

Perceptions of Bullying Victimization by Race In Southern Illinois

Mary Louise Cashel, Ph.D., Danielle Chambers, B.A.,
& Daryl Kroner, Ph.D.

Southern Illinois University



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Background

- Prior research on race and the prevalence of bullying has yielded conflicting findings.
 - Some studies suggest that racial/ethnic minorities are victimized at higher rates, especially Black or African-Americans (Esbensen & Carson, 2009; Peguero & Williams, 2013).
 - Others observed that specific ethnic minority groups were at lower risk than other ethnic minority groups (with opposing results):
 - Hispanic students (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Robers et al., 2012)
 - African-American students (Nansel et al, 2001; Spriggs et al., 2007)
 - Still other studies indicate that Caucasian or White/Non-Hispanic students are most at risk (Fisher et al., 2015)

Key Issues

- The demographic composition of the school may play a critical role.
 - Hanish and Guerra (2000) observed that Caucasian or White/Non-Hispanic students in the numerical minority were at greater risk for victimization than Caucasian students in the numerical majority at their schools.
 - Generally students face more race-based victimization if their ethnic group is in the numerical minority than other students (Fisher et al., 2015)
- The Imbalance of Power Hypothesis:
 - The power of a certain group in a school context is partially determined by the relative number of group members (Graham, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

- To evaluate perceptions of school climate and experiences of bullying among Black/African-American and White/Non-Hispanic students in rural Southern Illinois schools of varying size and racial demographic characteristics.
- To test the hypothesis that student racial groups with less representation at the school (lower enrollment numbers) would report more experiences of bullying than student groups with greater representation (higher enrollment numbers).

Participants

- Middle School [7th & 8th Grade] Students from 4 Schools
 - School A (n = 212) Small City, White = 37% Black = 63%
 - School B (n = 222) Town-Fringe, White = 78% Black = 22%
 - School c (n = 51) Rural-Distant, White = 24% Black = 76%
 - School d (n = 50) Rural-Distant, % White = 65%, Black = 35%
- Jr/Sr High School Students (7-12) from 2 Schools
 - School E (n = 104) Town-Distant, Black/African American (93%)
 - School F (n = 246) Rural-Distant, White(100 %)

Measure

- School Climate Survey (Ontario Ministry of Education)
- Derived Scales:
 - Perceptions of School **Climate** [17 items]
 - Perceptions of School **Safety** [9 items]
 - Direct Experiences of **Bullying** [10 items]
 - Observed Experiences of Bullying **Witness** [10 items]
 - Perpetration of Bullying **Perpetrate** [10 items]

Procedures

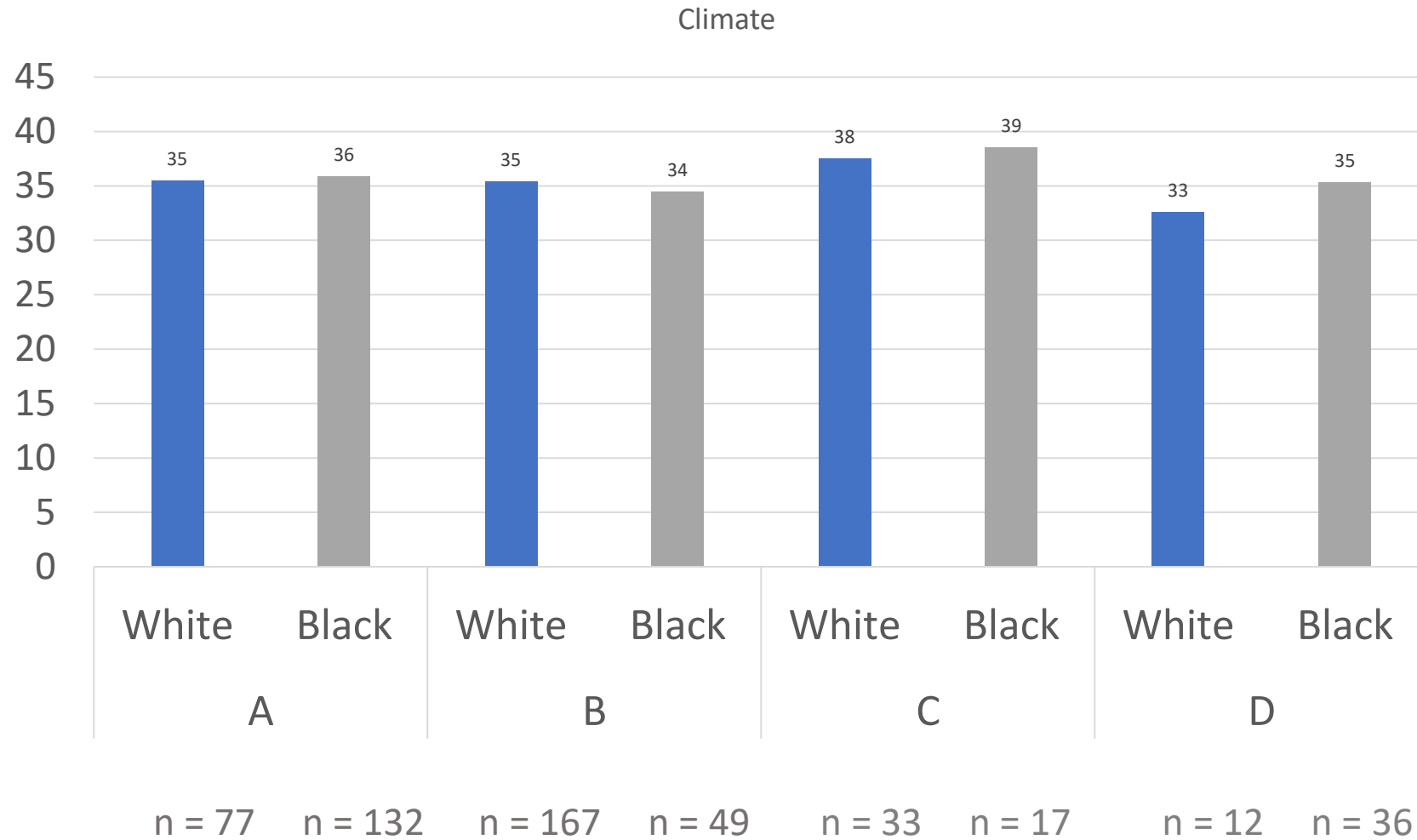
- Data collection for this presentation occurred March – May 2017
- Surveys were administered online using Qualtrics
- Students completed the surveys anonymously in classes at times/days designated by administrators.
- Parental consent and youth assent was obtained

Comparisons Across 4 Schools:

