Title: Identifying Currently Existing Self-Report Bullying Questionnaires to Inform the Development of a Bullying Assessment for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Authors: Cynde Katherine Josol, Rachel Wellings, Marisa H. Fisher (Michigan State University)

Introduction: Compared to the estimated national prevalence rate of 10.6% of students in the general population, nearly half (46.3%) of students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are victims of bullying (Sterzing et al., 2013). Research on bullying of students with ASD often relies on reports from other informants, such as parents and teachers, without accounting for the perspective of the individual with ASD. More recent research suggests, however, that other-informant reports may not fully capture the bullying experience (Fisher & Taylor, 2016). Further, of those studies that included self-report from students with ASD, most assessed bullying through questionnaires developed and validated for students without disabilities. The use of assessments that were not developed for individuals with disabilities may result in mischaracterizing the bullying experience of students with ASD. In order to adapt or develop a self-report questionnaire to meet the needs of students with ASD, the current study was conducted to identify those self-report bullying measures most often used with middle school students without disabilities to determine which of these measures should be adapted for individuals with ASD.

Method: A systematic electronic search of seven databases without any year restrictions (e.g., ERIC, PsycArticles, Sociological Abstracts, CINHAL Plus with Full, Education Full Text, PsycInfo, and Social Sciences Citation Index) was conducted to identify all studies that measured bullying victimization of middle school students through a self-report questionnaire. Studies were identified with the following group of search terms: bull* OR victim* OR peer* relation* OR violen* OR harass* AND middle school OR adolesc* AND self-report AND questionnaire OR survey OR tool*. This electronic search was last updated on September 20, 2017. Inclusion of relevant articles were determined by coders through a 3-step process based on a sequential examination of the title, abstract, and full text as suggested by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Statement. Inclusion criteria included: 1) assessed bully victimization; 2) included middle school students, adolescents, or youth ages 10-15; 3) used a self-report questionnaire to assess bullying; and 4) written in English.

Results: This search resulted in 4054 articles deemed fit for title and abstract screening, of which 433 articles were screened into the full-text eligibility review. Of these 433 articles, 220 have been coded thus far and 110 fit the final inclusion criteria. Current data indicate the most frequently used questionnaires were author created (n = 28), followed by the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (n = 24). The number of items used to assess bully victimization ranged from 1-80 items (m = 15.3). The majority of measures (n = 82) assessed the frequency of bullying (e.g., how often did it occur). The most frequently assessed timeframe was bullying within the past 2-3 months or during the school semester (26 articles) and bullying within a 1-month period (21 articles). Most articles (n = 45) only reported on bullying in general without specifying types. Only three studies included participants with ASD.

Discussion: These results highlight the variety of ways researchers have used to measure the experience of bullying victimization among middle school students without disabilities. Given the inconsistent use of measurement (e.g., different questionnaires, different time frames, different forms of bullying), it is difficult to determine the most promising measure to use or adapt for individuals with ASD. Yet, it is vitally important to understand how best to assess bullying among individuals who may have difficulty disclosing or communicating their experiences, namely students with ASD. As such, the next step of this project will work with a group of experts to identify a promising bullying questionnaire, adapt the questionnaire and pilot it with middle school students with ASD. These results will be compared to reports from teachers and peers of youth with ASD.

References: