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Cyberbullying and School Climate

Emily Payton Fisher
Western Kentucky University, emily.fisher221@topper.wku.edu

CYBERBULLYING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

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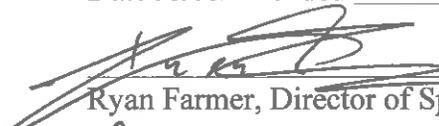Western Kentucky University
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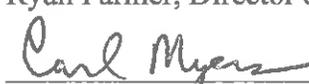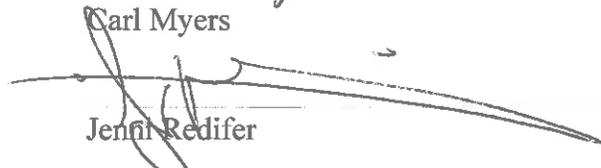Specialist in Education

By
Emily Payton Fisher
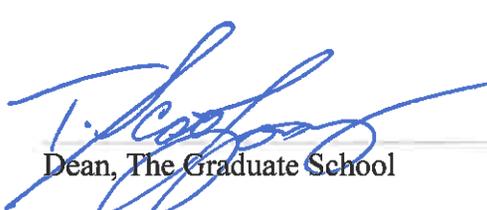
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Ryan Farmer, Director of Specialist Project

Carl Myers

Jenni Redifer

Dean, The Graduate School   6/25/18

Date

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Directed by: Ryan Farmer, Carl Myers and Jenni Redifer

Department of Psychology   Western Kentucky University

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between demographic variables known to predict bullying and victimization, traditional bullying victimization, cyberbullying victimization, and school climate. Participants were 214 fourth and fifth grade students from three elementary schools in Warren County, Kentucky. Students answered demographic questions and completed a series of surveys including the Positive Experience Checklist and the School Climate Survey Suite. Demographic variables and traditional bullying victimization were regressed on the students' perception of school climate (Model 1). Additionally, cyberbullying victimization was included in a second block to estimate its explanatory value (Model 2). The present study supports previous research that found that traditional bullying is related with a lower perception of school climate and extended this research by examining the relation between cyberbullying and school climate; of interest, are the impacts of cyberbullying on meaningful outcomes (e.g., school climate) of a sufficient magnitude to warrant changes in preventative and intervention strategies? Interestingly, cyberbullying had a negligible but significant effect on school climate, only explaining an additional 3% of the variance in student perception of school climate. These data indicate that cyberbullying victimization is much less predictive of perceptions of school climate than traditional victimization.

Literature Review

Bullying has been recognized as a national epidemic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; Lessne & Cidade, 2015; Nansel et al. 2001) with extensive research effort placed on understanding the causes of bullying (McCallion & Feder, 2013; Olweus, 1994), on the rate of bullying in our schools (Nansel et al. 2001), on developing bullying prevention programming (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999; Smith, 1997; Smith & Ananiadou, 2003), and on understanding the long-term impact of bullying on children (Cornell, Gregory, Huang & Fan, 2013; Hinduja, & Patchin, 2010). The majority of people still largely think of bullying as a troubling interaction between two people within the school. However, bullying has moved beyond name calling and tripping someone in the hallway (Campbell, 2005). For instance, cyberbullying—a type of bullying that occurs via various forms of technology, including e-mail, text message, or social media—has become more prevalent (Campbell, 2005; Foody, Samara, & O'Higgins, 2017; Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchán, Calmaestra, & Vega, 2009). Researchers are continuing to investigate various facets of cyberbullying, including how best to define it (Campbell, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2008a) and its impact on those who are bullied (Erdur-Baker & Tanrıkulu, 2009; Fernandes, Sanyal and Chadha, 2015; Kowalski, & Limber, 2013; Selkie, Kota, Chan & Moreno, 2015).

Various forms of bullying may influence how students perceive their school. In fact, it follows that students who experience traditional and relational bullying within the context of schools may have lower perceptions of *school climate* (Gendron, Williams & Guerra, 2011; Olweus, 1994). School climate is broadly defined as a student's perception of their school's safety, friendliness, and level of support (National School Climate

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center, 2017; Olweus, 1994) with the student's perception serving as a stand-in for the actual status of the school. School climate is predictive of positive academic and emotional outcomes (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Michael, 1961; Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998; Wilson, 2004). Historically, the majority of bullying has occurred in person and within the school context; however, technological variations developed throughout the late 1990s and into the 2000s (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006) have added to the way students are being bullied. Although the relationship between traditional and relational bullying has been well studied (e.g., Gendron et al., 2011) and logically follows, the relationship between school climate and cyberbullying is not as well understood.

