

PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING VICTIMIZATION BY RACE IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Ashley Harrison, M.A., Kaitlyn Hnetkovsky, B.A., Mary Louise Cashel, Ph.D., &
Daryl Kroner, Ph.D.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Acknowledgements

- This project is funded by the National Institute of Justice as part of the 2015 Comprehensive School Safety Initiative.
- The Regional Office of Education #30 was our LEA partner.
- We appreciate the participation of all 40 schools involved in the project

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).
- Cashel, Chambers, & Kroner (2018) observed an interaction effect between minority group membership, school representation (percentages of group enrollment), and bullying experiences, as reported by students in a longitudinal study on school climate.
- This study sought to replicate those findings with data collected in the final year of the project.

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.
 - 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).
- To perform follow-up analyses on the schools that were previously studied to see if the results replicated over the longitudinal study.

Participants

- Middle School (7th and 8th Grade) Students from 4 Schools
 - School A (n = 204) Small City, White = 27%, Black = 52%
 - School B (n = 210) Town-Fringe, White = 66%, Black = 18%
 - School C (n = 58) Rural-Distant, White = 36%, Black = 53%
 - School D (n = 49) Rural-Distant, White = 73%, Black = 23%
- Jr/Sr High School (7th through 12th Grade) from 3 Schools
 - School E (n = 101) Town-Distant, White = 5%, Black = 87%
 - School F (n = 246) Rural-Distant, White = 67%, Black = 0%
 - School G (n = 361) Rural-Distant, White = 93%, Black = 1%

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)

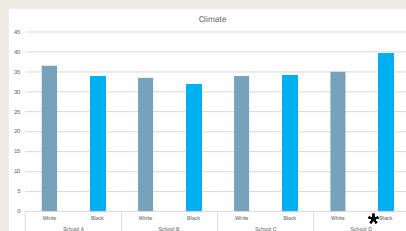
Procedures

- Data collection for this presentation occurred during the 2017-2018 academic school year.
- Surveys were administered online using Qualtrics .
- Students completed the surveys anonymously in classes at times/days designated by administrators.
- Parent passive consent and youth active assent was obtained

Comparisons Across 4 Schools

- 4 middle schools: Schools **A, B, C,** and **D**
- Large versus Small
 - **Large**
 - School A (427 students)
 - School B (438 students)
 - School C (329 students)
 - **Small**
 - School D (91 students)
- More versus Less Diversity
 - **More Diverse**
 - School A (73% minority)
 - School C (64% minority)
 - **Less Diversity**
 - School B (34% minority)
 - School D (27% minority)

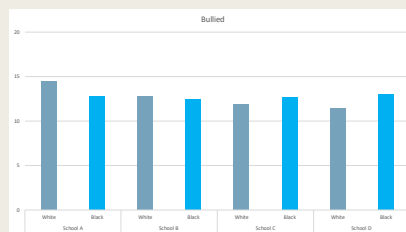
Mean Scores by School and Race - Climate



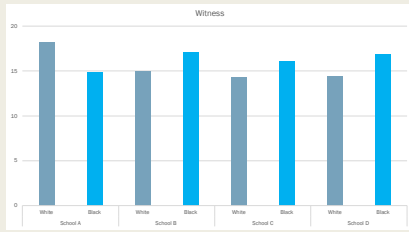
Mean Scores by School and Race - Safety



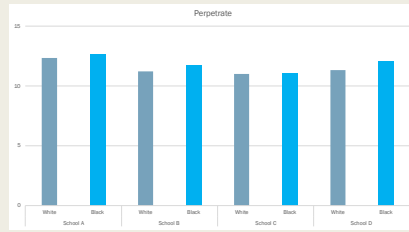
Mean Scores by School and Race - Bullied



Mean Scores by School and Race - Witness



Mean Scores by School and Race - Perpetrate



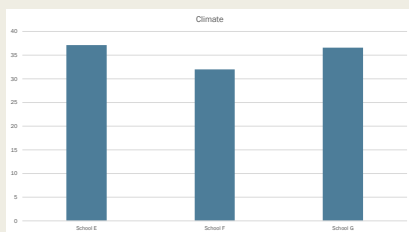
Summary of Findings

- We observed a significant group difference for School $F(3,456)=4.27, p=0.005, \eta_p^2=0.027$ on perceptions of school **Climate**.
 - One school (School D) had significantly worse scores overall than the rest.
- For perceptions of **Safety**, there were no main effects for school or minority status, but there was a significant school by group interaction $F(3,428)=2.98, p<0.05, \eta_p^2=0.20$.
 - Black students at one school (School B) had significantly worse scores than all groups of students at each of the other schools.
- A school by minority status interaction was also observed for **Witness** bullying $F(3,398)=3.275, p<0.05, \eta_p^2=0.024$.
 - There were significant differences between minority groups that varied across schools.
- Follow-up analyses indicated no clear relationships with rural location or percent minority enrollment at the school. It appears individual school characteristics were most salient.

