A Multi–Method Exploration of the Ethical "Grey Areas" in Bullying and Bystander Intervention: Centering the Perspectives of Youth with Specific Learning Disabilities

By

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Abstract

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Youth with disabilities are overrepresented in the bullying dynamic and experience poor mental health and school engagement outcomes associated with this involvement. However, limited existing research has looked at differences in bullying involvement based on disability category, and how youth with disabilities make decisions about bullying involvement and bystander intervention. This multi– method study examined how students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) have engaged in bullying, been impacted by this engagement, and think about bullying involvement. Drawing on quantitative analyses of surveys (N=221) and mixed methods analyses of clinical interviews (N=78), this dissertation research garnered an understanding of how youth with SLD have been involved in bullying and impacted by this involvement. In addition, this dissertation examined how these youth reason and make decisions about cyberbullying involvement and bystander intervention.

A person–centered analysis was conducted in order to: 1) elucidate distinct profiles of bullying involvement amongst youth with SLD ; 2) examine if and how demographic characteristics are associated with profile membership; and 3) examine if and how school engagement and mental health outcomes are associated with profile membership. This study revealed four distinct profiles of bullying involvement: Low Involvement profile (low levels of victimization and perpetration), Mildly Involved profile (mild levels of both victimization and perpetration), Moderately/ highly Victimized profile (low levels of perpetration and moderate to high levels of victimization), and Moderately Frequent Bully–Victim profile (moderate to high levels of both victimization and perpetration). The highest percentage of youth (37%) were in Profile 1, or the low involvement group. Participants in this group experienced the lowest levels of victimization and perpetration in comparison to participants in other groups. Profile 2, or the mildly involved group, was the smallest profile in this study with 14% of participants classified in this group. Participants in this group experienced mild levels of both victimization and perpetration in comparison to participants in other profiles. Profile 3, or the moderately/highly victimized group, included 18% of participants in this study. Members of this group reported higher mean scores for victimization than participants in other groups (particularly for verbal and physical

victimization). Finally, Profile 4 or the moderately frequent bully–victim profile, was the second largest of the four profiles with 31% of participants classified in this group. Participants in this group experienced higher levels of combined victimization and perpetration than those in other groups.

Significant results emerged when analyzing associations between bullying involvement profile and demographic variables as predictors, as well as associations between bullying involvement profiles and school engagement and mental health outcomes. Demographic variable analyses revealed that select demographic variables were associated with some the four bullying involvement profiles. Older participants (grades 6–12) when compared to younger participants (grades 1–5) were more likely to be in the moderate/highly victimized group or profile 3 than in the low involvement bullying group or profile 1. In addition, when compared to White youth, racial minority (non–White) youth were more likely to be in lower bullying involvement groups. Furthermore, youth who identified as LGBTQIA+ were more likely to be in the lower bullying involvement groups than youth who identified as straight. Membership in Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) and Profile 4 (moderate bully–victim) was significantly and negatively associated with school engagement when compared to Profile 1 (low bullying involvement). In addition, Profile 3 (moderately/highly victimized) showed a negative trend that approached statistical significance. Results showed more positive associations between membership in Profiles2, 3, and 4 than Profile 1 for internalizing symptoms. Additionally, results found more positive associations between membership in Profiles2 and 4 than Profile 1 for externalizing symptoms.). Taken together, these results highlight the negative effects on school engagement and increased rates of internalizing and externalizing symptoms associated with bullying involvement (particularly the combination of perpetration and victimization noted in profiles 2 and 4).

A mixed methods analysis was employed drawing on Social Domain Theory in order to understand how youth with SLD evaluated and justified their evaluations of cyberbullying and bystander intervention in hypothetical situations. As anticipated, the majority of participants evaluated cyberbullying as unacceptable across all four situations. Participants had more negative evaluations of cyber harm when directed at a victim with a disability as compared to a victim without a disability. In addition, participants had more positive evaluations, or felt cyber harm was more understandable or acceptable, when the harm took place as an act of retaliation or within the context of a friendship than in unprovoked situations and between a transgressor and victim who are not friends. Although there were no significant age or gender differences in general evaluations of each situation, there were significant age and gender differences in response to the retaliation and friendship counter probes. Younger participants (7–10–year–old) had more negative evaluations of cyberbullying in response to counter probes about whether the act of cyberbullying was an act of retaliation than did older adolescent participants (15–18–year–old). These age differences were also observed in how younger participants (7–10–year–old) evaluated cyberbullying between friends in the science classroom significantly more negatively than did older adolescents (15–18–year–old). With regard to gender differences, in the zoom conversation situation, female participants had significantly more negative evaluations of cyberbullying between friends than did males. Although age and gender differences were observed, these differences were more significant in response to contextual features. Specifically, these results highlight the ways in which participants considered the disability of a victim,

interpersonal ties between a transgressor and victim, and the intention of these acts of harm in evaluating the acceptability of these actions.

With regard to how youth with SLD evaluated and justified these evaluations of bystander intervention in cyberbullying situations, there were some differences between youth with low and moderate to high levels of bullying involvement. When compared to the low involvement bullying group, a higher percentage of participants in the mild to high involvement group endorsed supporting the victim and a passive response, and a lower percentage endorsed telling an authority figure in most situations. Participants who drew on moral justifications were more likely to endorse a bystander intervention that involved supporting the victim whereas those who drew on non–moral justifications (i.e., personal or social conventional) were more likely to endorse intervening by telling an authority figure. These findings highlight the associations between how participants conceptualize the bystander intervention (i.e., as a moral or non–moral action) and the specific actions participants endorsed in response to witnessing acts of cyberbullying. In addition, these findings suggest that there is a connection between prior experiences of bullying and bystander intervention decision making.

This study's findings have several implications. One, youth with SLD were involved in varying frequencies and forms of bullying as defined by the four bullying involvement groups, and the frequency of bullying involvement was significantly associated with both school engagement and mental health outcomes. Specifically, students who were involved in perpetrating bullying and also victimized were at highest risk of negative school engagement and mental health outcomes. This finding highlights the need to tailor interventions to students based on the specific forms and frequency of bullying involvement. Two, youth with SLD reasoned with more complexity (i.e., had mixed evaluations or found cyberbullying acceptable) in situations that involved retaliatory action or cyberbullying that took place between friends than in general contexts of cyberbullying. This finding underscores the need for developing intervention practices that explore these considerations and involve youth in the process of studying other factors that are relevant in evaluating situations of cyberbullying. Finally, the majority of youth in this study endorsed responding to cyberbullying situations by taking actions to support the victim. Some developmental differences were noted in these evaluations in addition to differences based on profile of bullying involvement. In addition, participants were most likely to draw on moral considerations in endorsing a response of supporting the victim. These findings suggest that future interventions should center youths' perspectives, involve authority figures such as teachers and parents, and involve a component of building skills and competence in the particularities of bystander intervention online.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the people who have supported, inspired, and believed in me. I dedicate this work to my parents, my sister, and my God Mother Nasrin Safai, all of whom have played pivotal roles in my academic and life journey. This work is dedicated to my students and all the youth who demonstrate courage, resiliency, and heart in navigating school and life with disabilities. Finally, I humbly dedicate this writing to my ancestors who built the foundation for me to chase my dreams.

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I have the deepest admiration for the youth who participated in this study. Thank you to all the participants who took the time to share their experiences and speak honestly about the difficulties they have faced in school and life. I also feel grateful to have heard their stories of resilience and optimism and thank each participant for the time they dedicated to this work and the trust they placed in me to share their perspectives through this writing.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Bullying has been identified as both a school safety and public health crisis in the United States (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2016). Bullying is aggression that is characterized by repetition, and intention to harm inflicted by an individual or group with more power (e.g., power yielded from higher status or greater physical strength) than the victim (Gladden et al., 2014). For these reasons, bullying is conceptualized as a social justice issue, because students who are excluded from what is defined as normal or mainstream culture are most frequently targeted (Herrera et al., 2015; National Association of School Psychologists, 2019).

