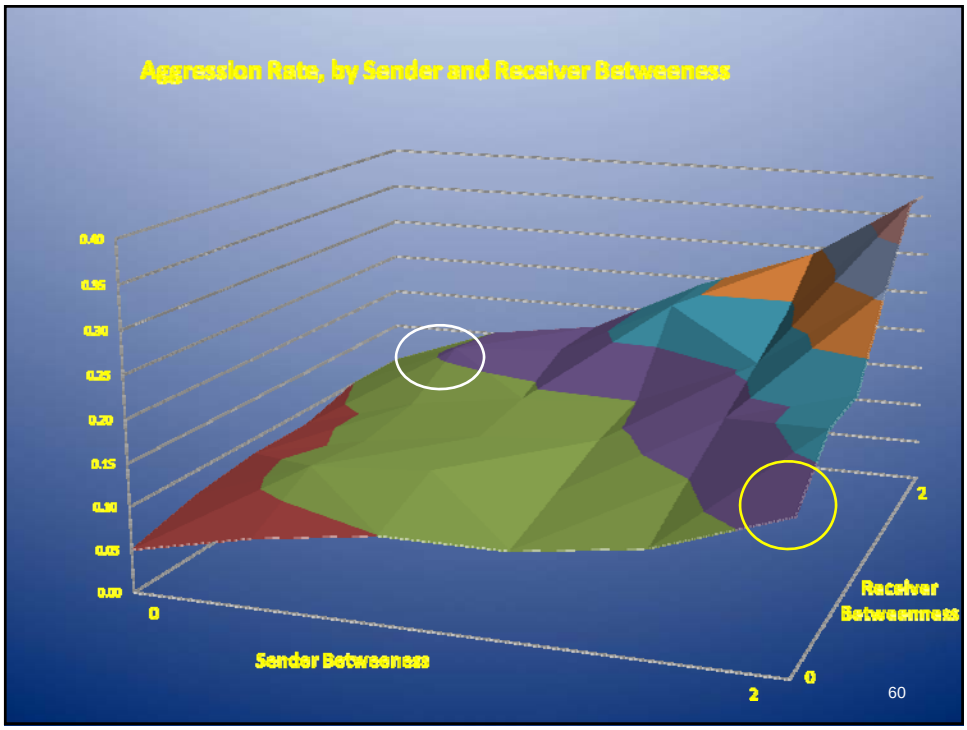
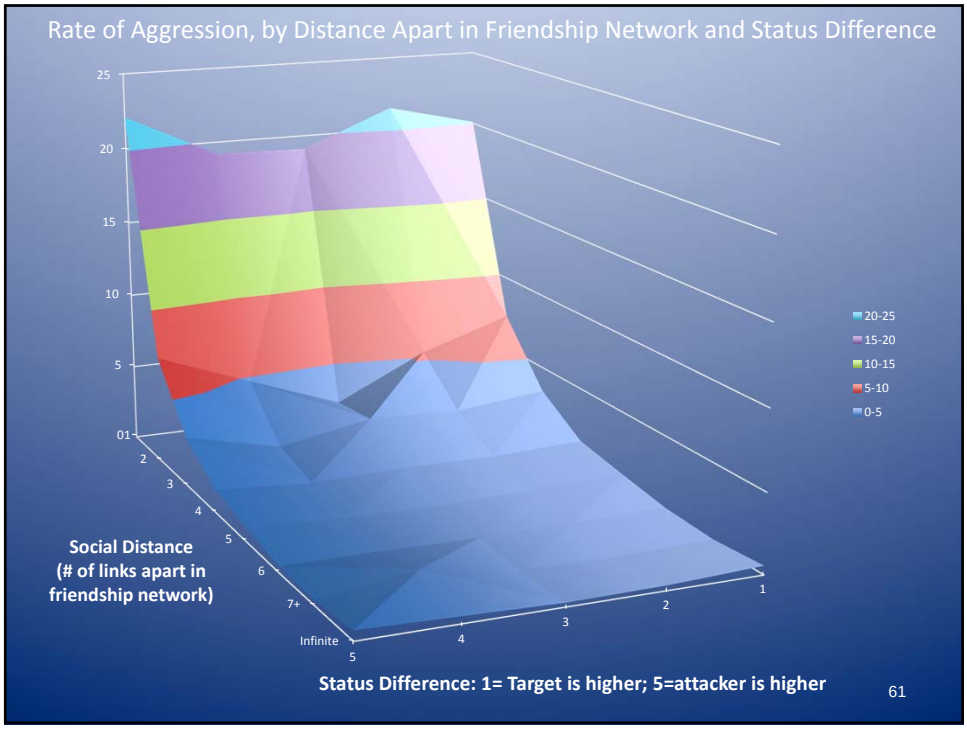
