Bullying, Suicidality, and Youth Homelessness: The Role of Parent Support

Kathleen McCallops, MS
Ann M. Aviles, PhD
Overview

1. Introduction
2. Method
3. Results
4. Discussion
5. Limitations and Future Directions
6. Implications and Conclusion
Introduction
Exploring the Youth Risk Behavior Survey

- Administered by The Center for Drug and Health Studies (CDHS) at University of Delaware
- Collaborated with faculty, graduate students, and center staff
- YRBS provides valuable information about the specific living conditions of youth experiencing housing instability
- YRBS enables researchers to examine in-school and out-of-school related factors in relationship to housing status
- Delaware was 1 of 9 states to collect information on unstably housed students in 2015 and 1 of 17 states in 2017 (SchoolHouse Connection, 2019)
Introduction

Limited research examining the relationship between youth homelessness, bullying, and suicidality, and the role of parent support
Conceptual Model

Relationship between homelessness and bullying
Homelessness and Bullying

- Youth experiencing homelessness were more likely to experience peer victimization, which included a measure of bullying.

Low-Income Youth

- More likely to be exposed to bullying and violence at school.
- More likely to identify with a bullying culture, and believed other students would join in if they were being bullied and teachers would not stop the bullying if they knew it was happening.
- More victimization and more depressed in young adulthood.
Conceptual Model

Relationship between bullying and suicidality
Bullying and Suicidality

Higher rates of suicide ideation and suicide attempts than non-bullied peers
Conceptual Model

Relationship between homelessness and suicidality
Homelessness and Suicidality

Research has consistently reported higher levels of suicide among youth experiencing homelessness.
Homelessness and Suicidality

Percent of High School Students Who Attempted Suicide, by Housing Status and Geography
2015

- **Housed**
- **Homeless**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Housed</th>
<th>Homeless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IL</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYC</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- N=32,694
- N=425,941
- N=216,330
- N=78,059
- N=4,032
- N=24,406
- N=127,964
- N=15,689
- N=19,711

U N I V E R S I T Y  O F  D E L A W A R E
Conceptual Model

The role of parent support
Parent Support

Parent support can mitigate the negative mental health effects of being bullied and experiencing homelessness.
Theoretical Framework: Buffering Hypothesis

“The hypothesis states that psychosocial stress will have deleterious effects on the health and well-being of those with little or no social support, while these effects will be lessened or eliminated for those with stronger support systems” (Cohen & McKay, 1984, p. 253).
Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between homelessness, bullying (traditional and cyberbullying), and suicidality, and to determine whether parent support moderates these associations by analyzing the 2015 Delaware High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).
Guiding Research Questions

1. Does bullying mediate the relationship between experiencing homelessness and suicidality?

2. Does parent support moderate the relationship between bullying and suicidality?

3. Does parent support moderate the relationship between experiencing homelessness and suicidality?
Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. Bullying would mediate the relationship between experiencing homelessness and mental health outcomes. Youth experiencing homelessness would be bullied more and in turn have an increased risk of suicidality.

2. Parent support would moderate the association between bullying and mental health outcomes. For youth experiencing homelessness with high levels of parent support, bullying would not be associated with an increased risk of suicidality.

3. Parent support would moderate the association between homelessness and mental health outcomes. Youth experiencing homelessness who have high levels of parent support would not have an increased risk of suicidality.
Conceptual Model

Bullying as a Mediator and Parent Support as a Moderator
Method
Sample

- Secondary data was obtained from the Center for Drug and Health Studies

- 2,433 youth enrolled in grades 9-12 in Delaware Public Schools who completed the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

- Participants were recruited by schools in Delaware

- Parental consent was obtained prior to youth participating in the survey
Measure: YRBS

- YRBS was created by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 1991

- The YRBS is administered to middle and high school students, grades 6-12, and has been conducted biannually since its development