Students with disabilities are at an increased risk of experiencing victimization and engaging in perpetration when compared to students without disabilities (Eisenberg et al., 2015; Rose & Gage, 2017). Although estimates vary by study, one study by Blake et al. (2012) measured prevalence rates of victimization across the developmental span and found that 24.5% of elementary and middle school students, and 34.1% of high school students with disabilities reported being bullied. Additional studies have documented the higher rates of bullying experienced by youth with disabilities compared to peers without disabilities. For example, Rose et al. (2015) found that 14.5% of youth without disabilities and 21.6% of youth with disabilities reported high levels of victimization (i.e., victimization levels that were one standard deviation above the total sample mean). Bear and colleagues (2015) extended this finding by examining differences in victimization by form of harm. They found that 19.6% of youth with disabilities experienced verbal bullying compared to 15.3% of youth without disabilities; 11.0% of youth with disabilities experienced social relational bullying compared to 7.8% of youth without disabilities, ; and 9.9% of youth with disabilities experienced physical bullying compared to 6.8% of youth without disabilities. The disproportionality in bullying victimization rates between students with and without disabilities begins in preschool (Son et al., 2012) and continues through adolescence (Rose & Gage., 2017).

Bullying involvement results in negative social conditions that increase the likelihood that victims will develop depression, anxiety, experience low self–esteem, self–harm, physical health and sleep problems, alcohol or drug abuse, school absences and avoidance, and suicidal ideation (Cornell et al., 2013; Hysing et al., 2021; Klomek et al., 2010). Additionally, there is increasing national awareness of both the immediate and long–term detrimental effects of bullying. Potential long–term implications of childhood bullying include greater levels of depression, anxiety, poor social relationships, economic hardship, and aggressive behaviors over the life span (Gladstone et al., 2006; Takizawa et al., 2014; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010; Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Adulthood criminality (e.g., assault/battery, rape) and personal problems (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse) have also been associated with bullying up to 11 years after the initial bullying experience (Ttofi et al., 2012). Given the risks associated with bullying, and the risks posed by having a disability and exposure to additional stressors, this research drew on the Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress model (Swearer & Hymel, 2015) in order to understand the effects of bullying involvement and additional vulnerabilities on mental health and academic outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Bullying has been studied as a phenomenon rooted in peer group dynamics as opposed to the bully–victim dyad, with group members taking on different roles in the process based on individual emotions, attitudes, and motivations. Studying bullying in its group context helps to further an understanding of the individual motivations that can drive perpetration, the range of

actions peer bystanders can take in relation to the bully and victims, and factors impacting the adjustment of victims across diverse contexts. An estimated 20–30% of students are involved in bullying as either a bully or victim, whereas 70–80% of students are bystanders (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The four most common roles that bystanders can take on are : (1) reinforcer to the bully (e.g., laughs or verbally encourages the bully); (2) assistant to the bully (e.g., joins the bully); (3) defender of the victim (e.g., stands up to the bully or comforts the victim); and (4) outsider (e.g., unaware of or ignores bullying). Encouraging peer bystanders to intervene directly (as defenders) or indirectly (by telling an adult) to stop bullying can be an integral component in effective bullying intervention and prevention (Craig et al., 2000; O'Connell et al., 1999; Polanin et al., 2012; Salmivalli et al., 2011) and has been shown to help increase students 'feelings of school safety (Gini et al., 2008).

Many factors impact the ways in which youth are involved in the bullying dynamic, including disability type and related individual characteristics. Rose et al. (2011b) identified the visibility of a disability, weaker social ties, and poor social skills as key individual–level factors that may put students with disabilities at higher risk for victimization. In addition, prior studies have found that students with disabilities with externalizing behaviors have an increased risk of engaging as both perpetrator and being victimized, whereas students with visible intellectual or physical disabilities are at higher risk of victimization (Farmer et al., 2015; O'Brennan et al., 2015). A recent study found that, when compared to students without disabilities, students with emotional disabilities and other health impairments reported more assisting and victimization experiences. Students with autism reported less instances of defending victims whereas students with other health impairments and Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) reported more defending behaviors (Malecki et al., 2020). Given the noted positive effects of defender bystander intervention, more research is needed to understand why youth with SLD report higher levels of defender bystander intervention than peers without disabilities, as this is a very promising finding for bullying intervention programs.

Face–to face and cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs in the US have produced modest effects at best (Evans et al., 2014; Gaffney et al., 2019; Ng et al., 2022). However, there have been noted increases in intervention effectiveness when positive peer intervention and peer counseling were embedded in the bullying intervention (Lee et al., 2015). Limited existing research has identified best practices to reduce bullying perpetration and victimization among students with disabilities (Rose et al., 2011). In addition, during the COVID–19 pandemic many essential activities were moved to online platforms as a public health safety measure. Research conducted prior to the COVID–19 pandemic indicated that higher frequency of internet use was associated with increased youth reports of cyberbullying and cybervictimization (Kowalski et al., 2014; Kowalski et al., 2019). As a result, there was growing public concern about the consequences of children's increased reliance on technology during and after the COVID–19 pandemic, including a potential increase in exposure to cyberbullying and its associated risks. There is a need for more research on the effects of bullying intervention programs that disaggregates results by disability type, focuses on cyberbullying, analyzes differential effects on subgroups (i.e., bullies, victims, and bully–victims), and evaluates intervention practices that are contextually and developmentally appropriate (Houchins et al., 2016).

Scholars have conceptualized bullying involvement as a moral issue that prompts individuals to think about concerns of welfare (e.g., psychological and physical safety), fairness, and personal rights and preferences. In this study, I draw on Social Domain Theory (Turiel,

1983) to understand the competing concerns that youth weigh in making decisions about bullying involvement as perpetrator and bystander (e.g., balancing concerns for the welfare of the victim, with the norms of a social group, and personal preferences). Furthermore, it is important to understand the effects of living with a disability on decision making related to bullying. For example, youth with less visible disabilities may perpetrate bullying to ensure that their disability stays hidden, to establish social power as a protective mechanism, or engage in bullying as a learned behavior in response to prolonged victimization (Eisenberg et al., 2015). This study centers the perspectives of youth with SLD in order to elevate the voices of these students and challenge deficit–oriented views and explanations for bullying and bystander actions that youth with SLD engage in.

Review of the Literature

The review of the relevant literature begins by providing a brief summary of the Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress model as an analytic tool to identify salient factors to consider in analyzing the risk of bullying involvement and adverse outcomes for youth with SLD. Then, this review provides an overview of how youth are classified with a SLD in the U.S. school system, and statistics on the prevalence of SLDs along with the social, emotional, and academic risks associated with having a SLD. Subsequently, this review provides definitions of key terms related to bullying including a summary of stigma–based bullying which is a relevant consideration in the context of understanding bullying that impacts youth with SLD. This review details patterns in bullying and related outcomes for youth with SLD along with a summary of additional demographic factors and developmental considerations to take into account in understanding differences in bullying experiences. Given the specific historical context during which data for this study were collected, this review outlines key considerations related to the COVID–19 pandemic that impacted youths' social and emotional wellbeing and risk for bullying involvement. This review outlines salient risk factors associated with cyberbullying, and provides some promising findings related to cyber bystander intervention. This literature review also provides an overview of bystander roles in cyberbullying and factors that contribute to cyber bystander decision making. This review then offers a brief rationale for some methodological decisions regarding Latent Profile Analysis and clinical interviews that will be further discussed in the subsequent chapters. This literature review concludes with a section on theoretical perspectives on the development of social and moral knowledge that provides the theoretical and empirical rationale for how youths' reasoning about cyberbullying and bystander intervention was analyzed in this study.

Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress Model

In this research I examined how youth with SLDs have experienced and responded to interpersonal stressors (i.e., bullying involvement) during and after a period of global turmoil due to the COVID–19 pandemic. The Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress model (Swearer & Hymel, 2015) provides a framework for understanding SLD diagnosis as a risk factor for bullying, and the associated adjustment outcomes. Empirical findings from decades of research on bullying have led scholars and practitioners to recognize the need to account for an individual's social ecology in understanding bullying (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). According to social–ecological

theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), human development occurs through bidirectional interactions between individuals and the multiple systems they exist within (i.e., home, neighborhood, school, community, and society).

Many factors influence bullying involvement and mental health outcomes including negative or stressful life events as well as one's cognitions about these events. In the Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress model, the social–ecological model takes into account the interconnections in a child's world, and the diathesis–stress model allows for an understanding of the complexity of stressors and risk and protective factors that influence both engagement and intervention in bullying. This model proposes that individual cognitive or biological vulnerabilities (i.e., diatheses) and specific environmental stressors can influence the development of negative psychological outcomes (e.g., internalizing and externalizing conditions). In this study, living with an SLD is conceptualized as the diatheses, or individual vulnerability, and involvement in the bullying dynamic is an environmental or life stressor.

Youth with Specific Learning Disabilities

In the United States, the highest percentage of students receiving special education services qualify for these federally legislated services under the category of Specific Learning Disability. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975 as Public Law 94–142, requires that children and youth ages 3–21 with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate public education in the least restricted environment. A total of 7.3 million disabled students made up 15% of national public–school enrollment in 2021–2022. During this school year, about a third of students (32%) receiving services under IDEA had a specific learning disability (Schaeffer, 2023). The regulations for qualifying a student for special education under a Specific Learning Disability date back to 1968. Outside of a school setting, a Specific Learning Disability is also recognized in diagnostic guidelines including the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual–5 (DSM–5, American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD–11, World Health Organization, 2018) (Grigorenko et al., 2020).

Children can qualify for special education services under the category of a Specific Learning Disability if the child does not meet state–approved age– or grade–level standards in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics problem solving. Processes for determining whether a child meets criteria for a Specific Learning Disability can vary state to state but include identification of a discrepancy between a child's intellectual abilities and achievement, a lack of response to evidence based interventions to address academic concerns, and an analysis of patterns of strength and weaknesses in a child's cognitive profile that reveal isolated areas of weakness. Decisions about special education eligibility are made as a team comprised of the child's parent(s), teachers, and qualified clinicians who conduct assessments. Furthermore, a child classified with a Specific Learning Disability is determined to not have difficulties that are primarily the result of a visual, hearing, or motor disability; intellectual disability; emotional disturbance; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency (Dragoo, 2017).

Social, Emotional, and Academic Outcomes Associated with Specific Learning Disabilities

Specific Learning Disabilities have been associated with challenges in multiple domains of functioning and life outcomes. In addition to academic difficulties, students with SLD have been found to be at higher risk, when compared with peers without learning disabilities, for internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety (Al–Yagon, 2016; Donolato et al., 2022; Mammarella et al., 2016; Mugnaini et al., 2009) and externalizing disorders such as behavior problems and hyperactivity (Sorour et al., 2014). Furthermore, students with SLD have been noted to have more difficulty with emotion regulation and associated challenges with understanding social cues than peers without learning disabilities (Bauminger & Kimhi–Kind, 2008) in addition to use of more passive or unproductive coping strategies when confronted with challenges (Firth et al., 2010). Additionally, the academic and psychosocial difficulties experienced by students with SLD have been associated with some maladaptive behaviors that can result in higher school dropout rates than in students without learning disabilities (Deshler, 2005).

Studies also suggest that students with SLD experience more challenges than their peers without learning disabilities in their social connections (e.g., Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). For example, students with SLD perceive higher levels of rejection and lower levels of availability for connection and support from teachers (Al–Yagon & Mikulincer, 2004). In addition, students with SLD also have reported lower levels of intimacy, and less validation and loyalty from their peers (Vaughn & Elbaum, 1999). Students with SLD have also reported higher levels of peer avoidance and anxiety (Al–Yagon & Mikulincer, 2004), as well as higher levels of loneliness in peer dyadic relationships, increasing their risk for adjustment problems (Al–Yagon, 2016).

Bullying Forms and Definitions

Traditional or face–to–face bullying is defined as unwanted physical, verbal, or psychological aggression that takes place in and around school and involves (a) an intent to cause harm, b) harm that occurs frequently over a sustained period of time, and (c) harm that occurs within an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power between perpetrator and victim (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Olweus identified face–to–face bullying as occurring in direct forms (e.g., involving pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, or restraining another) or indirectly (e.g., teasing, taunting, threatening, calling names, or spreading a rumor) (Olweus, 1993). Cyberbullying has core characteristics that distinguish it from face–to–face bullying. These characteristics are: 1) the pervasiveness of cyberbullying (i.e., it can occur day and night and across settings); 2) the anonymity of perpetrators that can lead victims to feel more helpless than in traditional bullying; and 3) the potentially broader audience to witness the harm.

Stigma–Based Bullying

Students with SLD are vulnerable to the negative effects of disability–based stigma and can experience a distinct form of bullying called stigma–based bullying (also referred to as bias–based bullying or harassment). This type of bullying refers to aggressive actions that include elements of both bullying and discrimination and is motivated by stigma often involving distinct behaviors such as homophobic epithets directed at LGBTQ youth or racial slurs targeted at racial and ethnic minority youth (NASEM, 2016). Earnshaw et al. (2018) conceptualize stigma–based bullying as a process that is driven, at least in part, by factors distinct from other forms of bullying (e.g., prejudicial attitudes, biases, and preferences for members of the same group).

Furthermore, youth who experience bias–based bullying based on multiple social identities report more negative outcomes of bullying and higher levels of school avoidance and fear than those students who only report one type of bias–based bullying and those who experience non–bias–based bullying (Mulvey et al., 2020).

Earnshaw et al. (2018) developed a theoretical framework for stigma–based bullying that draws on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and posits that individual youth who perpetrate stigma–based bullying are nested within influences at the interpersonal, school, familial, societal, and systems–levels. The most distal layer represents stigma, or social devaluation and discrediting, that exists within society (Goffman, 1963; Link & Phelan, 2001). Context plays an important role in how certain identities and groups are perceived. For example, sexual minority youth are more likely to report bullying if they live in neighborhoods with more LGBT related hate crimes (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015), and youth can experience more bullying in communities in which they are a part of the minority racial/ethnic group (Schumann et al., 2013). For students with SLD, placement and restrictiveness of educational placement may be factors that play a role in the degree to which disability is stigmatized (discussed in the next section).

Bullying Involvement and Related Outcomes of Bullying for Youth with SLD

Prior research shows that students with SLD are at high risk of bullying involvement and related negative mental health outcomes. Some studies have found that students with SLD are overrepresented within the bullying dynamic (Ezzati Babi & Mikaeili, 2022; Rose et al., 2011b), experiencing significantly higher levels of victimization (Mishna, 2003) and engaging as both perpetrator and victim (i.e., (bully–victims) more often than their peers without disabilities (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2013). In addition, adolescents with SLD receiving special education services in non–general education classes have reported higher levels of both victimization and perpetration than youth with learning disabilities in mainstream classes (Heiman & OlenikShemesh, 2015). Furthermore, students with SLDs are at heightened risk of experiencing adverse mental health and academic outcomes when engaged in the bullying dynamic (Kowalski et al., 2016).

