Taking *More Fun With Sisters and Brothers* Online: Broadening Impact

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Sibling Conflict is Stressful for children and parents

- Rates of sibling conflict among preschoolers can be alarmingly high: clocked at 3.5 per hour (Kramer, Perozynski, & Chung, 1999)
- Unmanaged conflicts predict poor sibling relationship quality (Kramer & Gottman, 1992)
- Emotionally challenging for parents (Ravindran, Engle, McElwain, & Kramer, 2015)
- Affects the perceived quality of family life (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006)
Evidence-based resources are sorely needed

- Most available resources are not theory-based, developmentally specific, or tested

- Evidence-based programs are difficult to access as many are offered only at the universities at which they were created
  - Several promising programs have recently emerged (e.g., Siblings Are Special, Feinberg et al., 2013)
More Fun with Sisters and Brothers Program

- Designed initially as a **child-based** initiative
- Evidence-based preventive intervention aimed at promoting positive sibling engagement among 4- to 8-year-old children
- Build competencies in 6 areas:
  - initiating social interaction
  - accepting and appropriately declining invitations to play
  - perspective-taking
  - identifying emotions
  - regulating intense emotions
  - managing conflict
- Intervention embedded in a fantasy that is attractive to children in this age group
Effectiveness of child-based MFWSB

- *The results of randomized control trials showed:*
  - Increased positive sibling relationship quality
    - Increased warmth, decreased agonism
      - Home observations and parental report (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008)
    - Increased CHILD emotion regulation (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008)
  - Increased PARENT emotion regulation (Ravindran et al., 2015)
Observed Positive Sibling Interaction Quality
Sibling Warmth (parent report)
Sibling Agonism (parent report)

PEPC-SRQ Agonism

Pre-test
Post-test

Agonism

Experimental
Control
Children’s Emotion Regulation (parent report of down regulation)
Online modality enables us to:

- Reach more and more diverse families
- Provide flexibility in terms of where, when and how participation occurs. (Just in time approaches)

While also presenting challenges:

- Intervention to be delivered to adults rather than children
- Parents must be prepared and incentivized to implement program procedures (as we intended)
  - How do we translate instructional language for parents, in a way that will make sense if it is delivered online
  - On-demand mechanisms to provide support to parents must be delivered
- How do we measure effectiveness when we lack control over program integrity?
How do we prepare parents to teach their children new skills when they may be part of the reason their children have difficulty getting along?

How will these factors affect program integrity and effectiveness?
Strategies for Addressing Challenges

- Translating content into terms that parents can understand, while also providing them with a language to use with their own children
- Teaching strategies
  - Exercises to promote assessment and reflection
  - Explanations of core concepts in parent-ese to promote understanding
  - Animated videos to demonstrate competencies
  - Scripts to provide specific language that parents can apply to interactions with children
- Methods to promote program integrity
  - Exercises to help parents become comfortable with new behaviors
  - Progress reports that ask parents to report on their own implementation of program components as well as their children’s reactions
Examples of Translating Technical Concepts to Terms Parents can Use

- **How to teach:**
  - Self-control
  - Perspective-taking
  - Identifying emotions
  - Emotion regulation
  - Parental differential treatment
  - Negative attributional biases
Study

- Online recruitment, assessment, intervention
- Randomized assignment to experimental (n = 60) and wait list (n = 40) control conditions
- Build online mechanisms of support
- What we have learned thus far
  - There is a hunger for this type of information and guidance
  - Initial reactions from parents
Future Directions

- How to fully take advantage of the potential the online world offers:
  - Social networking: Participants share experiences, build a virtual network of support
  - Go viral: With large samples, can test for the effects of more variables (e.g., geographic location, family size, etc.)
  - Instagram: Upload videos for "experts" review and support
  - Be the "Robot" in the living room: Real-time coaching from an expert to coach parents to manage conflict differently as it is occurring

- While we can offer help to more people in need, ethical, legal, and practical questions abound
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