- The purpose of the YRBS is to:
  1) “Describe the prevalence of health-risk behaviors among youths,
  2) Assess trends in health-risk behaviors over time, and
  3) Evaluate and improve health related policies and programs”

(Brener et al., 2013, p. 2).
Measure: YRBS

- The survey is anonymous and does not collect any identifying information.
- For those consenting participants, they were asked to fill out the 150-item questionnaire during school in the spring of 2015.
- The schools follow procedures outlined by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Research indicates that adolescents answer the YRBS accurately and the survey has demonstrated adequate levels of test-retest reliability.
- Secondary data analysis was approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board.
Measure: Demographics

- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Current Grade Level
- Race/Ethnicity
- Parent Serving Active Duty in the Military
- Parent Incarceration
Coding: Demographics

- **Gender** → 0 = female, 1 = male

- **Sexual Orientation** → 0 = heterosexual, 1 = gay or lesbian, bisexual, or not sure

- **Current Grade Level** → 9 = 9th, 10 = 10th, 11 = 11th, 12 = 12th

- **Race/Ethnicity** → dummy coded: Black, White, Hispanic/Latino, and Multi/Other

- **Parent Serving Active Duty in the Military** → 0 = parent(s) not active duty, 1 = parent(s) active duty

- **Parent Incarceration** → 0 = parent(s) not incarcerated, 1 = parent(s) incarcerated
Measure: Housing Status

1 Question

Question:

12. Where do you typically sleep at night?

- At home with your parent(s) or guardian(s)
- At a friend’s or relative’s home with your parent(s) or guardian(s)
- At a friend’s or relative’s home without your parent(s) or guardian(s)
- Somewhere else (such as a shelter, transitional housing, public place, hotel, car) with your parent(s) or guardian(s)
- Somewhere else (such as a shelter, group home, foster care home, public place, car, hotel) without your parent(s) or guardian(s)
Coding: Housing Status

Dichotomous variable based on McKinney-Vento’s definition:

0 = not experiencing homelessness
  ❖ “At home with your parent(s) or guardian(s)”

1 = experiencing homelessness
  ❖ “At a friend’s or relative’s home with your parent(s) or guardian(s)”
  ❖ “At a friend’s or relative’s home without your parent(s) or guardian(s)”
  ❖ “Somewhere else (such as a shelter, transitional housing, public place, hotel, car) with your parent(s) or guardian(s)”
  ❖ “Somewhere else (such as a shelter, group home, foster care home, public place, car, hotel) without your parent(s) or guardian(s)”
Measure: Bullying

2 Questions

Dichotomous response either “Yes” or “No”

Questions:

Bullying is when 1 or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when 2 students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way.

39. During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied on school property?

40. During the past 12 months, have you ever been electronically bullied? (Count being bullied through email, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites or texting.)
Coding: Bullying

Composite variable:

0 = not bullied

1 = bullied in-person or online

2 = bullied in-person and online
Measure: Suicidality

4 Questions

Dichotomous response either “Yes” or “No”

Questions:

45. During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for **two weeks or more in a row** that you stopped doing some usual activities?

46. During the past 12 months, did you ever **seriously** consider attempting suicide?

47. During the past 12 months, did you make a **plan** about how you would attempt suicide?

49. **If you attempted suicide** during the past 12 months, did you attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?
Measure: Suicidality

1 Question

0 times to 6 or more times

Question:

48. During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?

- 0 times
- 1 time
- 2 or 3 times
- 4 or 5 times
- 6 or more times
Categorical variable:

0 = no feelings of sadness or hopelessness

1 = feelings of sadness or hopelessness

2 = seriously considered attempting suicide

3 = planned to attempt suicide

4 = suicide attempt
## Measure: Parent Support

### 8 Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Never or Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Always or Almost Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The following 8 questions ask about your relationship with your parent(s).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140. How often do you get along well with your parent(s)?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141. How often do your parent(s) spend time with you doing something fun?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142. My parents(s) show me they are proud of me:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143. My parent(s) take an interest in me:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144. My parent(s) listen to me when I talk to them:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145. I can count on my parent(s) to be there when I need them:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146. My parent(s) and I talk about what really matters:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147. I am comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings with my parent(s):</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coding: Parent Support