Youth with SLD have not only been found to be more likely to experience victimization but are also more likely than peers without disabilities to intervene as bystanders when witnessing bullying. In a recent study conducted by Malecki et al. (2020), disability status was examined in relation to engagement in bully, victim, and bystander roles. Students with SLD reported engaging in higher levels of defending behavior than peers without disabilities (Malecki et al., 2020). More research is needed to understand why youth with SLD report higher levels of defender bystander intervention than peers without disabilities as this is a very promising finding for bullying intervention programs that focus on bystander intervention.

Because bullying takes place in the context of a larger social ecology, social support has been linked to bullying involvement. Rose et al. (2015) found that the level of peer social support, as measured by students' perceived care and respect from peers, and inclusion in the peer group, was more significantly associated with bullying involvement than having a SLD. Students with SLD who reported lower levels of social support, were more likely to experience bullying victimization. Additionally, support from teacher and school personnel served as a predictor for increased victimization (Rose et al., 2015). One explanation for this finding may be

that when students are viewed as dependent on adult support, they tend to be victimized more than students who are more independent (Rose et al., 2015).

Bullying and Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation

In addition to disability status, other demographic factors have been associated with increased risk of bullying involvement. Although existing research has not systematically analyzed the intersection of these demographic risk factors with disability status, some important findings have emerged regarding demographic factors that may further increase the chance of bullying involvement for students with SLD. When exploring the association between race or ethnicity with bullying involvement, studies have yielded inconsistent findings. Gage et al. (2021) analyzed data reported to the U.S. Office of Civil Rights including data from 90,000 schools across the country to understand how demographic factors were associated with risk for bullying victimization. Results from this study indicated that Black and Hispanic students were significantly more likely to be victims of bullying, and to be disciplined for bullying perpetration, than their White counterparts. However, Jackman et al. (2020) found that White youth reported higher odds of bullying involvement than racial/ethnic minority youth in a sample from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance data (2011–2017) (N = 114,881).

Researchers have analyzed sexual minority status and gender in relation to risk for bullying victimization and perpetration. Studies have indicated that identification with a sexual minority group increased the likelihood of bullying victimization and perpetration (e.g., Pollitt et al., 2018). Eisenberg et al. (2015) found that the odds of being both a perpetrator and a victim of physical and relational bullying were 1.41 to 3.22 times higher among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths than among heterosexual youths. In a cross–country comparison of studies on gender differences in bullying involvement, Smith et al. (2018) found that males were more involved in both bullying perpetration and victimization than females across studies and countries.

Intersectional analyses of the relationship between demographic a variables and bullying involvement have yielded significant findings. For example, Mueller et al. (2015) analyzed a sample of 75 344 participants from the 2009 and 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey in order to assess associations between race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation variation in being bullied. The authors found that for White and Hispanic females, the risk of bullying victimization increased significantly with identification as being bisexual. However, there was no significant difference between the risk of bullying victimization between Black and White youth and between Black youth who identified as sexual minorities and their White heterosexual counterparts. Jackman et al. (2020), in a study mentioned above, found that sexual minority youth reported higher odds of bullying perpetration and peer victimization than heterosexual youth. When employing an intersectional analysis of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual minority status, all sexual minority and racial/ethnic minority boys, and bisexual racial/ethnic minority girls were at higher risk for bullying and peer victimization when compared to heterosexual peers of the same race/ethnicity. Taken together, findings from these studies highlight the need to analyze sexual minority status and race/ethnicity as potential risk factors in bullying involvement for youth with SLD.

Developmental Trends in Bullying

Research has shown that with age the prevalence rates, forms, and predictors of bullying can vary (Nansel et al., 2001; Swearer & Hymel, 2015; Zych et al., 2020). Adolescence is a phase of development between childhood and adulthood that the United Nations has formally defined as the period between 10–19 years of age (Sawyer et al., 2018). Distinct changes in biology and social functioning take place when individuals transition from childhood to adolescence (Rodkin et al., 2015), and these changes may impact the form, frequency, and motivation for engaging in bullying. In general, bullying tends to increase somewhat during childhood, peak during early adolescence, and decline slightly during the late adolescent years (Nansel et al., 2001; Zych et al., 2020).

Findings from a longitudinal study of developmental trajectories of face–to–face bullying in a cohort of adolescents followed from ages 11 to 17 show a developmental change in the form bullying is most commonly enacted (Zych et al., 2020). Specifically, victims reported relatively stable rates of exclusion and teasing, whereas physical victimization decreased with age, a finding supported by prior research by Eisner and Malti (2015). Additionally, over time, victims demonstrated higher probabilities of insulting and excluding others (Zych et al., 2020). It is possible that physical aggression becomes less acceptable with increasing age, but subtle aggression persists over the course of development, and victims engage in subtle victimization in response to prior experiences of victimization (Zych et al., 2020). Additionally, Pepler et al. (2006) attribute the increase in bullying during the transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school to a desire to assert power during periods in which power dynamics have not yet been established.

Developmental trends in cyberbullying perpetration and victimization have been noted to have significant variability based on the range of measures used to assess prevalence rates, how cyberbullying is defined; the time range used to determine whether cyberbullying occurred (e.g., last two months, six months, or lifetime); the criteria for repetition of the bullying act (e.g., at least once, two to three times a month or more); and demographic characteristics of the sample being investigated (e.g., age, sex, and race) (Kowalski et al., 2019; Selkie et al., 2016). One of the few existing studies that have explored age–differences in cyberbullying suggest that cyberbullying peaks in adolescence (ages 11–18) and declines over the lifespan into older adulthood (Barlett & Chamberlin, 2017). In addition, older adolescents may be at higher risk of cyberbullying perpetration. For example, one study found the risk of cyberbullying perpetration increased with age amongst a sample of 13–17–year–old students (Festl & Quandt, 2016). However, when evaluating changes in perpetration amongst a sample of adolescents 12–15 years of age, Festl et al. (2017) found that involvement in cyberbullying perpetration remained relatively stable, suggesting that increase in perpetration may occur in adolescents 15 years and older.

Similar to traditional or face–to–face bullying, increases in cyberbullying have been noted during transition years (i.e., the transition from elementary to middle school). Adolescents have been found to be at greater risk of victimization in early middle school (e.g., sixth and seventh grade) when transitioning to middle school (Olthof et al., 2011). Although the majority of the research examining prevalence rates of cyberbullying has been conducted with middle school students, the few studies conducted with elementary school students have found that very young children are not immune from the experience of cyberbullying (i.e., children as young as seven years of age experience cybervictimization) (Kowalski et al., 2019). This emphasizes the need to begin bullying prevention efforts in elementary school with a particular focus on the transition from elementary to middle school (Olthof et al., 2011).

COVID–19 Contextual Factors

Beginning in March 2020 at the start of the COVID–19 pandemic, schools were closed as a safety measure to mitigate the spread of the COVID–19 virus in most countries worldwide impacting approximately 1.2 billion students (i.e., almost three–quarters of all learners across the globe). In the United States, nearly all of the 55 million students in Kindergarten through 12th grade were affected by school closures (Golberstein et al., 2020). At this time, there was great uncertainty and confusion around when schools would reopen, and how school closures would affect students. Policies to address school closures included programs for remote and hybrid learning, and these changes to traditional schooling had variable effects on students. The school closures continued into the following school year for varying periods of time for different groups of students, based on region and school type, and additional factors (e.g., political and economic). During this time of school closures students spent substantially more time online than prior to distance learning and interacted with peers and teachers primarily through virtual platforms. This led to unique learning circumstances that impacted students in many ways, including affecting students' social and emotional wellbeing, relationships with teachers and peers, and experiences of bullying (Bacher–Hicks et al., 2022).