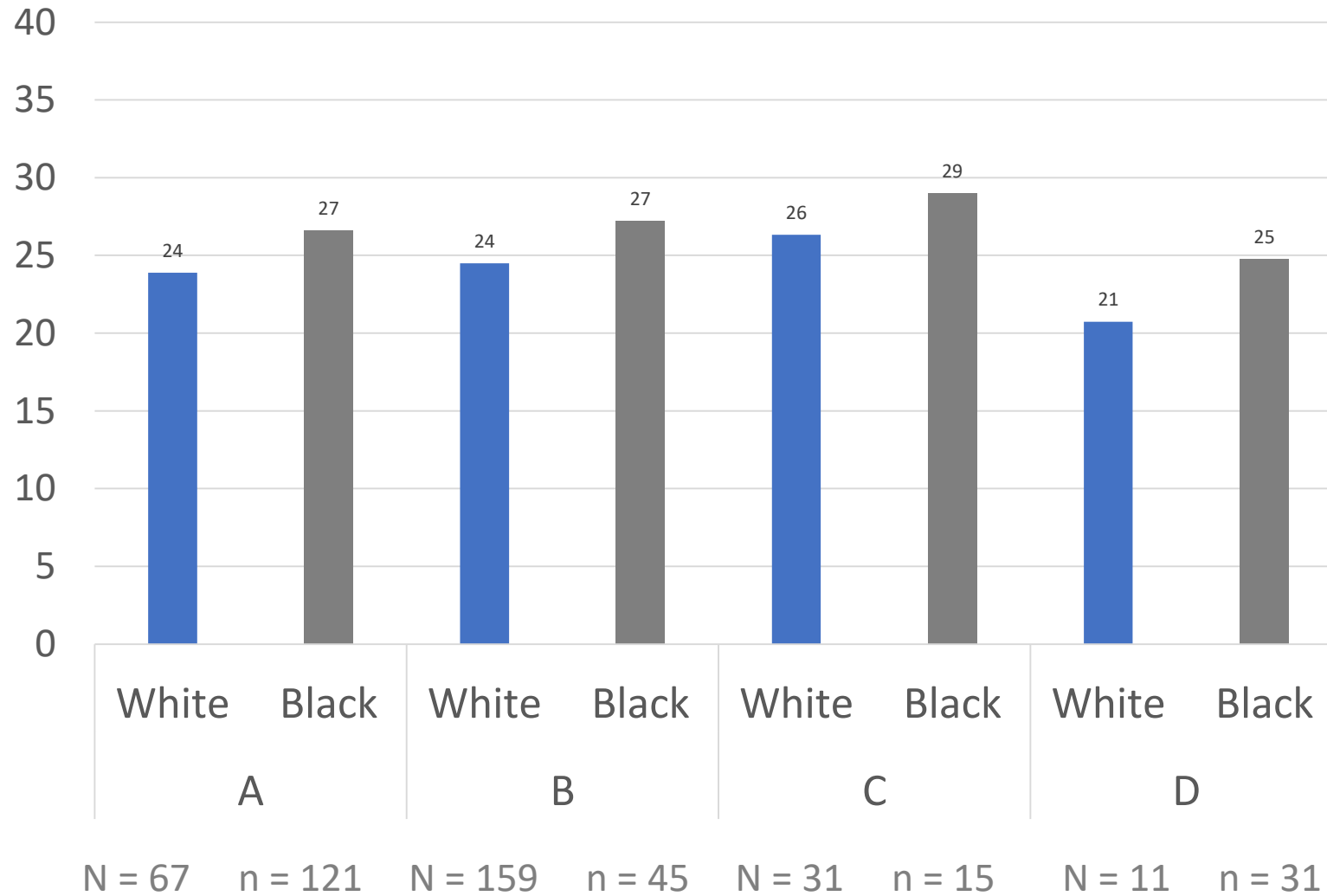
Large versus Small

More versus Less diversity

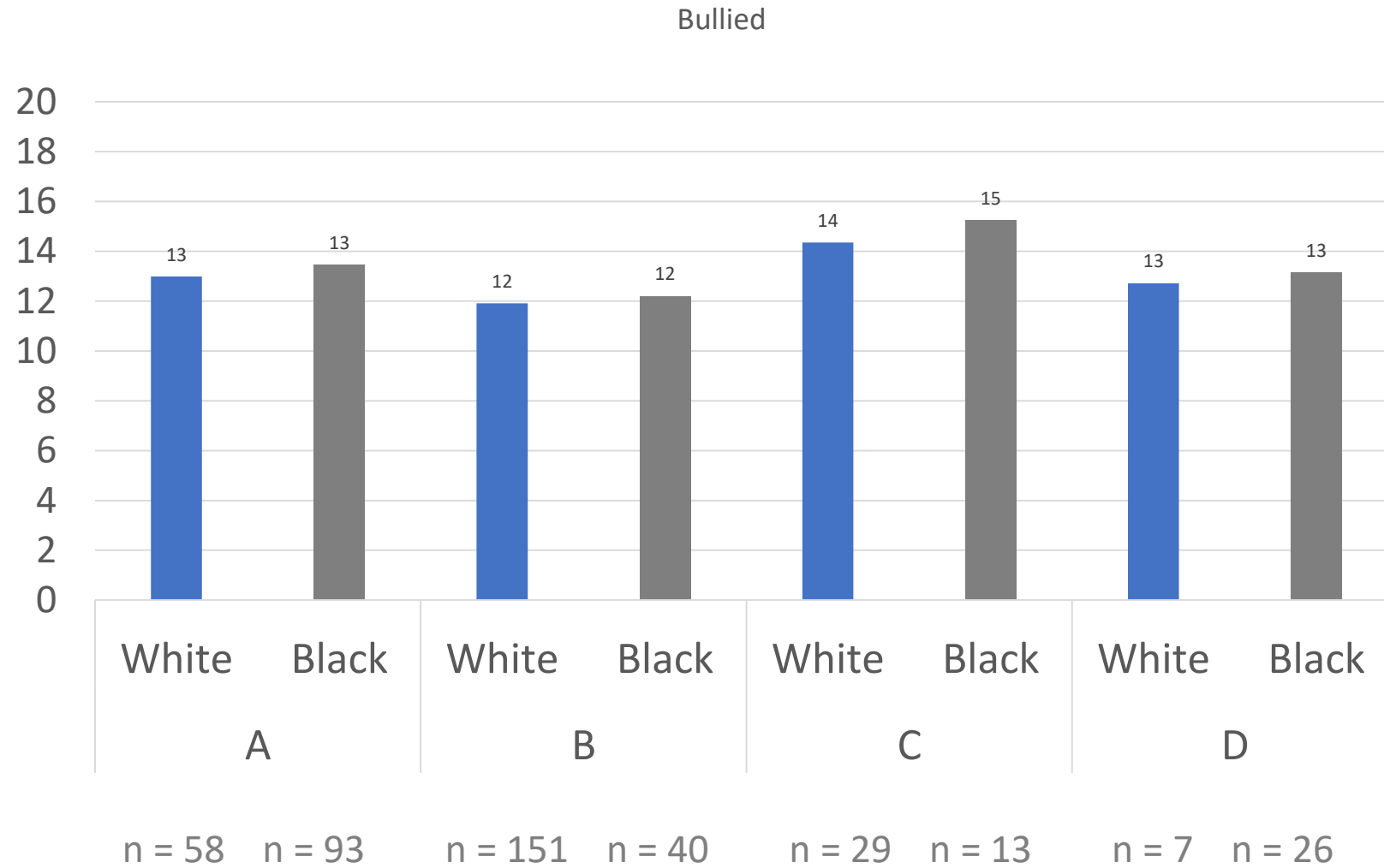
Means Scores by School & Race - Climate



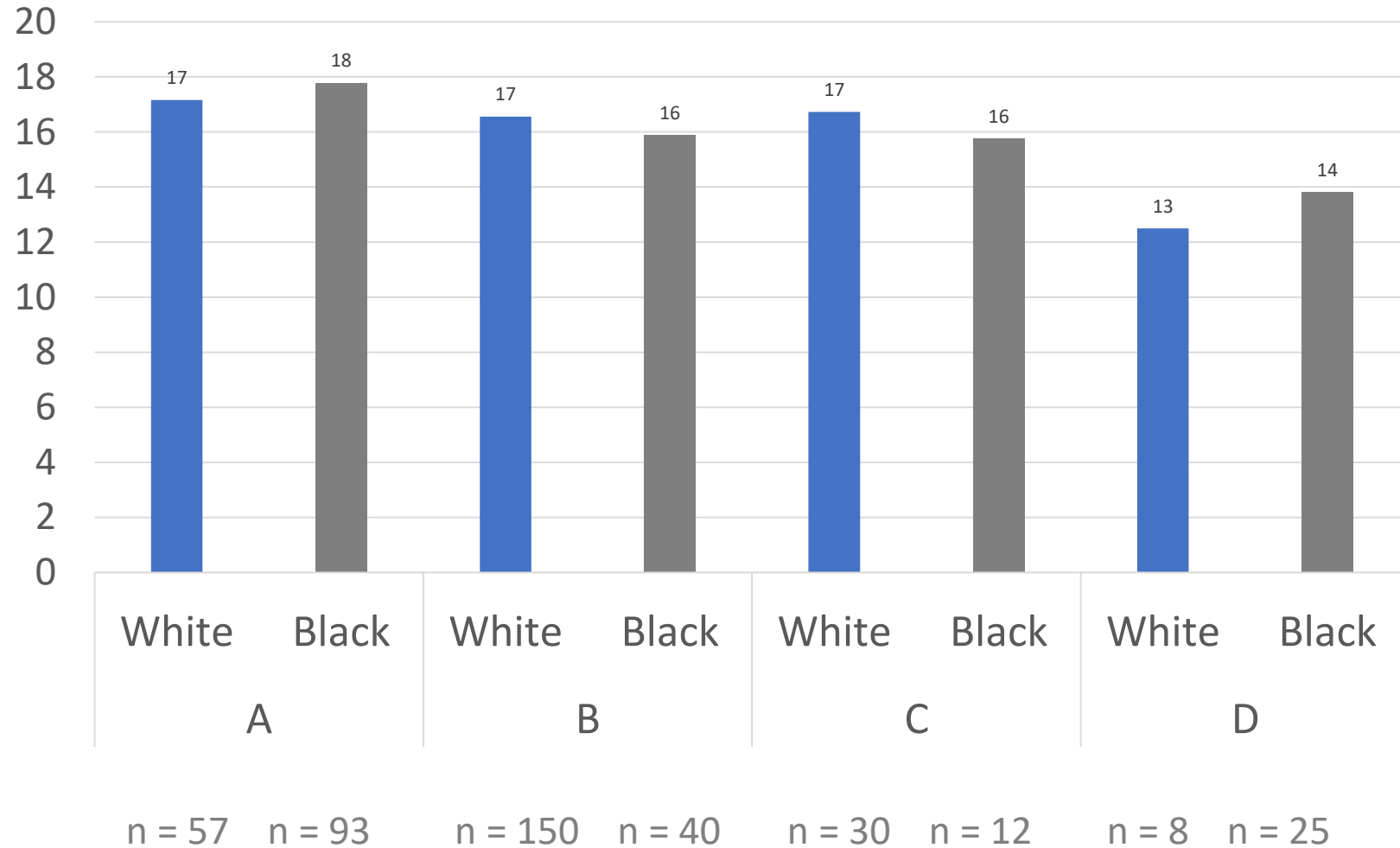
Mean Scores by School & Race - Safety



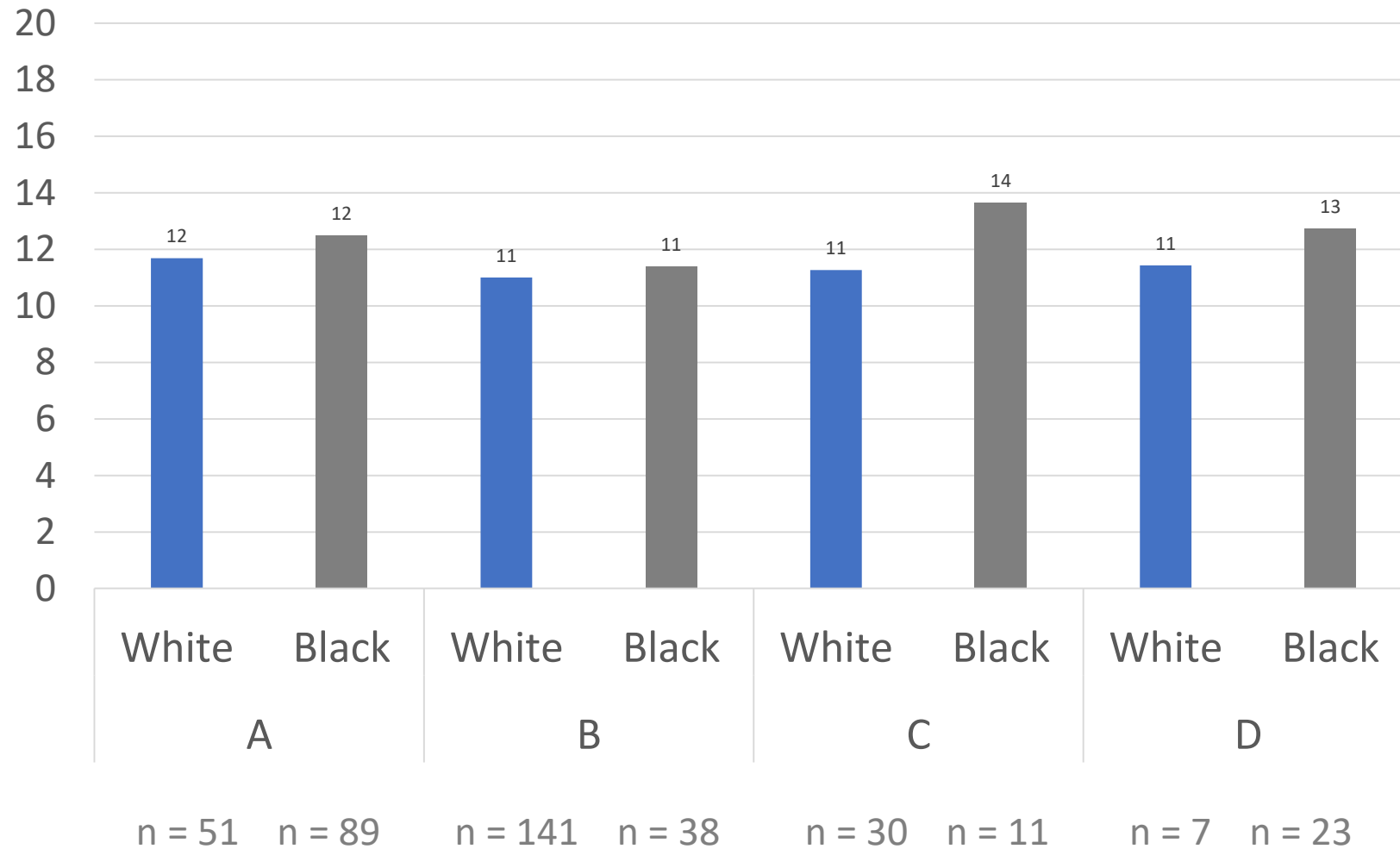
Mean Scores by School & Race - Bullied



Mean Scores by School & Race - Witness



Mean Scores by School & Race - Perpetrate

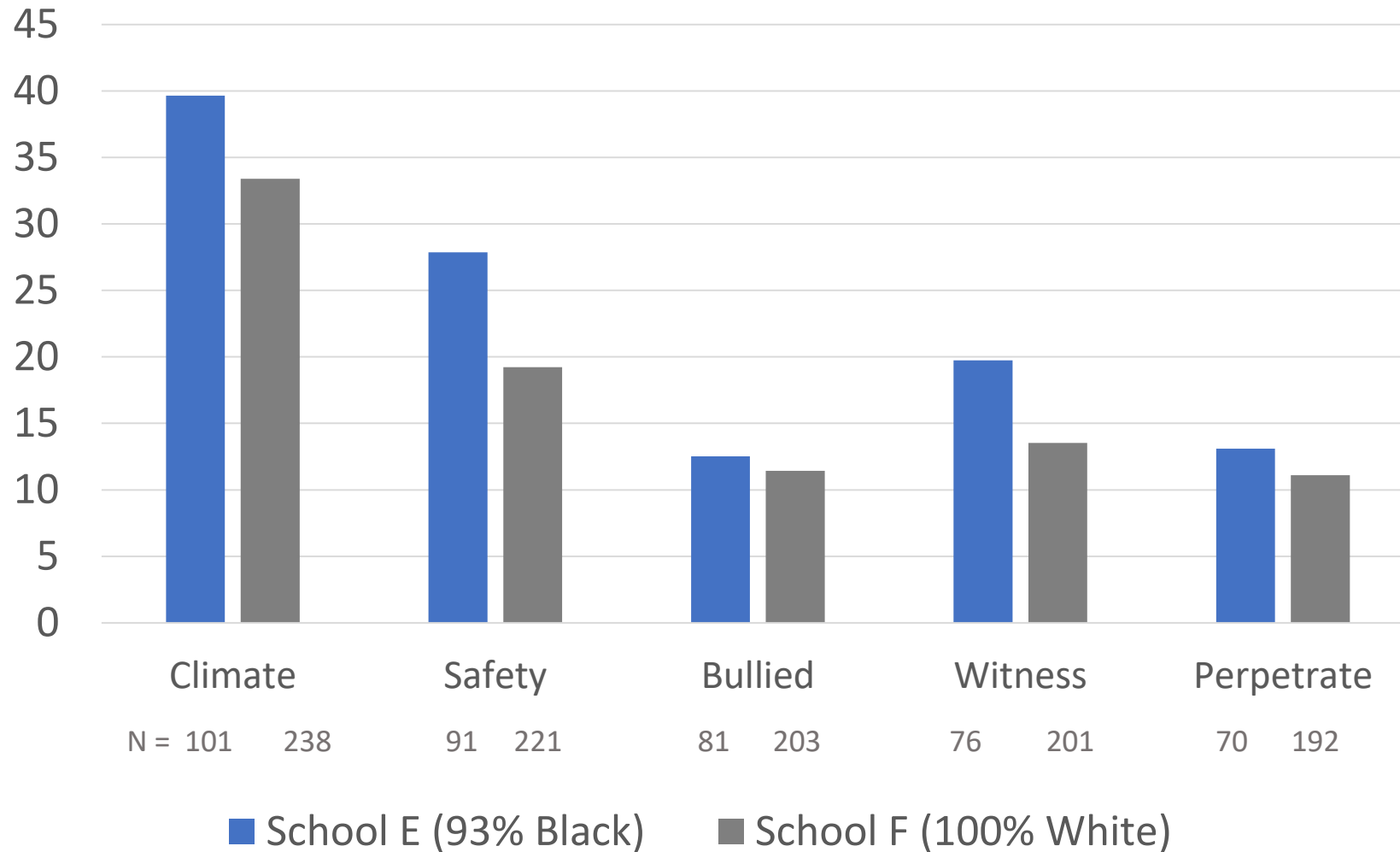


Summary of Findings

- We observed significant between group differences for Race (main effect) $F(1, 472) = 5.534, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .012$ for scores on the perceptions of **Safety** scale.