Composite variable:

0 (Never or Almost Never) to 2 (Always or Almost Always)

Responses range from 0-16
Quantitative Analyses

1. Descriptive Analyses
   - Results stratified among youth who were experiencing homelessness and youth who were not homeless

2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

3. Hayes’s PROCESS tool to test for mediation and moderation - Model 15
Results
Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample by Residential Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Homeless (n = 64)</th>
<th>Stably Housed (n = 2,049)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30 (47%)</td>
<td>1,093 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34 (53%)</td>
<td>956 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>16 (25%)</td>
<td>549 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
<td>471 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>21 (33%)</td>
<td>785 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
<td>244 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>29 (45%)</td>
<td>1,046 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
<td>458 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
<td>309 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10 (16%)</td>
<td>239 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sample sizes may vary due to missing data and youth identifying with more than one race/ethnicity.
Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample by Residential Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Homeless (n = 64)</th>
<th>Stably Housed (n = 2,049)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>46 (72%)</td>
<td>1,833 (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>18 (28%)</td>
<td>216 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Active Duty Military</td>
<td>17 (27%)</td>
<td>213 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Active Duty</td>
<td>47 (73%)</td>
<td>1,836 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incarcerated</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Incarcerated</td>
<td>40 (63%)</td>
<td>484 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Incarcerated</td>
<td>24 (37%)</td>
<td>1,565 (76%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sample sizes may vary due to missing data and youth identifying with more than one race/ethnicity.
Table 2. Rotated Pattern Matrix for the Parent Support Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you get along well with your parent(s)?</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do your parent(s) spend time with you doing something fun?</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parent(s) show me they are proud of me:</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parent(s) take an interest in me:</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parent(s) listen to me when I talk to them:</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can count on my parent(s) to be there when I need them:</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parent(s) and I talk about what really matters:</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings with my parent(s):</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalue                                                                 | 4.52      |
% of var.                                                                  | 56.45     |
cum. % of var.                                                            | 56.45     |

*Note.* All factor loadings are greater than .63, indicating ‘very good’ loadings, according to Comrey and Lee (1992). Questions were measured on a Likert scale from 0 (never or almost never) to 2 (always or almost always).
Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis Predicting Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B (SE)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing Homelessness</td>
<td>0.29 (0.07)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender(^a)</td>
<td>-0.11 (0.02)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.01)</td>
<td>.034*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation(^b)</td>
<td>0.19 (0.04)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>-0.07 (0.04)</td>
<td>.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi/Other(^c)</td>
<td>-0.07 (0.04)</td>
<td>.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.16 (0.03)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental incarceration</td>
<td>0.13 (0.03)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent in active duty military</td>
<td>0.01 (0.04)</td>
<td>.969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. \(^a\)0 = female and 1 = male. \(^b\)0 = heterosexual and 1 = gay or lesbian, bisexual, or not sure. \(^c\) = Asian, American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Multiracial.*
## Table 4. Results of Regression Analysis Predicting Suicidality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B (SE)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing Homelessness</td>
<td>0.30 (0.24)</td>
<td>.221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>0.70 (0.10)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support</td>
<td>-0.07 (0.01)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support*Bullying</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.01)</td>
<td>.031**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support*Homelessness</td>
<td>0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender^a</td>
<td>-0.26 (0.06)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.02)</td>
<td>.480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation^b</td>
<td>0.64 (0.07)</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>0.10 (0.07)</td>
<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi/Other^c</td>
<td>0.11 (0.07)</td>
<td>.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.06)</td>
<td>.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental incarceration</td>
<td>0.14 (0.06)</td>
<td>.012*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent in active duty military</td>
<td>0.03 (0.07)</td>
<td>.677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All coefficients rounded to second decimal position for convenient presentation.

^a*Gender was scored as 0 = female and 1 = male. ^b*Sexual orientation was scored as 0 = heterosexual and 1 = gay or lesbian, bisexual, or not sure.
Table 5. Indirect Effect of Homelessness on Suicidality through Bullying at Different Levels of Parent Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Parent Support</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>$B$ (SE)</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>0.16 (0.06)</td>
<td>[0.06, 0.28]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>0.13 (0.05)</td>
<td>[0.05, 0.23]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>0.12 (0.04)</td>
<td>[0.04, 0.21]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* CI = confidence interval. All coefficients rounded to second decimal position for convenient presentation.

The strength of the association between homelessness and suicidality via the mediator of bullying became weaker at higher levels of parent support, but it did not become non-significant.
**Conceptual Model**

Bullying as a Mediator and Parent Support as a Moderator

The bold lines are significant at $p < .05$ and the dotted lines are not significant at $p > .05$.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
Discussion
First, it was hypothesized that bullying would mediate the relationship between experiencing homelessness and mental health outcomes. Youth experiencing homelessness would be bullied more and in turn have an increased risk of suicidality.
Second, it was hypothesized that parent support would moderate the association between bullying and mental health outcomes. For youth experiencing homelessness with high levels of parent support, bullying would not be associated with an increased risk of suicidality.
Hypothesis 3 - Not Supported

Finally, it was hypothesized that parent support would moderate the association between homelessness and mental health outcomes. Youth experiencing homelessness who have high levels of parent support would not have an increased risk of suicidality.
Limitations and Future Directions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Study</th>
<th>Future Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❖ Cross-sectional data</td>
<td>❖ Longitudinal data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Time frame for homelessness question</td>
<td>❖ Recommendations to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Where do you typically sleep?”</td>
<td>CDC about the homelessness and bullying questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Bullying variable does not include frequency or</td>
<td>❖ Replicate study in large states/using other data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>severity</td>
<td>with larger sample sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Small sample size</td>
<td>❖ Utilize data from multiple people (i.e., teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Self-report measures</td>
<td>and parents)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implications and Conclusion
Implications and Conclusions

❖ School personnel and homeless liaisons
  ➢ Schools as points-of-contact to minimize the effects of homelessness, bullying, and suicide
  ➢ Mental health screenings and meet regularly with school personnel
  ➢ Opportunities to foster strong school-family partnerships

❖ Family/single shelters
  ➢ Opportunities for parents to learn and discuss the significance of supportive parent-child relationships, as well as parents identifying and reflecting on their own type of parent-child relationship
  ➢ Spend time together to strengthen child-parent relationships

❖ Youth shelters
  ➢ Mental health screenings and support from professionals to become aware of and help improve well-being
  ➢ Interpersonal tools and skills (i.e. social-emotional and conflict resolution) to positively navigate relationships
Research and Possibilities


- Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness (ICPH, 2017), More than a Place to Sleep: Understanding the Health and Well-Being of Homeless High School Students.

- Current States that include a housing status question on the YRBS
  - AK, AR, CA, CO, DE, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, ME, MT, NH, NC, PA, VA, WI.

- What additional factors should researchers be examining in relationship to housing status?

- How might this information inform our work in schools and communities?
Thank you!
Questions?

Contact Information

Kathleen McCallops: kamcca@udel.edu
Ann M. Aviles: amaviles@udel.edu
References


References


References


References


Defining Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

- Subtitle B – Education for Homeless Children and Youth
- All children and youth should have equal access to public education, regardless of residential status
Defining Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Act classifies children and youth as homeless if they lack a regular and adequate residence at night, which includes:

(1) children and youth who are living with another person or family because of economic hardship, loss of housing, or similar reasons

(2) children and youth who consider their nighttime residence to be that of a public or private space that is not designated for sleeping

(3) children and youth who are living in parks, cars, abandoned homes, or similar locations