Bullying

Defining bullying is somewhat challenging given various topographies and researcher perceptions (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Further, it is often difficult to discern bullying from aggression. Several researchers have defined several primary characteristics of bullying, including that it is an (a) interaction between two or more people that is perceived as harmful by one party, is (b) often characterized by a power imbalance, and (c) happens systematically and repeatedly over time (Glew, Rivara, & Feudtner, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1994; Olweus, 1999). In instances of bullying, we have at least two participants: the bully and the victim(s). In the majority of instances, the victim tends to be a single individual; however, there can be multiple victims and sometimes more than one "bully" (Olweus, 1994). The imbalance in the relationship is a critical part of the definition of bullying (Aalsma & Brown, 2008). This

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helps to distinguish the difference between bullying and other acts of aggression between two people.

Prevalence of Bullying

The prevalence rate of bullying has been widely studied. Research indicates that 20.2% to 30% of students surveyed via various means, reported at least one instance of bullying (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; Lessne & Cidade, 2013; Nansel et al., 2001; Wolke, Woods, Stanford & Schultz, 2001). However, the prevalence of bullying varies by source

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; Lessne & Cidade, 2013) reported that 20.8% of students in a sample of over one million students reported being verbally or physically bullied. In 2015, surveys sent out by the CDC indicated that in the 12 months before the survey, 20.2% of respondents had been bullied on school property and 15.5% had been bullied electronically. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

Wolke, Woods, Stanford and Schulz (2001) noted that out of 2,377 children surveyed in England, 24% reported being a victim of bullying. This included instances of bullying in the classroom and on the playground. Bullying, in this article, was defined as anytime the student had been called a name, hit, lied to, had something stolen from them, or was blackmailed. Nansel et al. (2001) found that in a study of 15,686 students in the United States, almost 30% reported being involved in bullying.

More recently, Modeck, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, and Runions (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of bullying prevalence that examined 80 studies, including peer reviewed studies, dissertations, and theses. The weighted mean prevalence rate for

traditional victimization was .36 (95% CI, .36-.36), or 360 students per 1000 are

experiencing traditional bullying. Related, the weighted mean prevalence rate for cyber

victimization was .15 (95% CI, .15-.15), or 150 students per 1000 are experiencing

cyberbullying. These data are commensurate with past estimates (e.g., Wolke et al., 2001;

NCES, 2013), but are likely more accurate estimates of bullying prevalence. Moreover,

traditional bullying and cyberbullying victimization had moderate overlap ($\bar{r} = .47$).

Across these studies, it is evident that bullying is a significant problem, with more

than one-third of students experiencing bullying during their primary and secondary

school experiences. Additionally, given the moderate overlap between traditional and

cyberbullying victimization, it is not clear to what extent cyberbullying will explain

school climate.

Bully Characteristics

Cook et. al. (2010) completed a meta-analysis of 153 studies on bullies and

victims conducted since 1970 with the purpose of determining individual and contextual

factors that best predict targets for interventions. According to Cook et al., bullies

typically engage in externalizing behavior, have negative perceptions of others, poor

academic and social problem solving, and are likely to experience some type of

internalized symptoms. In addition, bullies were more susceptible to negative peer

influence, more likely to come from disrupted or turbulent communities and homes, and

perceived school climate poorly.

Victim Characteristics

Although there is no way to perfectly predict who will be a victim of bullying,

certain students may be more likely to be bullied (McCallion & Feder, 2013). Cooke et

al. (2010) conducted a meta-analysis that determined that lower perceived peer status, low social competence, and poor academic performance were significant predictors of victimization. Victims also typically had an unstable or negative home environment, a low perception of school climate, lower peer status and lived in communities of lower socioeconomic factors, or communities with high rates of violence and/or drug trafficking. Students with disabilities (Olweus, 1994) and students who are overweight or obese (Jansen et al., 2014; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2010) are often victims of bullying. Another factor associated with increased risk of being bullied is gender identity. Specifically, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network National School Climate Survey (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016) found that 85.2% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) students were verbally harassed, 27% were physically harassed, and 48.6% were cyberbullied. Additionally, 13% reported physical assault.