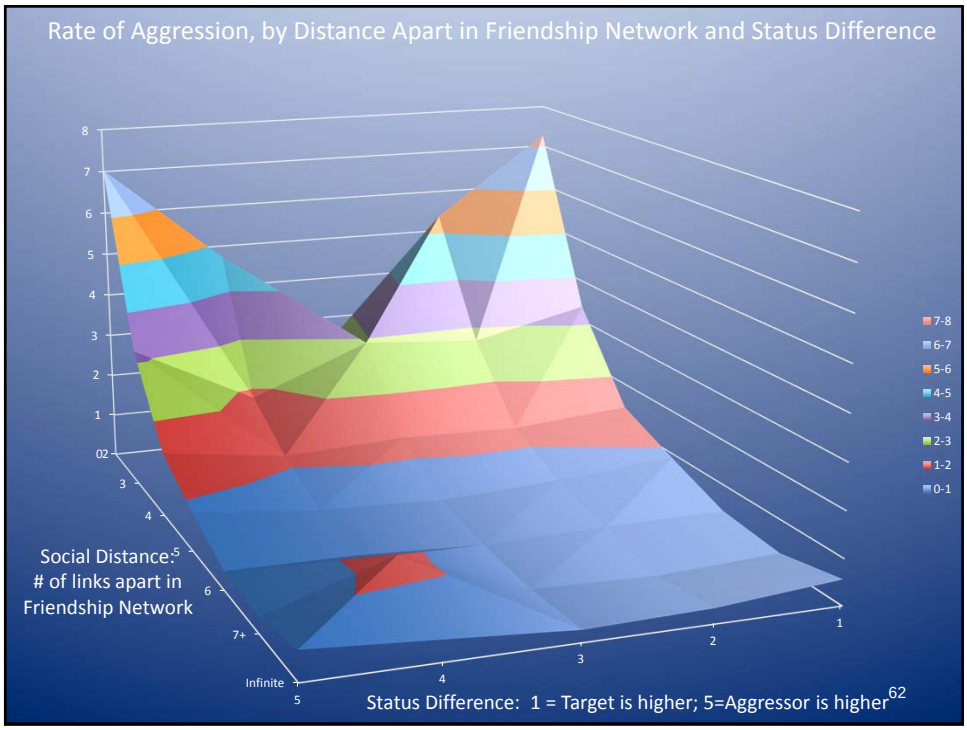
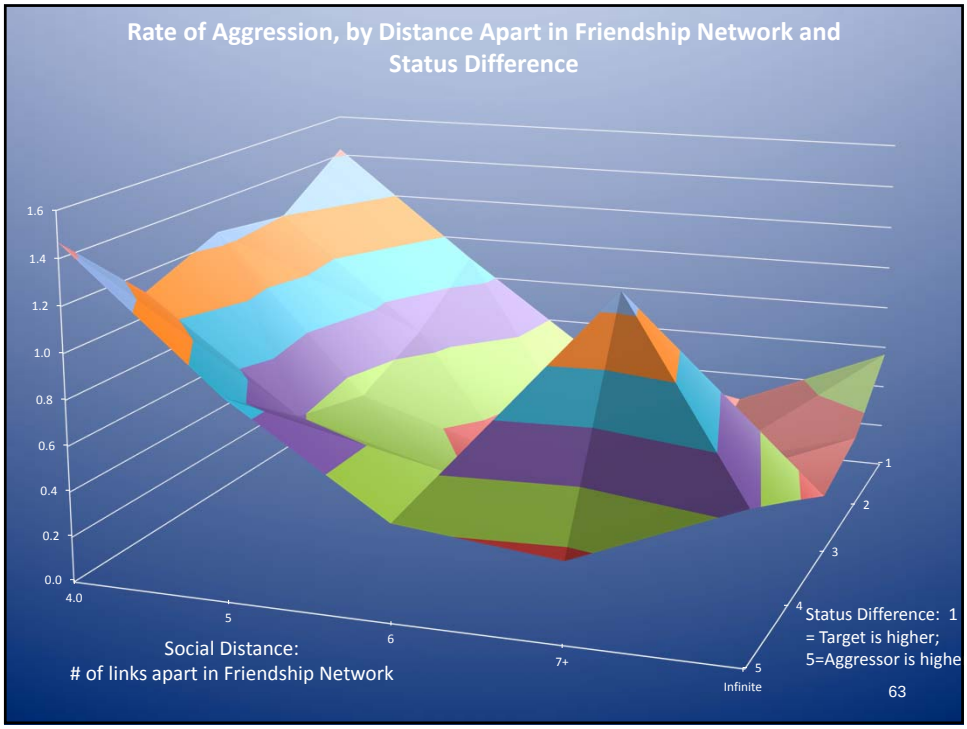
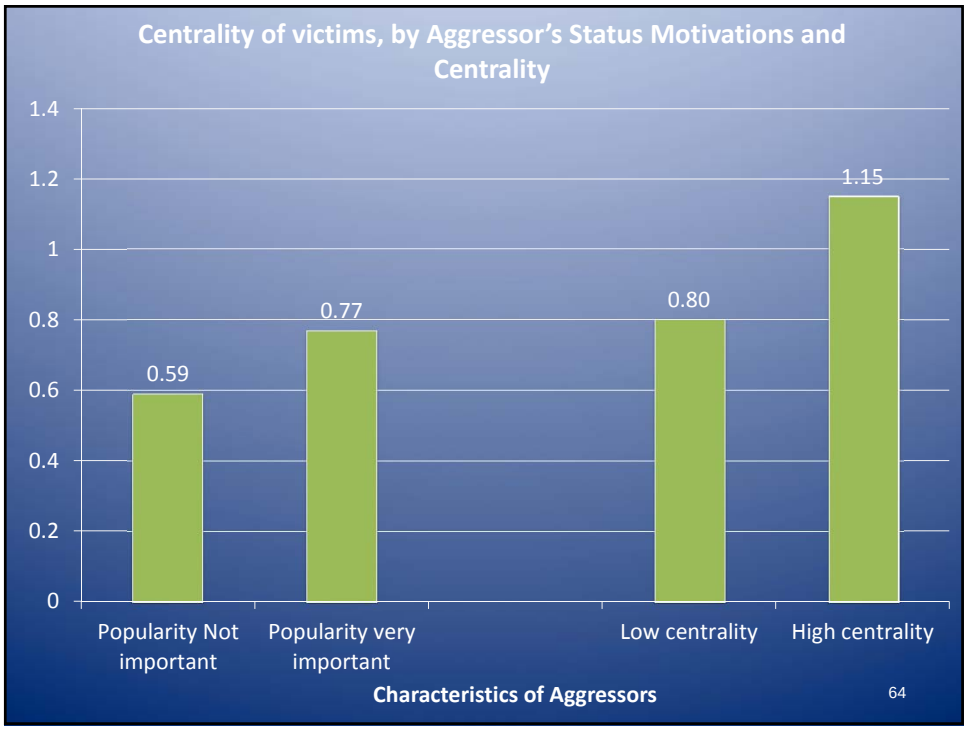

Aggression Rate, by Sender and Receiver Betweeness
0.40
0.35
0.30
0.25
0.20
0.15
0.10
0.05
0.00
0
2
Sender Betweeness
0
2
Receiver Betweenness
59


Aggression Rate, by Sender and Receiver Betweeness
0.40
0.35
0.30
0.25
0.20
0.15
0.10
0.05
0.00
0
2
Sender Betweeness
0
2
Receiver Betweenness
60


Rate of Aggression, by Distance Apart in Friendship Network and Status Difference
25
20
15
10
5
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7+
Infinite
5
4
3
2
1
20-25
15-20
10-15
5-10
0-5
Social Distance
(# of links apart in
friendship network)
Status Difference: 1= Target is higher; 5=attacker is higher
61


Rate of Aggression, by Distance Apart in Friendship Network and Status Difference
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
2
3
4
5
6
7+
Infinite
5
4
3
2
1
7-8
6-7
5-6
4-5
3-4
2-3
1-2
0-1
Social Distance:
# of links apart in
Friendship Network
Status Difference: 1 = Target is higher; 5=Aggressor is higher
62


Rate of Aggression, by Distance Apart in Friendship Network and Status Difference
1.6
1.4
1.2
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
4.0
5
6
7+
Infinite
Social Distance:
# of links apart in Friendship Network
1
2
3
4
5
Status Difference: 1 = Target is higher; 5=Aggressor is highe
63