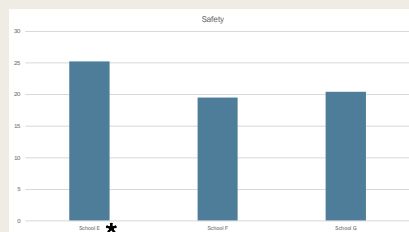
Comparisons Across 3 Schools

- Junior/Senior High Schools: **E, F, and G**
- Large versus Small
 - Large
 - School F (277 students)
 - School G (521 students)
 - Small
 - School E (170 students)
- More versus Less Diversity
 - More Diverse
 - School E (95% minority)
 - Less Diverse
 - School F (33% minority)
 - School G (7% minority)

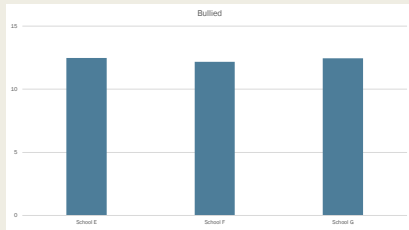
Mean Scores by School - Climate



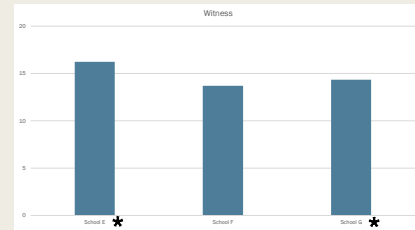
Mean Scores by School - Safety



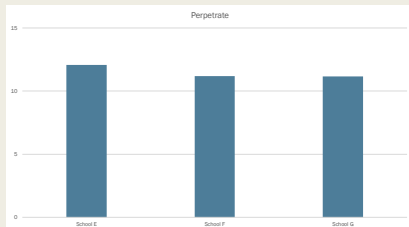
Mean Scores by School - Bullied



Mean Scores by School - Witness



Mean Scores by School - Perpetrate



Summary of Findings

- We observed a significant group difference for School $F(2,560)=3.689, p<0.05, \eta_p^2=0.013$ on students who **Witness** bullying.
 - Two schools (Schools E and G) had significantly worse scores overall than the other school (School F).
- We observed a significant group difference for Race $F(1,581)=4.436, p<0.05, \eta_p^2=0.008$ on perceptions of **Safety**.
 - One school (School E) had significantly worse scores overall than the other two schools (School F and School G).
- Follow-up analyses indicated no clear relationships with rural location or percent minority enrollment at the school. It appears individual school characteristics were most salient.

Compared to the Previous Research

- Similar to previous findings by Cashel, Chambers, and Kroner (2018), we observed that Black/African American students rated more areas in their school as significantly less safe than did White/Non-Hispanic students within the middle schools.
- Different from the previous findings, we observed a significant group difference for School on perceptions of school **Climate** as well as a school by minority status interaction for **Witness** bullying within the middle schools.
 - Showing there were significant differences between minority groups that varied across schools.
- Also different from previous findings, we did not observe a significant group difference for School on four scales for Jr/Sr high schools, rather we only observed significant group difference for School on students who **Witness** bullying and perceptions of school **Safety**.

Conclusions

- The follow-up study and original findings indicated there were significant group (Race) differences; these were small main effects specific to the scale assessing perceptions of safety.
- Analyses indicated no clear relationships with rural location or percent minority enrollment at the school. It appears individual school characteristics were most salient.
- Experiences of school climate, safety, and bullying appear to be much more strongly related to the characteristics of the school and the community.

Implications

- There is a need for continued studies of school climate, perceptions of safety, and bullying experiences in areas/schools characterized by racial and ethnic diversity.
- Studies may need to ask more specific questions of students regarding the characteristics of those they believe have bullied them.
- Future directions for research should also focus on conducting a nation-wide study on youth concerning school climate, perceptions of safety and experiences of bullying to help better inform intervention and prevention programs within schools and communities
- School administrators should make efforts to ensure all student groups feel respected and safe.
- Efforts to improve school climate may need to be closely tied to community outreach and violence prevention. .

Questions?

- Contact:
 - Ashley Harrison, M.A.
 - ashley.harrison@su.edu
 - Mary Louise Cashei, Ph.D.
 - mcashei@su.edu
 - (618) 453-3553