The Effect of Bullying

The effects that bullying has on victims is detrimental to the victim in physical, mental and emotional ways (Olweus, 1997). These effects can also range in time length and intensity. For instance, anxiety is a common symptom reported by victims of bullying (Jenkins, Demaray, & Tennant, 2017; Smokowski & Kopasz 2005). Additionally, victims of bullying experience higher levels of anxiety than their peers (Arshad, Aslam, & Tanvir, 2016) and anxiety and stress caused by bullying are commonly related to depression and suicide attempts, (Schneider, O'Connell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012).

Individuals with a history of being bullied are at higher risk of depression (Arshad, Aslam, & Tanvir, 2016; Kalibala-Hein, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen, 1999; Roland, 2002). Often those who experience bullying feel helpless, alone, and unwanted. These are all common symptoms associated with a state of depression. Depression can have long-term effects if not addressed. Depression, like stress, can be persistent and can lead to suicidal ideation and behavior (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen 1999).

Arshad, Aslam and Tanvir (2016) examined the relationship between bullying and psychological problems and noted that bullying in adolescents is a specific predictor for later increases in stress and depression. Gini and Pozzoli (2009) as well as Brill, Patel and MacDonald (2010) noted that bullying has been linked to psychosomatic problems. Psychosomatic problems included complaints of a headache, a stomachache, or feeling dizzy, that have no identifiable physiological cause (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009). More specifically, bullied children are at least two times more likely to report psychosomatic symptoms than children who are not bullied.

One possible reason for victims of bullying to report psychosomatic problems is for the purpose of avoidance or escape from school (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009). Although feigning illness permits avoidance or escape from bullying, repeated absences may lead to academic problems and psychological difficulties due to missing instruction and learning maladaptive ways to cope with bullying (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

The effects that bullying has on victims can also lead to long-term problems as well. The constant stress, anxiety, depression, fear of continuation of bullying, and feeling like an outcast, can lead to multiple absences, academic problems, dropping out of

school, as well as suicidal ideation, attempts and/or completions (Gastic, 2008; Hinduja, & Patchin, 2010; Feldman et al., 2014). When at school, students who have been bullied may be more likely to avoid areas in the school building that are unsupervised, such as restrooms, certain areas of the playground, and hallways during class instruction times, for fear of encountering a bully (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Children who are teased and/or bullied in high school have a higher likelihood of dropping out of school, which ultimately impacts the remainder of their life (Cornell et al., 2013).

Types of Bullying

There are many different forms of bullying (Sharp & Smith, 2002). Specifically bullying has been divided into two categories: direct and indirect. Direct bullying includes direct physical aggression towards a person or their belongings; examples include pushing, hitting, kicking, and property destruction. Indirect bullying, on the other hand, can be something verbal and non-physical, like teasing, name-calling, threatening to cause harm to another, or social exclusion (Olweus, 1994; Sharp & Smith, 2002; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Verbal bullying has been noted as the most common form of bullying that most students face (Nansel et al., 2001; Yadav, 2017), potentially because the topographies are more covert that those associated with direct aggression (Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000). A relatively newer type of bullying, *cyberbullying* or cyber-aggression, closely aligns with indirect bullying concept.

Cyberbullying

The new form of bullying affecting schools is cyberbullying. Research continues to grow on the topic of cyberbullying with it gaining greater ground in the 1990's and 2000's as the use of technology increased (Campbell, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Cyberbullying is an act of bullying through means such as email, chat rooms, websites and mobile phones (Campbell, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Hinduja and Patchin (2008) noted that cyberbullying includes four main concepts. These four concepts are that it is (a) willful, (b) repeated, (c) causes harm and (d) involves computers, cellphones, and any other electronic devices. Definitions of traditional bullying and cyberbullying have some overlap including the intent to harm, having a specific target for the harmful message and an imbalance in power between two people (Smith, Barrio, & Tokunaga, 2013).