Although the prevalence and risks associated with bullying have been widely documented prior to the COVID–19 pandemic, there is a dearth of literature on how the pandemic and resulting shifts in modality of schooling impacted students' bullying experiences, and, specifically the bullying experiences of youth with disabilities. In some ways, the pandemic created a natural experiment to test the effects of distance learning on student outcomes, including bullying victimization. Emerging literature on this topic suggests that the prevalence of bullying victimization may have decreased during and immediately following distance learning for the overall student population (Bacher–Hicks et al., 2022; Repo et al., 2023; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). However, there was likely a great deal of variability in the effects of distance learning on student experiences based on student characteristics and demographic factors due to the fact that the pandemic also brought to light long–standing inequities in society. This inequity may have had implications on the nature of bullying that took place during and after the pandemic. For example, a recent study by Kim et al. (2020) documented an increase in bias–based bullying during the pandemic (i.e., bullying victimization associated with socially devalued identities such as race/ethnicity and disability). This study also found that students were more likely to intervene and report instances of bullying during the pandemic than prior to the pandemic. However, many important questions are yet to be answered about the bullying involvement and related experiences of youth with disabilities during and after the COVID–19 pandemic.

In addition to bullying involvement, students' academic and mental health wellbeing were affected during the pandemic and after the transition to distance learning. In a study of a general sample of adolescents between the ages of 11–17, students' self–reports indicated an increase in academic worries during the pandemic. Specifically, high school students and female students reported heightened academic worries compared to middle school students and male students. In addition, the majority of adolescents indicated decreased support from teachers during the COVID–19 pandemic, including reduced communication with teachers (Lessard et al., 2021). Data on youths' mental health wellbeing during the pandemic taken from a nationally representative sample of public and private schools in the U.S. indicated that a significant

percentage of adolescents experienced poor mental health (i.e., more than one in three high school students (37.1%) experienced poor mental health during the COVID–19 pandemic). In addition, almost half of students surveyed experienced persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness, with approximately 20% expressing suicidal ideation. There were no significant differences in mental health indicators based on race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual minority status. However, positive connection to peers and adults at school served as significant protective factors for youth in this survey (Jones et al., 2022).

Trends in Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention

Although cyberbullying and face–to–face bullying take on differing forms, prior research highlights a strong association between these types of bullying. Cyberbullying often occurs in conjunction with face–to face bullying (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015) and can reflect a continuation of face–to–face bullying enacted through a different medium (Modecki et al., 2014). Similar to face–to–face bullying, the prevalence of cyberbullying differs in relation to variables such as gender and disability in addition to factors unique to the cyber context. For example, cyberbullying is associated with time spent online, with a growing risk of cyberbullying involvement being associated with more time online (Álvarez–García et al., 2015; Sasson & Mesch, 2017). Prior research also highlights that cyberbullying is more prevalent in girls as opposed to boys (Fridh et al., 2015). Students with disabilities are at higher risk of cyberbullying involvement than students without disabilities. For example, a study found 50.4% of participants without a disability indicated they had been cyberbullied in their lifetime, as compared to 72.9% of participants with disabilities (Kowalski &Toth, 2018).

For students with SLD, cyberbullying risk has been associated with having a learning disability as well as the setting in which students received instruction. A study compared cyberbullying involvement between a group of students with SLD attending general education classes, students with comorbid learning disabilities attending special education classes, and typically achieving students as a control group. Results showed that students with SLD in special education classes were more often cyberbully victims, reported being cyber perpetrators more often, and were more often both victim and perpetrator when compared to students in the other groups (Heiman & Olenik–Shemesh, 2015). In addition, students with SLD in general education who reported cyber victimization also reported lower achievement in the classroom and lower concentration. Similarly, students with SLD in special education who were cyber victims reported lower concentration than non–victimized peers (Heiman & Olenik–Shemesh, 2015).

In addition to direct involvement in cyberbullying, youth are also at risk of witnessing cyberbullying online. A study found that 85% of students from ages 12 to 17 reported they had witnessed negative interactions on social media, and 12% said they had repeatedly witnessed these negative interactions (Lenhart et al., 2011). Observational research has found that when bystanders intervene on behalf of the victim, they successfully abate victimization more than 50% of the time (Craig et al., 2000; O'Connell et al., 1999). In addition, one study of a school–based bullying intervention program found that the bystander intervention program was associated with a significant decrease in cybervictimization (Williford et al., 2013). Furthermore, Midgett and Doumas (2019) found that effective bystander intervention was associated with a decrease in students' self–reported depressive symptoms and an increase in a sense of belonging throughout the school. As a result, it is necessary to have bystander interventions in place to support all those involved in the bullying interactions.

Existing research on cyber bystander intervention has identified categories of intervention and some justifications for why each action is warranted by bystanders. Cyber bystander interventions have been separated into two overarching categories: constructive and aggressive bystander interventions. Constructive intervention requires the bystander to assist and comfort the victim while also trying to stop the bully. Aggressive intervention refers to bystander intervention that involves aggressively fighting back against the bullying. A study by Beavon et al. (2022) found more in–depth categories for bystander intervention including blocking and/or reporting the bully, retaliating against the bully, direct intervention, distracting the bully or victim, telling an adult, advising the victim, and emotionally supporting the victim. One study found many justifications for different bystander interventions. These justifications included how participants perceived the seriousness of the situation to be, the social relationships with the victim and bully, who was at fault, social status, perception of risk, and defender self–efficacy (Thornberg et al., 2018). Although some existing research has explored forms and reasoning for different cyberbullying bystander interventions, further research to explore disability–related, developmental, and contextual differences is warranted.

Methodological Considerations

In studying bullying involvement, predictors, outcomes, and youths' reasoning about bullying, there are methodological limitations that have been addressed in prior literature. In response to these limitations, Latent Profile Analysis and the clinical interview method have been used to study bullying behaviors and youths' reasoning about bullying. What follows is a brief discussion of these approaches and the rationale for using these approaches.

Latent Profile Analysis

The distinct bullying involvement groups that students are classified within should accurately reflect key differences between students. However, when employing a variable–centered analytic approach, there are some important limitations. Specifically, there is a lack of consensus in the field on criteria that should be used for grouping students. Some studies classify students into groups based on victimization severity or frequency, whereas others analyze bullying involvement based on the form of bullying students report experiencing (e.g., verbal or physical). However, inconsistent guidelines exist for cutoff scores and grouping criteria for studies that specify victimization groups based on severity. Studies that classify bullying involvement based on the form of bullying are also questionable as different forms of bullying have been shown to be highly correlated, with students often concurrently experiencing multiple different types of bullying. When different criteria are used, it becomes difficult to establish consistent subgroup differences across studies (Nylund et al., 2007).

Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) is a person-centered analytic approach. It is an extension of latent class analysis wherein continuous, ordinal, and/or categorical indicators are presumed to occur in meaningful clusters that can be explained by mutually exclusive profiles (Hagenaars & McCutcheon, 2002). LPA allows for an examination of the heterogeneity in individual behaviors, identification of discrete classes of youth who engage in bullying victimization and/or perpetration in similar ways, and assessment of whether these groupings support commonly used researcher–identified categories of the stable bully, stable victim, or bully–victim categories

when accounting for specific forms of bullying perpetration and victimization (i.e., relational, verbal, physical, and cyber).

