

Earnshaw and Barnes Study Stigma-Based Bullying

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Assistant professors Valerie Earnshaw and Tia Barnes have collaborated on a paper reviewing stigma-based bullying interventions with scholars from institutions in Massachusetts and California, which is published in the *Developmental Review*. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention defines bullying as “unwanted aggressive behavior that involves a power imbalance, is repeated or is likely to be repeated, and may cause harm to the targeted youth.” Bullying, however, is not to be confused with discrimination. Discrimination is when someone is treated poorly due to an identity, characteristic, or other attribute. Although bullying and discrimination are very similar, there are several key differences that distinguish one from the other. Stigma-based bullying is representative of the overlap between the two.

Stigma-based bullying is when bullying happens because of stigma, such as when a young person is bullied because of their race, sexual orientation, gender, or other characteristics. Youth who are often the targets of this type of bullying tend to be members of minority groups, obese, or have disabilities. “I became interested in this because we’re realizing that being bullied due to a stigmatized characteristic or identity is really harmful,” said Earnshaw, who is a CEHD Dean’s Scholar and assistant professor in the human development and family sciences department at the University of Delaware. She continues on, saying she “started wondering what people were doing about [stigma-based bullying], and whether they are doing the right things about it.”

Through this collaborative research, Earnshaw and Barnes identified 22 research studies describing 21 interventions addressing stigma-based bullying. Their theory is that “stigma-based bullying is driven, in part, by distinct stigma related factors that are not necessarily involved in non-stigma based bullying (e.g., social dominance orientation, stereotypes, prejudice).” And so, interventions need to address these distinct factors in order to successfully combat stigma-based bullying. According to their findings, although these interventions are growing in number, they are unevenly distributed across various stigmas, geographic locations, and types of organizations; there is still much progress to be made. Earnshaw and Barnes have concluded that future interventions addressing stigma-based bullying should occur within multicomponent interventions, adopt interdisciplinary and theory based approaches, as well as include rigorous and systematic evaluations.

Assistant professors Valerie Earnshaw and Tia Barnes have published their paper in [Developmental Review](#). [Visit UDaily](#) to learn more about this research, and how it can be used to help stop bullying before it starts.