Research continues to expand on what cyberbullying is and how to best define it (Eliott, Cornell, Gregory & Fan, 2010). This includes broadening the definition by saying that is the use of interactive technologies such as social networking sites, cell phones (including text, video, voice, or picture messaging), instant messaging, or other newly developed technology-based communication tools. In any case, despite what mean of deliverance is used, it is the deliberant and repeated deliverance of slanderous, harassing, obsessive, or obscene messages that are intended to cause harm (Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011). Some researchers now categorize cyberbullying based on the means by which it takes place. This includes (a) text message, (b) email, (c) phone call, (d) and pictures/video clips (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Traditional bullying usually happens during school where there are moments of unsupervised time (Olweus, 1991). Electronics allow bullying to occur under even lower levels of supervision and can also allow the bully to remain anonymous (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Cyberbullying also takes less energy than does traditional bullying. Students will spend more energy trying to pick on someone in the playground or trip

them in the hall than they would sending a simple text from sitting on their bed at home (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

As with traditional bullying, cyberbullying has implications for those who fall victim. Research by Kowalski and Limber (2013) suggests that there are psychological, physical and academic deficit correlations between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Some of the psychological problems noted by Kowalski & Limber (2013), included self-esteem, depression and anxiety. Fernandes, Sanyal, and Chadha (2015) as well as Chang et al. (2013) also found that when comparing individuals who had been cyberbullied with those who have not been, those who encountered some type of cyberbullying reported having lower self-esteem in comparison to the non-cyberbullied group. Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner (2014), conducted a critical review and meta-analysis to look at the effects of cyberbullying showing a strong connection between cyberbullying and behavioral as well as psychological problems. In particular, cyberbullying had a strong connection with stress and suicidal ideations.

Cyberbullying has also been found to be a significant predictor in depression, (Erdur-Baker & Tanrıkulu, 2009). Erdur-Baker and Tanrıkulu (2009) looked at the effects of rumination, problem solving abilities and victimization on depression. Their study concluded that rumination was the most important factor correlated to depressive moods, followed by victimization and perceived problem solving abilities. This relationship was also noted in a study of college females (Selkie, Kota, Chan, & Moreno, 2015). After receiving survey information from 265 college students, it was found that those who had reported being cyberbullied also had increased odds of depression. This

meant that those who were cyberbullied met criteria for depression as stated by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV).

Cyberbullying also has effects that carry over into the schools. Academic problems are another consequence of cyberbullying as mentioned by Kowalski and Limber (2013). In particular, those students who report being cyberbullied also report having lower grades in comparison to those students who have not been cyberbullied (Tsitsika et al., 2015). Unfortunately, addressing cyberbullying—and bullying in general—can be a challenge. Researchers have focused on contextual components, such as school climate, because it is seen as a malleable variable that can be influenced by school personnel (Cook et al., 2010).

Bullying Prevention

Understanding variables related to bullying is important because it informs prevention and intervention strategies. Given the high prevalence rates of bullying and cyberbullying as well as the detrimental effects it has on its victims, it is crucial that school psychologists be well-informed about evidence-based interventions for bullying. Smokowski and Holland Kopasz (2005) reviewed a number of bullying intervention programs including the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, The Bullying Project, and a few additional programs that have been known to help combat bullying.

The Olweus Bullying Prevention program (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999) was developed to help reduce bullying occurrences in elementary and secondary school students. One of the points of the program was for parents and teachers to develop clear rules against bullying behavior and to provide support and protection. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) is organized into a three-level system. It is focused

on intervening at the individual, class and school levels. Holding classroom meetings and meeting with parents was a second key concept. OBBP helps reduce occurrence of bullying my at least 50 percent. It leads to reductions in antisocial behavior such as theft and fighting, improves school climate and gives greater support to victims of bullying.

The Bergan Anti-Bullying Program (BABP) is a second common program, also developed by Olweus, that collected data by using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Smith & Ananiadou, 2003). This program was developed on the understanding that bullying happens because the bully is looking to gain a social reward, such as being liked by his/her peers. The BABP set to remove positive consequences of bullying behavior and replace them with negative ones. For example, by creating rules against bullying and fostering a more positive school environment. This program worked on a three-level basis; the individual student, the class, the school and the community including the parents.

A third bullying prevention program is the Sheffield Anti-Bullying Project (Smith, 1997; Smith & Ananiadou, 2003). This program focused on bringing the school together to work develop a school wide policy against bullying. One main aspect of the SABP was that the schools tailored the program to fit their individual needs by creating their own policies. The use of peer supports was also a new concept introduced in comparison to the two programs discussed above. Smith (1997) looked at the effects of the SABP showing that there were decreases in bullying behavior ranging from small to large. The range in effect was noted to be due to the amount of effort and times the school put into the program with those donating ample amounts of time having a higher reduction rate.

