

Rationale for Inclusion/Exclusion of Risk and Protective Factor Items in the Development of the Pride Surveys Risk and Protective Factor Survey

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Substantial evidence demonstrates that a variety of adolescent problem behaviors are predicted by a large number of risk and protective factors (RPFs; Pollard, Hawkins & Arthur, 1999; Arthur, Hawkins, Pollard, Catalano & Bagliani, 2002). Depending upon how the risk and protective factor domains are “divided up” there are roughly thirty to thirty-five RPFs which are both theoretically meaningful and predictive of problem behaviors. Naturally enough, when it is possible, best epidemiological practice argues for a systematic survey all RPFs to both assess and intervene with adolescent problem behaviors.

However, in non-research settings, there are a number of considerations that come into play when deciding whether all known RPFs should be surveyed, or whether coverage should be more selective. In fact, there are several reasons why a complete survey of all RPFs may not be either feasible or optimal, and why specific RPFs may be dropped from the survey effort.

Length/Redundancy of the RPF: Schools are under pressure to do more, with less, and at the same time continually improve academic performance. They are increasingly resistant to non-instructional activities being imposed on them. If a school administrator perceives that a survey can’t be implemented within a single class period, they will scuttle the survey. Shortening the survey to the greatest extent possible makes school surveys administratively more practical. More importantly, a shorter survey is just easier to sell to schools. Some RPFs do not contribute enough unique information to the survey findings to justify their inclusion when survey time and/or space are at a premium. In addition, when an RPF is collecting information that is partially redundant with other RPFs, it’s need for inclusion in the survey is additionally reduced.

Political Considerations/Community Sensitivity: Some RPFs are capable of generating significant controversy. For example, *Family Conflict* is an important component in the etiology of adolescent problem behavior; however, it is one of the most politically sensitive RPFs to measure. On occasion an entire survey effort in a school district has been scuttled when local policy makers contemplated the political consequences of measuring items related to family conflict, or family issues in general. The optimal course may be to drop the controversial RPF in order to get the survey implemented. Getting most of what you want is better than getting nothing at all.

Limited Ability to Intervene: For some RPFs, there are no easily implemented prevention strategies, especially at a primary prevention level. For example, *Sensation Seeking* is primarily a physiologically driven phenomena that is not

amenable to intervention in school settings. This is not a risk factor that is likely to be addressed at the school or community level. Therefore, measuring the prevalence of this risk factor is not very useful to schools or communities.

The RPF has Limited Importance: Some RPFs are less critical in the etiology of problem behaviors than others. For example, in the Community domain, *Laws and Norms Favorable to Drug Use* is much more important a predictor than *Opportunities for Positive Involvement in the Community*. Both are known to predict adolescent problem behavior; *Opportunities for Positive Involvement* is just less important.

In the following table we document the specifics of why individual RPFs were eliminated from the Pride survey. The logic for the inclusion or elimination for each RPF is based upon the arguments made above.

Pollard, J., Hawkins, J. D., & Arthur, M. A. (1999). Risk and protection: Are both necessary to understand diverse behavioral outcomes in adolescence. *Social Work Research, 23, 3*, 145-158.

Arthur, M., Hawkins, J. D., Pollard, J. A., Catalano, R. F., & Baglioni, A. J. (2002). Measuring risk and protective factors for substance use, delinquency, and other adolescent problem behaviors: The Communities That Care Youth Survey. *Evaluation Review*.

