Defenders, Bullies, and Victims | Blue Plate Research

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Defenders, bullies, and victims

The social ecology of adolescence

Everyone wants to be part of a community. This is especially true for young people as they are discovering who they are and how they fit in the world. Unfortunately, many children face bullying and other acts of victimization. But what causes bullying? How can defenders reduce its frequency? Is bullying preventable?

Those are the questions being asked by Dr. Diana Meter, a researcher in Utah State University's Human Development and Family Studies department, who explores what factors predict when kids will stand up for each other and how we can encourage more defenders. Dr. Meter will share some of her findings at the next USU Blue Plate Research, held in person for the first time from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on January 13, 2022 at Gallivan Hall in downtown Salt Lake City. Lunch will be provided for attendees.

This research was also featured on a recent episode of the Instead podcast, produced by the Utah State University Office of Research, and can be found on Apple, Google, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts. Presented by Utah State University and sponsored by Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Utah, Blue Plate Research is an event series that is focused on sharing easy-to-understand well-being research with Utah health advocates, statewide stakeholders, and the public.

Wednesday, June 7 at 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Gallivan Hall, Salt Lake City

Featured Presenter

Dr. Diana Meter is an assistant professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education at Utah State University. On her episode of the Instead podcast, she discussed her research on the psychology of bullies, the impact on victims, and the influence defenders can have.

Meter points out that most kids are bullied about things that are outside their control, like body shape, gender, sexual orientation, etc. When asked about the oft repeated saying that bullying builds character, she says, “Through that, somebody may be able to learn skills and adapt to their situation, but at what cost?” Meter further shows how victimization can lead to depression, anxiety, and acting out.

In contrast to aggressors, Meter’s latest research has focused on a group called “defenders” who stand up for victimized students. Though defenders anecdotally had
a positive impact on their peers, Meter found a lack of research on the subject and focused her studies on that topic.
Visit Dr. Meter's faculty profile to learn more about her research and interests.