There has been some research on cyberbullying prevention as well. Some states have written legislation that address not only bullying but cyberbullying as well, (Snakenborg, Van Acker, & Gable, 2011). The same article discusses the importance of teacher supervision in order to reduce occurrences of cyberbullying because it usually happens when students are using electronic devices under little supervision. However, most of the research on cyberbullying prevention, at the time of this article, was not backed by scientific evidence but rather practical beliefs (Snakenborg, Van Acker, & Gable, 2011). The overarching connection between current traditional and cyberbullying prevention programs can easily be connected to school climate and a student's feelings of safety and relationships.

School Climate

Given the influence of school climate on bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Olweus, 1999), it is logical that substantial research has been conducted on school climate. School climate is defined as the perceived quality and character of school life by the National School Climate Center (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski 2016). More specifically, school climate includes students' feelings of safety, their relationships with others at school including peers, and teachers and the environment. School climate potentially impacts students' learning and development (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Although school climate can have effects on students' academic, psychological problems and behaviors, the reverse is also possible. Psychological and behavioral problems can influence perception of school climate (Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007)

A positive school climate can be important for a multitude of reasons. Recent research tells us that a positive school climate can be predictive of academic achievement

or school success. This means that schools who promote a positive school climate have students with higher GPAs, higher end of the year test scores and higher rates of graduates who go on to attend college (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Michael, 1961). A student's health and development has also been associated with having a positive school climate. In particular, students who believe that they are cared about, treated fairly, feel safe and have teachers who care about them are associated with achieving health related goals (Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998).

Last, positive school climate has been known to lead to less violence in the schools. This can include things such as threats and physical violence (Wilson, 2004), or bullying (Olweus, 1994). Fostering a positive school climate, specifically, aspects of safety and belongingness can be important for reducing the occurrence of bullying in schools. When a student feels that their school is a safe space there will be less students who bully others and in turn less students who are bullied (Eliot et al., 2010).

If there are occurrences of bullying in the school, then, relationships and belongingness play an important role (Osterman, 2000). Students who are bullied are much more likely to approach a teacher, or other school personnel, to seek help. When a student feels that their teachers care about them and their safety, they are much more likely to go to a teacher when they feel as if someone is bullying them (Eliot et al., 2010). Students who feel a belongingness to the school are also more likely to stand up for someone who is being bullied and seek help. When a student feels as if they belong, that the school is family, they are more likely to turn to a teacher if they see someone else is being bullied instead of being a bystander (Ferráns & Selma, 2014). If looking at school climate from the opposite end, a negative school climate can have detrimental effects for

both students and teachers, and/or staff administrators, as well (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005). School climate reported as low or negative has associations with higher accounts of student delinquency, student victimization and teacher victimization. Also, students who perceived school to be an aggressive non-safe place are more likely to bully others (Olweus, 1994).

A better school climate can potentially lead to less accounts of cyberbullying in schools (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012). When students are cyberbullied by someone that they know at school, it can make them feel as if school is an unsafe place to be. This relates to the safety component of school climate. The research available at the current time regarding the effects of cyberbullying on school climate is limited. The current research seeks to explore the relationship between cyberbullying and students' perception of school climate.

Purpose of Study

Previous research has identified that school climate is significantly related to traditional bullying victimization (Cook et al., 2010; Olweus, 1999). However, the causal relationship between these two variables is not entirely clear. For instance, we know that traditional bullying can result in significant behavioral and emotional effects on victims (Olweus, 1999), and that behavioral and emotional symptoms may influence a student's perception of school climate (Way et al., 2007). Additionally, we do not yet fully understand the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and school climate, especially given that cyberbullying often occurs outside of the context of the school. The current research also will be conducted with a younger group of participants, specifically 4th and 5th grade students unlike previous research mainly conducted with students from

grades 6th through 12th. Thus, the purpose of this project is to examine the relationships between demographic variables known to predict bullying and victimization, traditional bullying victimization, cyberbullying victimization, and school climate.

Hypothesis

1. Demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity and grade) and traditional bullying victimization will significantly predict student perception of school climate, as indicated by the amount of variance explained by the model (i.e., R^2 value).

2. The addition of cyberbullying victimization to the demographic variables and traditional bullying, will increase the amount of variance explained by the model, as demonstrated by a significant increase in R^2.

Methods

Participants

This study is an analysis of an existing dataset consisting of 214 students from three elementary schools in the southeast region of the United States. The schools the participants attended had population sizes ranging from 211 to 466 students and had a free-reduced lunch rate that ranged between 28.5% and 93.7%. There was a total of 96 fourth graders and 118 fifth graders who completed the survey. Of the participants, 56.1% identified as white, 14.0% identified as Africa American, 3.7% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 9.3% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 2.8% identified as Middle Eastern/North African, and 5.1% identified as mixed race. The sample was approximately evenly split with 51% female. Consent was obtained from each student's parent and assent was obtained from each child, pursuant to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for that study. The IRB was approved for the additional analyses described in this document, and approval forms are included in Appendix A.

