Forgiveness, reconciliation and shame:
Three key variables in reducing school bullying

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Bullying is

- a repetitive aggressive act (either physical or non-physical)
- the dominance of the powerful(s) over the powerless(s) who is or are not capable of retaliating
- carried out without provocation
What does past research tell us?

Four main research traditions:

- Nature and prevalence
- Family variables
- School variables
- Individual characteristics

(Sources: Ahmed, 2001; Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999; Rigby & Cox, 1996; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001; Slee, 1993)
What is missing from past research?

• A restorative justice perspective
• Forgiveness and reconciliation
• Emotions (e.g., shame / guilt)
• Non-western cultural context
Hypothesis 1
Forgiveness reduces bullying behavior

Hypothesis 2
Reconciliation reduces bullying behavior
Shame and its management

SHAME ACKNOWLEDGMENT (adaptive)
- feeling shame
- taking responsibility
- making amends

SHAME DISPLACEMENT (non-adaptive)
- blaming others
- hitting out at others
- feeling retaliatory anger
Hypothesis 3
Shame acknowledgment reduces bullying

Hypothesis 4
Shame displacement triggers bullying
Mediation hypothesis
(via shame management variables)

Figure 1. A hypothesized model of forgiveness, reconciliation, shame management and bullying (Model A)
An alternative Mediational hypothesis
(via forgiveness and reconciliation)

Figure 2. An alternative hypothesized model of shame management, forgiveness, reconciliation and bullying (Model B)
Methodology

- Data collected through the “Life at School Survey” (Bangladesh, South Korea, and Australia)
- 1875 students from Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Recruited from 9 co-educational schools, both public and private
- Female - 60%
- average school grade – 8.28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Correlation coefficients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>-.38***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td>-.67***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame acknowledgment</td>
<td>-.20***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame displacement</td>
<td>.27***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .001
Figure 3. Results of a path analysis (Model A)

- Forgiveness
- Shame acknowledgment
- Shame displacement
- Reconciliation
- Bullying

Path coefficients:
- Forgiveness → Shame acknowledgment: -0.14
- Shame acknowledgment → Shame displacement: 0.18
- Shame displacement → Bullying: 0.09
- Reconciliation → Bullying: 0.09
- Reconciliation → Shame acknowledgment: -0.25
- Reconciliation → Shame displacement: -0.58
Figure 4. Results of a path analysis (Model B)
Table 2. A comparison between two path models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goodness-of-fit indices</th>
<th>Model A</th>
<th>Model B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square ($\chi^2$)</td>
<td>1.99 (df = 2; p &lt; .37)</td>
<td>.14 (df = 1; p &lt; .71)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)</td>
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<td>.998</td>
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<td>CFI (Comparative Fit Index)</td>
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<td>TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIC (Akaike’s Informational Criterion)</td>
<td>27.98</td>
<td>28.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAIC (Consistent Akaike’s Informational Criterion)</td>
<td>106.63</td>
<td>112.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECVI (Expected Cross-Validation Index)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of results

• Forgiveness reduces bullying
• Reconciliation reduces bullying
• Shame acknowledgment reduces bullying
• Shame displacement triggers bullying