| | Reason(s) for Inclusion/Exclusion | | | | | Comments |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| | Included (Yes/No) | Length/Redundancy | Political Sensitivity | Limited Ability to Intervene | Limited Importance | |
| Community Risk Factors | | | | | | |
| Low Neighborhood Attachment | NO | • | | | • | These protective factors are not well correlated with outcome behaviors of interest, although this is in large part because they are early in the causal chain of variables leading to negative behavioral outcomes. Also, much of their predictive utility is captured by other risk factors in this domain. |
| Community Disorganization | NO | • | | | • | |
| Transitions and Mobility | YES | | | | | These community domain risk factors collectively capture most of the impact of community-level factors on adolescent problem behaviors. |
| Perceived Availability of Drugs | YES | | | | | |
| Perceived Availability of Handguns | YES | | | | | |
| Laws and Norms Favorable to Drug Use | YES | | | | | |
| Community Protective Factors | | | | | | |
| Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement | NO | • | | | • | These protective factors are not well correlated with outcome behaviors of interest, although this is in large part because they are early in the causal chain of variables leading to negative behavioral outcomes. Also, much of their predictive utility is captured by other risk factors in this domain. |
| Rewards for Prosocial Involvement | NO | • | | | • | |
| Family Risk Factors | | | | | | |
| Family History of Antisocial Behavior | NO | | • | | | Controversial items. |
| Poor Family Management | YES | | | | | High predictive value, so this risk factor was included even in light of its potential controversial nature. |
| Family Conflict | NO | | • | | | Very controversial items. |
| Parental Attitudes Favorable Towards Drug Use | YES | | | | | High predictive value, so these risk factors were included even in light of their potential controversial nature. |
| Parental Attitudes Favorable to Antisocial Behavior | YES | | | | | |
| Family Protective Factors | | | | | | |
| Attachment | NO | | • | | | Controversial items. |
| Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement | NO | | • | | | Controversial items. |
| Rewards for Prosocial Involvement | NO | | • | | | Controversial items. |
| School Risk Factors | | | | | | |
| Academic Failure | YES | | | | | School -related RPFs are of high |

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|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low Commitment to School | YES | | | | | interest to school administrators. |
| School Protective Factors | | | | | | |
| Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement | YES | | | | | School -related RPFs are of high interest to school administrators. |
| Rewards for Prosocial Involvement | YES | | | | | |
| Peer-Individual Risk Factors | | | | | | |
| Rebelliousness | NO | | | • | • | Minimal practical ability to intervene directly with this RPF in typical school/community settings. |
| Gang Involvement | YES | | | | | High interest to communities. |
| Perceived Risk of Drug Use | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Early Initiation of Drug Use | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Early Initiation of Antisocial Behavior | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Favorable Attitudes Towards Drug Use | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Favorable Attitudes Towards Antisocial Behavior | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Sensation Seeking | NO | | | • | | Minimal practical ability to intervene directly with this RPF in typical school/community settings. |
| Rewards for Antisocial Involvement | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Friends' Use of Drugs | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Interaction with Antisocial Peers | YES | | | | | Highly predictive of problem behaviors. |
| Intentions to Use | NO | • | | | | This RPF, while recognized in the research literature, has significant overlap with other RPFs included in the Pride survey. |
| Peer-Individual Protective Factors | | | | | | |
| Interaction with Prosocial Peers | NO | • | | | • | This RPF, while recognized in the research literature, has significant overlap with other RPFs included in the Pride survey. |
| Belief in the Moral Order | NO | | • | • | • | Controversial topic, and one of the least predictive RPFs within the Peer-Individual domain. |
| Prosocial Involvement | NO | | | | • | These RPFs, while recognized in the research literature, have significant overlap with other RPFs included in the Pride survey. |
| Rewards for Prosocial Involvement | NO | | | | • | |
| Social Skills | NO | | | | • | The survey items needed for measurement of Social Skills are lengthy and expensive in terms of survey effort. |
| Religiosity | NO | | • | • | • | This RPF, for obvious reasons, has never been effectively used in any public school-based prevention program. It may be more useful in private school settings, but can be controversial. |
| Outcome Measures | | | | | | |

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|--------------------------------|-----|--|---|--|--|---|
| Depression | NO | | • | | | School administrators are often resistant to depression related items because of concerns about school responsibility in new area of social/mental health services. |
| High Substance Use Frequency | YES | | | | | Pride items included instead of CTC items. |
| Substance Use Frequency- | YES | | | | | Key outcome variable of interest. |
| Antisocial Behavior | YES | | | | | Key outcome variable of interest. |
| Antisocial Behavior Frequency- | YES | | | | | Key outcome variable of interest. |
| Additional Questions | | | | | | |
| Demographics | YES | | | | | Required for proper interpretation of survey results. |