Measures

The Personal Experiences Checklist (Hunt, Peters, & Rapee, 2012) was used to measure accounts of cyber- and traditional-victimization. The internal consistency reliability for the Personal Experience Checklist was calculated for this sample in previous research (Kim, Frederick, & Farmer, 2018). The bullying subscale ($\alpha = .78$ [.73 to .82]) and cyberbullying subscale were both found to have adequate reliability ($\alpha = .83$ [.80 to .86]). The Personal Experience Checklist was significantly positively correlated ($p < .001$) with the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders ($r = 0.47$), the Center for Epidemiological Studies—Depression Scale for Children ($r = 0.47$), the Self-

Perception Profile for Children (r = -0.33), and the Children's Automatic Thoughts Scale (physical threat r = 0.44; social threat r = 61; personal failure r = 37; and hostility r = 50) (Hunt, Peters & Rapee, 2012). The scale is presented in appendix B.

Additionally, students completed the School Climate Survey Suite (Furlong, You, Renshaw, O'Malley, & Rebelez, 2013) which was used as a measure of student perceptions regarding school climate. The reliability for the School Climate Survey Suite total score was calculated using Cronbach alpha and was found to be adequate (α = .82 [.78 to .85]). School Climate Survey Suite was found to be significantly positively correlated (p < .001) with the Prosocial Behavior Scale (male r = .65, female r = .64), the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale Acceptance scale (male r = .55, female r = .48), and Caring Relationships (male r = .59, female r = .39) subscales (Furlong You, Renshaw, O'Malley, & Rebelez, 2013). The scale is presented in appendix C.

Procedure

Students who had a returned consent form and who assented to completing the surveys did so in their schools' computer labs during the school day. Research assistants provided an explanation of the study, obtained student assent, introduced students to the survey software, and briefly taught students to answer questions. The complete survey was written at a 4.4 reading level. The survey was administered via the Qualtrics survey software system and took approximately 30 minutes to complete (median time = 30.7 minutes; mean = 32.7 minutes); however, for this study, only two of the completed surveys from each of the 214 students were used in the data set. Students and teachers provided demographic information, with students answering general demographics and teachers providing information only regarding special education status. Once the survey

was completed, the student was instructed to raise their hand. A researcher completed de-identified demographic information provided by the students' teachers. Upon completion, each student was thanked for their participation and returned to their classrooms.

Data Analysis Plan

A blocked sequential linear regression was used to evaluate the R^2 change between the base model and the nested model. First, for the base model, demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity and grade) and traditional bullying victimization were regressed on the student's perception of school climate. R^2 was evaluated along with Cohen's f^2 (Cohen, 1988), a measure of global and local effect size using the formula provided by Selya, Rose, Dierker, Hedeker, and Mermelstein (2012). Once the initial model was entered, cyberbullying victimization was added to the model. Both R^2 and Cohen's f^2 were evaluated to determine whether cyberbullying victimization significantly contributed to the model. Results were reported for the variance accounted for by each model (A and B) as well as unstandardized and standardized beta coefficients for each predictor. A post-hoc power analysis was completed with G Power version 3.1.9.2 given five predictors (age, gender, race, traditional bullying and cyberbullying victimization), a sample size of 214, and with a small effect size ($f^2 = .15$), the estimated power for this analysis is .99 indicating a strong likelihood of finding an effect if one truly exists (Cohen, 1988).

Results

Of the 214 student who completed the survey, a total of 182 students (85%) reported experiencing at least one instance of bullying in the 12 months leading up to the survey and a total of 61 (28.50%) students reported experiencing at least one incidence of cyberbullying.

In the base model, Model 1, students' perceptions of school climate were regressed on demographic variables and traditional victimization; the base model explained 22% of the variance in school climate ($R^2 = 0.22$; $p < .001$; $F[9, 185] = 5.86$, $p < .001$; $f^2 = 0.28$). Although traditional victimization had a strong, negative effect on school climate ($\beta = -0.19$; $p < .001$), identification as mixed race ($\beta = -0.65$; $p < .001$) had a larger, negative effect on perceptions of school climate.