 - Black/African American students across the region generally rated more areas in their school as significantly less safe than did White/Non-Hispanic students.
 - Post Hoc revealed a main effect for group differences on the experience of Racial Bullying $F(1, 353) = 5.564, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .016$
- There were no school by racial group interactions.
- There were trends in which one rural school (School C) obtained generally higher scale scores than the other three schools, most notably for experiences of bullying.

Comparison of Two Schools with Minimal Diversity: Schools **E** and **F**

Differences Between Schools E and F



Summary of Findings

- There were significant group (School) differences across four scales:
 - Climate $F(1, 339) = 33.743, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$
 - Safety $F(1, 311) = 56.244, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$
 - Witness $F(1, 276) = 33.106, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .11$
 - Perpetrate $F(1, 261) = 13.289, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$
- School E had consistently higher scores across scales, except for bullying.
 - Post hoc analyses indicated that School E student reported higher rates of Racial Bullying $F(1, 241) = 9.025, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .036$
- Perception of community safety was a significant covariate, but findings were robust.

Conclusions

- Our primary hypothesis, that student group differences in experiences of bullying would be a function of group representation (percent enrollment) in the schools, as opposed to racial group status, was not supported.
- There were significant group (Race) differences; these were small main effects specific to the scale assessing perceptions of safety and the item addressing direct experiences of racial bullying.
- Experiences of school climate, safety, and bullying appear to be much more strongly related to the characteristics of the school and the community.
- Other preliminary analyses suggest that school leadership (especially principal involvement) plays a significant role.

Implications

- There is a need for continued studies of school climate in areas/schools characterized by racial and ethnic diversity.
- School administrators should make efforts to ensure all student groups feel respected and safe.
- Studies may need to ask more specific questions of students with regard to the characteristics of those they believe have bullied them.
- Efforts to improve school climate may need to be closely tied to community outreach and violence prevention.

Questions??

Contact: Mary Louise Cashel, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
mcashel@siu.edu
(618) 453-3553