Centrality of victims, by Aggressor's Status Motivations and Centrality
1.4
1.2
1
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0
0.59
0.77
0.80
1.15
Popularity Not important
Popularity very important
Low centrality
High centrality
Characteristics of Aggressors
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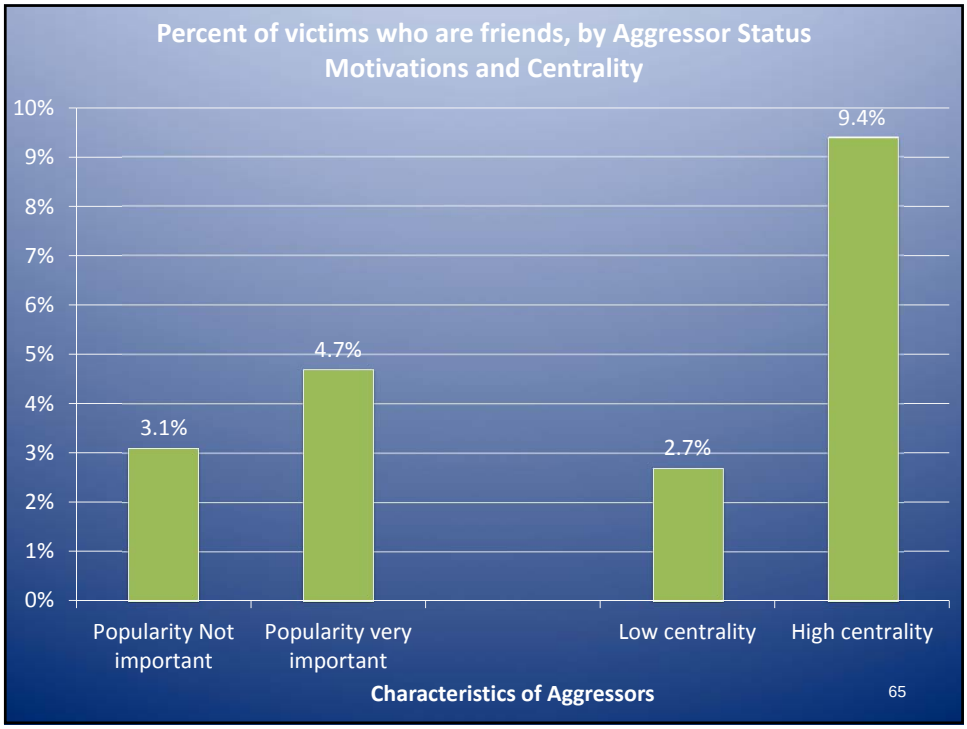
Percent of victims who are friends, by Aggressor Status Motivations and Centrality
10%
9%
8%
7%
6%
5%
4%
3%
2%
1%
0%
3.1%
4.7%
2.7%
9.4%
Popularity Not important
Popularity very important
Low centrality
High centrality
Characteristics of Aggressors
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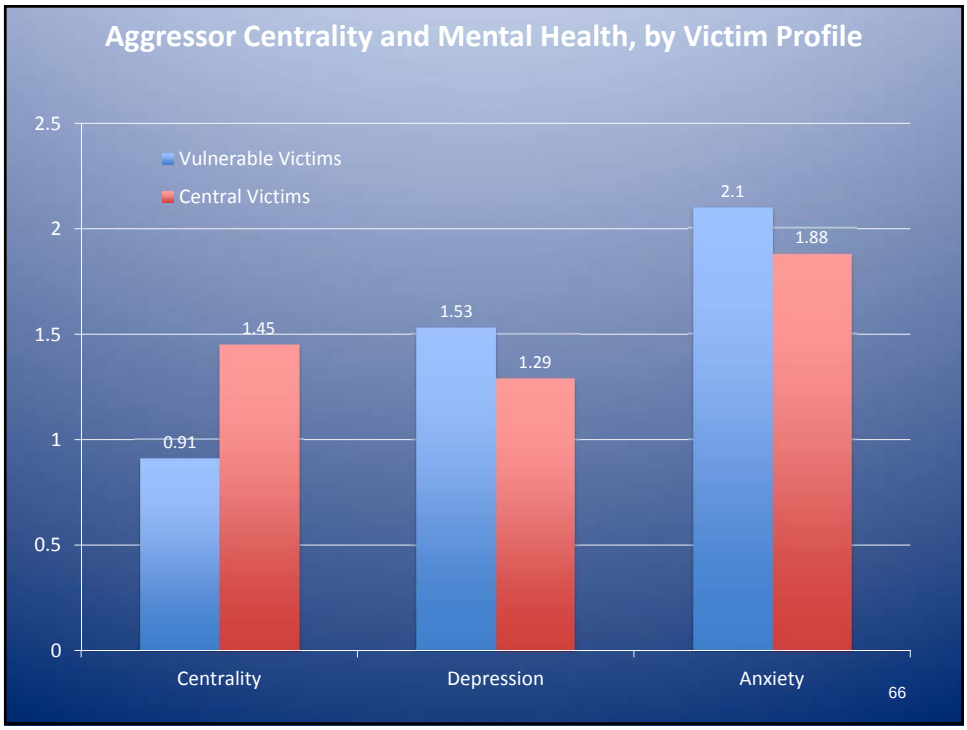
Aggressor Centrality and Mental Health, by Victim Profile
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0
Vulnerable Victims
Central Victims
0.91
1.45
1.53
1.29
2.1
1.88
Centrality
Depression
Anxiety
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CONCLUSIONS

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Conclusions

- Evidence of both:
  - normative targeting of vulnerable victims
  - Instrumental targeting of high status rivals
- Instrumental aggression appears to be more prevalent
- High status and status-motivated aggressors more likely to target:
  - high status schoolmates
  - their friends
- Those who target vulnerable victims are:
  - Lower status (but higher than their victims)
  - More anxious and depressed
  - Less likely to target within their friendship group

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Questions?

Additional Resources

- Building Capacity to Reduce Bullying- IOM Workshop Summary
- StopBullying.gov website
- StopBullying.gov Blog
- CSN Bullying Prevention Resource Guide

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Thank You!

Please complete this brief evaluation
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LFM3BYP

Contact Information

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