Of interest, in the nested model, Model 2, cyberbullying victimization was entered into the regression. As shown in Table 1, the addition of cyberbullying victimization explained only an additional 2% of the variance in school climate ($R\Delta^2 = 0.02$, $F[1, 184] = 4.43$, $p < .05$; $f^2 = 0.02$). As student's experienced cyberbullying victimization, rating increased by 1 standard deviation ($SD = 2.65$), their rating of school climate decreased by only 0.29 standard deviation ($\beta = -0.11$; $p < 0.05$). Although cyberbullying alone has a negligible effect on school climate, the combined effect of the base and nested model were moderate to strong ($R\Delta^2 = 0.24$, $F[10, 184] = 5.81$, $p < .001$; $f^2 = 0.32$).

Table 1.

Sequential Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting School Climate by Model 1 and 2

Model	R^2	ΔR^2	Cohen's f^2	β	B
Model 1	0.22**	-	0.28		
Age				0.01	0.04
Grade				-0.06	-0.52
Gender				0.05	0.45
Ethnicity					
Asian				-2.64	-2.69
Black				-0.05	-0.50
Hispanic				-0.10	-0.61
Middle Eastern				0.15	0.41
Mixed Race				-0.65**	-6.14**
TV				-0.13**	-0.36**
Model 2	0.24**	0.02*	0.32		
Age				0.04	0.25
Grade				-0.08	-0.76
Gender				0.05	0.48
Ethnicity					
Asian				-0.26	-2.68
Black				-0.29	-0.55
Hispanic				-0.05	-0.45
Middle Eastern				0.11	0.30
Mixed Race				-0.86**	-5.19**
TV				-0.03**	-0.31**
CV				-0.11*	-0.30*

Note. TV = traditional victimization; CV = cyber victimization. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .001$.

Discussion

The purpose of the present thesis was to further examine the relationships between demographic variables such as age, grade, sex, and ethnicity; traditional bullying victimization; cyberbullying victimization; and school climate. Previous research has identified that school climate is significantly related to traditional bullying victimization (e.g., Cook et al., 2010; Olweus, 1999); however, we have little information describing the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and school climate.

The present study supports previous research that found that traditional bullying is related to a lower perception of school climate and extended this research by examining the relationship between cyberbullying and school climate. Interestingly, cyberbullying had a negligible but significant effect on school climate, only explaining an additional 2% of the variance in student perception of school climate. There are some potential explanations for the low increase in explanatory power, with the first being that cyberbullying may be occurring primarily outside of school, and thus have a buffer that minimizes its influence on school climate. Regardless of the explanation, these data indicate that cyberbullying victimization has a smaller effect on perceptions of school climate than traditional victimization.

Although the relationship between accounts of bullying and school climate does not have a definite direction, decreasing traditional bullying and, potentially cyberbullying, may be important in order to foster a positive school climate. Previous research indicates the importance of a positive school climate in that it correlates with higher academic achievement, school success, positive health, ongoing development, and leads to less school violence (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Michael, 1961; Samdal,

Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998; Wilson, 2004). It is not clear, however, whether higher perceptions of school climate actually effect school violence and bullying, if the lack of school violence and bullying cause varying perceptions of school climate, or if these variables have a dynamic relationship.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

Although this study contributes to the literature by exploring the additional explanatory power of cyberbullying, it also contributes by exploring these issues with a younger sample of elementary school students. These issues are typically explored in older (e.g., 6th through 12th grade) samples. Related to this strength, however, we must acknowledge that children ages 9 to 11 years may have substantially less access to social media and digital communication than older children, and thus it may not generalize to older samples. Additionally, the SES of the students in this study may also have differentially affected cyberbullying rates, and thus future studies should consider measuring rates of technology use among students. An additional strength of the current research is the findings regarding participants' reported ethnicity. This research allowed the exploration of the effects of ethnicity on perception of school climate. It was found that those reporting to be of mixed race, had a significant effect on their perception of school climate. Although not hypothesized and thus considered an exploratory finding, this is no trivial result: children who identified as mixed race seemed to have a substantially lower perception of school climate. A limitation of this study is that variables and factors related to ethnicity, racial discrimination, or racially-laden bullying were not investigated. Future studies should seek to investigate this phenomenon further.

Implications and Conclusions

School climate is a predictor of academic achievement, school success, positive health, and development. A positive school climate can also lead to less school violence (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Michael, 1961; Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998; Wilson, 2004). Given the results of this study—that traditional and cyberbullying could potentially reduce perceptions of school climate, a potential indirect influence of bullying is described. That is, bullying attenuates school climate, which is positively related to a number of outcomes (Gendron et. al., 2011; Olweus, 1994) in addition to known negative outcomes of bullying (Olweus, 1997). The results of this analysis allow us to double-down on an uncontested fact: we need to be doing more to intervene on bullying, and more specifically, with a primary focus on traditional bullying. In addition, although not directly related to this analysis, it is important to encourage teachers and other school staff members to foster a positive school climate by making sure children feel safe and feel a sense of belongingness within their classrooms and school.

In the current study, although accounts of cyberbullying had some effect on students' perception of school climate, the observed variance was minimal compared to the variance explained by accounts of traditional bullying. It may potentially be beneficial to include the topic of cyberbullying into current traditional bullying programs; however, it may only be slightly beneficial in improving school climate. Although this study found little influence of cyberbullying on school climate, that does not diminish the potential impact of these types of bullying on child outcomes (Gini & Espelange, 2014;

Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; LeBlanc, 2012). Influences on cyberbullying and treatment

modalities should continue to be researched.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT

WKU   *INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD*
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY

DATE: May 11, 2018

TO: **Emily Fisher**
FROM: **Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB**

PROJECT TITLE: **[1183840-1] Traditional Bullying, Cyberbullying and School Climate**
REFERENCE #:   **IRB 18-412**
SUBMISSION TYPE: **New Project**

ACTION: **APPROVED**
APPROVAL DATE: **May 11, 2018**

REVIEW TYPE: **Exempt Review**

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission regarding de-identified existing data. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt from Full Board Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB's records.

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APPENDIX B: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES CHECKLIST

Thinking about the last month or so at school, how often do the following things happen?

Please circle the best response (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Most Days, Every Day)

1. Other kids play nasty practical jokes on me where I might get hurt or injured.

2. The other kids ignore me on purpose.

3. Other kids try to turn my friends against me.

4. Other kids say nasty things to me on an instant messenger, chat room or bulletin board.

5. Other kids make fun of my language.

6. Other kids tease me about things that aren't true.

7. Other kids punch me.

8. Other kids make fun of my culture.

9. Other kids make prank calls to me.

10. Other kids threaten me over the phone.

11. Other kids tell people not to hang around with me.

12. Other kids won't talk to me because of where I'm from.

13. Other kids make death stares at me.

14. Other kids say nasty things to me by SMS.

15. Other kids tell people to hit me.

16. Other kids send me nasty emails.

17. Other kids kick me.

18. Other kids say mean things about me behind my back.

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19. Other kids make rude gestures at me.

20. Other kids say they'll hurt me if I don't do things for them.

21. Other kids shove me.

22. Other kids say nasty things about me on websites

23. Other kids wreck my things.

24. Other kids send me computer viruses on purpose.

25. Other kids tease me about my voice.

26. Other kids trip me over.

27. Other kids tell people to make fun of me.

28. Other kids call me names because I'm a bit different.

29. Other kids hit me.

30. Other kids harass me over the phone.

31. Other kids make fun of my friends.

32. Other kids call me names because I can't do something.

School Climate Survey: Elementary
Please answer all of the questions or your answers won't be recorded, but you can mark "I prefer not to answer" if you don't want to answer a question about you.

Demographics
What is your gender or gender identity?
Female ¨ Male ¨ Other ¨ I prefer not to answer

What is your ethnicity?
Hispanic or Latino/a ¨ Not Hispanic or Latino/a ¨ I prefer not to answer

What is your race? (*mark all that apply)*
American Indian or Alaskan Native ¨ Asian ¨ Black or African American
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ¨ White ¨ I prefer not to answer

Beyond that, is there another ethnic group with which you identify?
Ethnic Group:¨ I prefer not to answer.

What grade are you in?
□ 3 ¨ 4 ¨ 5 ¨ 6

Survey Questions

1. I like school.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

2. I feel like I do well in school.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

3. My school wants me to do well.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

4. My school has clear rules for behavior.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

5. Teachers treat me with respect.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

6. Good behavior is noticed at my school.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

7. I get along with other students.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

8. I feel safe at school.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

9. Students treat each other well.
   □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

10. There is an adult at my school who will help me if I need it.
    □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always

11. Students in my class behave so that teachers can teach.
    □ Never ¨ Sometimes ¨ Often ¨ Always