Clinical Interviews

Commonly used self–report psychometric scales do not include questions that aim to target the root causes of bullying, whereas the clinical interview method (Piaget, 1967) provides a means for understanding the cognitive processes in which children and adolescents engage when confronted with moral dilemmas of evaluating and responding to bullying. A basic difference between the clinical interview method and psychometric scales is that clinical interviews are aimed at describing the organization of thought (Piaget, 1967; Turiel, 1983), whereas psychometric scales assume a one–to–one correspondence between one's final evaluation and prior cognitive processes (Turiel, 1983). The assumption of one–to–one correspondence between cognitive processes and responses is problematic, as an individual's response to a dilemma or task is not a complete indicator of type or complexity of thinking (Piaget, 1967; Turiel, 1983). The clinical method consists of a set of tasks pertaining to a domain (e.g., morality) and a closely associated interview, which includes a series of predetermined questions and probes based on specific hypotheses (Turiel, 1983). The following section presents more information on the specific questions and probes included in the clinical interview used in this study.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Development of Social and Moral Knowledge

Morality is central to all aspects of social life and has particular relevance in this study's focus on understanding youths' bullying involvement decisions. Varying psychological theories have drawn on philosophy, biology, anthropology, and sociology, in efforts to understand the origins and development of morality in human beings. Developmental scientists have studied how morality is acquired, as well as the sources and nature of changes and variations in moral thinking. Scholars from different fields and theoretical orientations have placed varying degrees of importance on the role of evolutionary, environmental, and cultural factors, as well as an individuals' emotions and cognition in the development of morality. Despite differences in theoretical orientations, there is a common understanding amongst developmental scientists that morality refers to how individuals treat others, and intentions and motivations for actions taken (Killen & Smetana, 2015). In this section, I provide a brief overview of different theoretical views on moral development drawing on the summary provided by Killen and Smetana (2015). I then provide a discussion of structural–developmental or constructivist theories of moral development and provide an overview of Social Domain Theory which is the underlying theoretical framework for this study's analysis of youths' reasoning about bullying involvement. I conclude with a brief overview of relevant empirical literature that draws on Social Domain Theory in an examination of bullying and bystander intervention.

Classical Theories of Moral Development

The psychoanalytic theory of moral development (Freud, 1930,1961) is rooted in an analysis of the social and emotional aspects of parent–child relationships during early life. According to Freud, development occurs in stages, particularly in the first few years of life,

ultimately leading to the formation of conscience by the age of 5. Young children are thought to develop mechanisms for inhibiting negative behavior and promoting positive behavior by internalizing the norms and values demonstrated by their parents. Conscience, in this theory, is viewed as a self–regulatory system that integrates moral emotions and conduct, with greater importance placed on emotion than cognition. A central aspect of the psychoanalytic theory is the notion of a mutually responsive orientation between parents and children. This relationship fosters the child's sensitivity towards learning proper conduct, caring for others, and complying with social expectations. Freud's theory emphasizes the importance of these early social interactions and their impact on a child's moral development.

Behaviorism originally described by Watson (1930) and further developed by Skinner (1971) relied solely on observable behaviors as the basis for theory formation and expansion. Watson's theory of classical conditioning originated with research on animals and extended to the psychological care of infants and children. This theory spurred research on how learning principles could explain the development of morality. Skinner (1950) expanded on this work through his theory of operant conditioning. Skinner (1971) argued that moral behaviors were influenced by the same environmental factors as any other learned behavior, such as language acquisition or learning to swim. According to Skinner, rewards and punishments play a significant role in the onset of any new behaviors. This theory led to debates in the field of developmental psychology, as Skinner rejected the concept of age–related limitations on development and cognitive developmental changes.

Building upon Skinner's foundational research, Bandura and McDonald (1963) proposed a social learning theory approach to development. Their proposition was that children learn not only through behavioral contingencies and reinforcement, but also through imitation and observation. These cognitive processes allow individuals to learn from observing others and experiencing vicarious situations, rather than solely relying on direct instruction and personal experiences. In the context of morality, children acquire knowledge about appropriate conduct by observing models such as parents, teachers, and peers (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) suggested that initially, behavioral control is external in young children. However, as children grow and are exposed to their environment, they have more opportunities to witness models of moral conduct. Through vicarious reinforcement (observing a model being rewarded for certain behaviors and punished for others) and self–evaluative consequences, children develop internal controls to reinforce socially desirable behavior and avoid transgressions. Bandura emphasized that this self–evaluative process is only activated when needed, and self–deterring consequences are most effective when the harm associated with one's actions is clear. This self–evaluative process forms the foundation of Bandura's moral disengagement theory, which is briefly discussed in a later section on theoretical approaches to studying moral reasoning about bullying. Extensive research from this perspective has focused on the role of parental socialization, disciplinary strategies, and environmental models in promoting behavioral adherence to adult standards as indicators of successful internalization of moral values.

Structural–Developmental or Constructivist theories of Moral Development

Piaget's theory (Piaget, 1932) provides a foundation for current research on the development of moral judgment for structural–developmental or constructivist theorists. Piaget (1932) explored how moral judgment and behavior emerge in development. His theory emphasizes the interaction between biological factors and environmental influences, such as

interactions with peers and adults, in shaping moral knowledge. According to Piaget, knowledge is acquired through action, and moral understanding evolves through experiences, reflection, and evaluation. Piaget posited that children are initially heteronomous thinkers, defining morality as compliance with rules set by authority figures. At this stage, children focus on objective responsibility (i.e., children take into consideration the consequences of an action and fail to factor in motivations or intention for said actions). However, by 8–10 years old, children are thought to transition to an autonomous stage of reasoning. At this stage, children are influenced by equal–status peer interactions that promote conceptions of equality and fairness. Piaget challenged the common belief that parents teach morality, stating that reciprocal peer interactions are crucial for moral development. He studied children's conflicts, discussions about social rules, and evaluations of moral dilemmas within peer exchanges and real–life scenarios. Subsequent research has confirmed the importance of peer relationships and friendships in children's moral understanding. However, it is important to note that current studies have shown that even young children have an intrinsic understanding of rules and do not solely rely on authority when evaluating transgressions, contrary to Piaget's theory of moral development (Killen & Smetana, 2015).

Kohlberg (1969) extended the work of Piaget (1932), and critiqued behaviorism and social learning theory in doing so. He argued that these theories failed to explain how children construct moral knowledge and that relying solely on imitation and observation was insufficient, given that adults often possess flawed or immoral orientations towards moral issues. To address these issues, cognitive developmental theory was applied to morality (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) to identify the logical thinking processes required for moral judgment development. Kohlberg proposed a six–stage theory of moral development organized into three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. In this stage sequence, children initially prioritize concerns such as avoiding punishment, meeting their own needs, and following social rules. He posited that in late adolescence or adulthood, judgments become grounded in principles of reciprocity and justice, moving beyond adherence to societal norms. In this way, both Piaget and Kohlberg emphasize that moral development entails differentiating between compliance with rules and societal norms and the understanding of social relationships based on cooperation, reciprocity, welfare, justice, and fairness. Kohlberg hypothesized that individuals progress through stages in a logical sequence, without skipping any stages. However, despite extensive research, this aspect of his theory has not been empirically validated (Killen & Smetana, 2015; Turiel, 2014). Nevertheless, Kohlberg's research program has been crucial in understanding how children develop moral knowledge and the developmental trajectories involved.

Social Domain Theory. Building on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg, research from Social Domain Theory (Turiel, 1983) has systematically found that children as early as 3 or 4 years of age are able to distinguish between moral issues, and conventional or other types of concerns. Well over 100 empirical studies utilizing Social Domain Theory conducted across the globe and with different cultural groups (Turiel, 2002) have substantiated this finding that is counter to the stage sequence proposed by Kohlberg. Social Domain Theory proposes that through reciprocal relations with the environment people actively construct, rather than passively receive, forms of social knowledge (Turiel, 1983). Social knowledge is categorized into distinct domains of reasoning which emerge early in development: the moral, the social–conventional, and the personal domains.

Studies drawing on Social Domain Theory have found that individuals justify evaluations of situations as okay or not okay based on their interpretation of domains at play in a given social situation. The moral domain encompasses prescriptive notions regarding how people ought to behave toward each other and deals particularly with concepts related to rights, justice, and welfare or prevention of harm (Turiel, 1983). Moral prescriptions are seen as universal, not determined by group consensus or law, and impartial to personal preferences (Turiel, 1983, 2002). The social conventional domain refers to knowledge of traditions or customs in systems of social relations. This domain is concerned with how people reason about social organizations, group dynamics, rules, and authority, as well as how they apply that reasoning to the coordination of social interactions (Turiel, 2002). The personal domain relates to self–knowledge and decisions within one's own sphere of control. It includes choices that are considered personal prerogatives, not governed by authority figures, rules, traditions, or laws. Empirical research has shown that these domain orientations coexist within individuals and are part of reasoning in evaluations of both straightforward and complex events. In some situations, people focus on concerns such as fairness or justice (moral domain), whereas in others they focus on group functioning (social conventional domain), or on individual priorities, preferences, and goals (personal domain). When social issues are thought to involve aspects of all the domains, individuals weigh multiple factors and may give priority to one consideration or domain over the others (Killen & Smetana, 2015).

Moral Evaluations, Justifications, and the Contexts of Bullying and Bystander Evaluation

Analyzing an individual's moral reasoning both empirically and conceptually is essential in studying bullying involvement behaviors including perpetration and bystander intervention. Researchers have explored bullying as a moral issue drawing on the theory of moral disengagement (Killer et al., 2019), positing that individuals first decide to engage in acts of harm, then selectively suspend morality to preserve a positive sense of self (Bandura, 2002). The idea of moral disengagement originates in Bandura's (1977) cognitive social learning theory. This theory presumes bullying perpetration results from an individual's disengagement from their moral values rather than as a result of a judgment and decision–making process that involves prioritization of nonmoral over moral concerns (e.g., social conventional over moral) considerations of a situation. In this study, I take a position in line with Social Domain Theory, that reasoning about moral principles is central to how youth evaluate acts of bullying, but, when reasoning about multifaceted situations, youth may sometimes be forced to coordinate conflicting principles, leading to engagement in acts of harm (Dahl & Waltzer, 2018).

This study focuses on understanding how youth with SLD reason about cyberbullying, due to the limited research that has examined how youth think about this form of bullying through a Social Domain Theory lens. A study by Shohoudi Mojdehi et al. (2019) investigated developmental and gender differences in reasoning about cyberbullying engagement. Specifically, the authors evaluated differences between children ages 8–10 and adolescents 14–16 years old and found that children found cyberbullying to be more negative than adolescents. In addition, female students judged cyberbullying as more unacceptable than their male counterparts (Shohoudi Mojdehi et al., 2019). In exploring cyberbullying, the current study investigated how youth think about this topic with considerations for gender and age differences. Furthermore, this dissertation study examined how reasoning about cyberbullying might vary with contextual variations including intergroup vs. intragroup bullying, provoked vs. unprovoked

acts of harm, and close vs. more distant interpersonal ties between the transgressor and victim. Finally, this study examined cyberbystander intervention evaluations and reasoning. What follows is a brief overview of empirical studies that drew on Social Domain Theory pertaining to these areas of exploration.

Moral Reasoning and Intergroup Exclusion

According to Social Domain Theory, individuals evaluate situations in distinct ways depending on the domain in which they classify the situation. Although some issues are prototypical of particular domains (e.g., unprovoked hitting is prototypical of the moral domain), many issues, including social exclusion, involve considerations from different domains. Research on social exclusion, conceptualized as a non–prototypical situation), shows that individuals invoke multiple categories of evaluation, even in early childhood (Killen & Rutland, 2011). As a result, although bullying refers to a range of indirect and direct acts of harm, a majority of prior studies on reasoning about disability–based bullying focus on intergroup social exclusion.

Killen and Rutland (2011) expanded the Social Domain Theory framework to focus on specific dilemmas that arise in group–based contexts of exclusion, as a distinct category of social interaction with moral implications. They found that children and adolescents use reasoning based on conventions and traditions to justify the exclusion of others. Conversely, youth use reasoning based on fairness, equitable treatment, or concern for others to reject forms of social exclusion. Killen and Rutland also distinguished between intergroup exclusion, which involves a member of the in–group or more powerful group in a given context excluding a member of the out–group, from intragroup exclusion, which involves a member of the in–group excluding another member of the in–group because this group member deviates from the group's norms in meaningful ways. Research findings indicate that from around ages 7–8 years old, children view it as legitimate to exclude those from their own group and from other social groups who threaten the social conventional norms central to their group. At this age children focus on preserving the cohesion of their group by minimizing threats to the group's conventions (Killen & Rutland, 2011).

Research on the reasoning of children, adolescents, and young adults without disabilities' evaluations of the exclusion of peers with disabilities has shown that a majority of children, adolescents, and young adults condemn disability–based exclusion and peer victimization (Bottema–Beutel et al., 2017; Bottema–Beutel et al., 2019; Bottema–Beutel & Li, 2015; Chilver–Stainer et al., 2014; Gasser et al., 2013, 2014; Mulvey et al., 2020) and express high levels of sympathy for peers with disabilities, independent of age and educational setting (Gasser et al., 2013). As children get older, they are able to take multiple perspectives into account. They are also more likely to base their reasoning for exclusion on the interplay between contextual factors and individual characteristics, and to account for multiple domains that are relevant to a particular decision. For example, Gasser et al. (2014) found that older children expected the inclusion of children with physical disabilities more frequently in social contexts than in athletic contexts as compared to their younger counterparts. Although age, context, and disability type appear to influence the evaluations and reasoning complexity children and adolescents engage in when evaluating acts of exclusion, these findings warrant further inquiry in the context of cyberbullying. In addition to age, exposure to peers with disabilities in an educational setting

(i.e., an inclusive classroom) may also have an effect on reasoning about inclusion or exclusion of peers with disabilities (Gasser et al., 2013).

Additional Contextual Considerations

A salient contextual factor has been shown to be an important consideration in how individuals make decisions about acts of harm (i.e., whether the act of harm is provoked or unprovoked). In addition, one's lived experience has been found to play a role in the interpretation of the act. A study by Ardila-Rey et al. (2009) found that children who were exposed to violence and displaced by this violence were more likely to condone moral transgressions (such as hitting or not sharing toys) when these transgressions were provoked (for reasons of retaliation) than were children who had low exposure to violence. This study revealed that not only does context of the harm have an impact on the ways in which children evaluated these situations, but also prior exposure to violence had an impact on the acceptability of retaliating in response to being harmed. Less is known about how prior experiences with bullying, and whether the act of cyberbullying is one of retaliation or not may impact how youth reason about these issues.

Additionally, judgments about justice or welfare can be influenced by interpersonal ties. For most people, maintaining and fostering interpersonal relationships is a central social consideration, however, factors related to interpersonal relations can conflict with justice, rights, or welfare concerns. For example, justice or welfare considerations can run counter to an interpersonal concern that is morally neutral or even negative (e.g., giving priority to a close friend over a stranger when distributing resources even when the stranger has a greater need for the resources). Smetana et al. (1991) investigated this topic and found that children's judgments and reasoning shifted based on interpersonal connections between individuals in the situation. Specifically, children generally favored the obligations of justice and rights over self–interested interpersonal expectations. Children also took interpersonal relationships into account when there was a conflict between moral and interpersonal considerations, and the salience of one or the other component lead to changes in how children reasoned about scenarios in which these considerations were in conflict (Smetana et al., 1991).

When interpersonal considerations come up in the context of social exclusion, children have been shown to make judgments that differentiate exclusion based on the nature of interpersonal ties. For example, in a study by Killen et al. (2002), evaluations and reasoning about exclusion differed based on whether the exclusion took place in a friendship, social club peer group, or school institutional context. With age, exclusion in the friendship and peer group contexts was viewed as multifaceted because these acts were evaluated as moral, conventional, and personal (whereas younger children more often viewed exclusion in strictly moral terms). Overall, adolescents were more likely than were younger children to evaluate exclusion from friendship and a peer group (e.g., music club) as acceptable. Adolescents often evaluated exclusion in the friendship context as acceptable based on personal domain justifications (e.g., "It's up to me to decide who I want to play with"). Further research is needed on how interpersonal ties might impact how children and adolescents reason about cyberbullying.

Patterns in Moral Reasoning about Bystander Involvement

Research on reasoning patterns and justifications for bystander intervention options in response to bullying has found that some distinct patterns exist in decision making. Specifically, when bystanders advocate for intervening to defend a victim and challenge the bullying scenario, these bystanders provide reasoning in the moral domain (e.g., consider the welfare of the victim or the fairness of the situation). This pattern also applies to bystander intervention in response to intergroup social exclusion or verbal aggression (e.g., ‘‘I will help the victim because it’s not fair that they are being teased just because of where they are from”) (Mulvey et al., 2016; Mulvey et al., 2020; Palmer & Abbot., 2018). On the other hand, decisions to remain uninvolved in response to intergroup social exclusion and aggression as a bystander are often justified with personal concerns (e.g., ‘‘It’s none of my business”) (Mulvey et al., 2016). Furthermore, decisions to remain uninvolved in response to witnessing bullying have been shown to increase with age, with younger adolescents finding bullying more unacceptable and expressing a greater likelihood of intervening to support the victim when compared to older adolescents (Mulvey et al., 2016).

Limited existing research has examined reasoning about bystander intervention in response to disability–based bullying. Mulvey et al. (2020) measured children’s (9– to –10 and 11– to– 12–year–old) evaluations of the acceptability of peer victimization and the type of intervention participants would engage in if they observed this form of victimization. Results indicated no differences based on the disability of the victim, and there were no significant differences based on the age of the participants. Participants’ moral judgments about the harmful nature of bullying and their own rates of aggressive behavior were associated with their likelihood of intervening if they observed youth with disabilities being victimized, and children were more likely to intervene when they expressed that bullying is morally unacceptable. Participants reported a variety of strategies for engaging in bystander intervention, including expecting to confront the bully, help the victim, and seek out help from others. Only a few participants reported that they would choose to not get involved, and no significant differences existed between responses indicating bystander intervention involving defending the victim directly or doing so indirectly by seeking help from others.

Furthermore, group membership and status may be associated with different bystander reactions during intergroup bullying. Existing research supports the finding that by 10 years of age children are aware of and take into account group membership and status differences when reasoning about intergroup conflict (e.g., Elenbaas & Killen, 2016; McGuire et al., 2019; Mulvey et al., 2018) prompting additional concerns about prejudice and discrimination (Hitti et al., 2017). For example, Mulvey et al. (2018) found that bystanders from a language majority group challenged the exclusion of a language minority outgroup member more often than a language majority in–group member. However, when examining bystander intervention in response to intergroup name–calling, Abbott and Cameron (2014) found that the minority outgroup status of a victim resulted in lower rates of defender bystander intervention from majority in–group members. To date, no study utilizing Social Domain Theory captures the perspective of youth with disabilities, conceptualized as members of the less powerful out–group, on cyberbullying and bystander intervention. Although Malecki et al. (2020) found that students with SLD report higher levels of defender intervention when witnessing bullying than their peers without disabilities, there is a gap in the literature on how youth with disabilities reason about intervening in bullying situations.

Current Study

Bullying prevention programs in the United States have produced modest effects at best (Evans et al., 2014). Particularly troubling is that little is known about intervention practices to reduce bullying perpetration and victimization among students with disabilities (Rose et al., 2011a). Furthermore, students are most often involved in the bullying dynamic as bystanders (Oh & Hazler, 2009), and can play a powerful role in perpetuating or preventing bullying in this role, and in providing emotional support to the victim (Salmivalli, 2010; Williford et al., 2013). However, little is known about how students with disabilities think about bystander involvement in bullying. This study explored how students with SLD, representing the largest proportion of students receiving special education services in the US, have engaged in bullying and reason about cyberbullying and bystander intervention.

In this research, I focused on two main objectives. First, I assessed how youth with SLD are involved in bullying, and the mental health and academic outcomes associated with their bullying involvement. Second, I investigated how youth with SLD reason about cyberbullying, given that this study took place during the period in which students were engaged or recently engaged in distance learning due to the COVID–19 pandemic. The research drew on both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data. Students' self–report survey measures on bullying involvement tested whether students' diathesis (living with an SLD) and environmental stressors (involvement in bullying) were significantly associated with their mental health and school engagement outcomes, in line with the Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress Model (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). The qualitative clinical interviews assessed (through hypothetical situations) how students evaluated acts of cyberbullying victimization and the bystander actions they endorsed in response to this victimization. In this way, the clinical interviews were designed to provide a better understanding of findings from the survey reports by examining relationships between how participants think about hypothetical acts of bullying and their self–reported experiences with bullying. Specifically, the study addressed the following questions broken down by the two main research objectives:

Research Questions

Bullying Involvement, Predictors, and Associated Outcomes

1) What profiles of bullying involvement exist among students identified with SLD?
2) Is there an association between one's demographic characteristics (i.e., race, age, or sexuality) with one's bullying involvement profile for students with SLD?
3) To what extent does one's bullying involvement profile associate with mental health and school engagement outcomes for students with SLD?

Patterns in Reasoning about Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention

4) How do students with SLD evaluate victimization in hypothetical acts of cyberbullying?
a) Do evaluations differ by a participant's age or gender?
b) Do evaluations differ by contextual factors: i) harm occurring in online school or personal social media account; ii) interpersonal connection between the bully and victim;

iii) whether the act of harm is provoked (retaliatory) or unprovoked; iv) or whether the bullying is based on a student's disability or not?

5) How do students with SLD evaluate bystander intervention in hypothetical acts of cyberbullying?
    a) What, if any, patterns exist in how adolescents with different bullying engagement profiles (as identified in research question one) evaluate hypothetical acts of bystander intervention?
    b) Are there any associations between the form of bystander intervention a participant advocates for, and domain of justification used to endorse this action?

Hypotheses

Bullying Involvement, Predictors, and Associated Outcomes (Hypotheses #1–#3)

With respect to the first research question, prior literature has identified four common bullying victimization and perpetration profiles that exist among the general student population in the in–person educational context: victim, bully, bully/victim, and uninvolved students (Liu et al., 2021; Lovegrove et al., 2012) with variation in the severity of involvement and form of bullying that is reported within each group. Students with SLD have been found to be at higher risk of involvement in bullying both as victim and perpetrator, even before the COVID–19 pandemic (Mishna, 2003; Rose et al., 2011b). Adolescents spent less time together in person due to the pandemic and more time online, consequently they may have been more vulnerable to cyberbullying and victimization as three or more hours of time spent on the internet corelates with higher levels of cyberbullying and victimization (Bottino et al., 2015). In line with prior findings., I hypothesized that four groups of bullying involvement will emerge from the data (Hypothesis 1), with a majority of students reporting cyberbullying and victimization in each group. I hypothesized the following groups would emerge from the data: a) low victimization and low perpetration (uninvolved); b) high perpetration and low victimization (bully); c) high victimization and low perpetration (victim), and d) high victimization and high perpetration (bully/victim).

In response to research question two, I hypothesize that bullying involvement would vary significantly by age. Adolescence is a developmentally significant period, with bullying victimization peaking in middle school and decreasing in high school (NASEM., 2016). Therefore, I hypothesized that elementary, middle, and high school students would report a diverse range of involvement behaviors, with students in elementary school reporting higher levels of engagement in bullying than their peers in high school. I also hypothesized that the form of bullying would vary by age, with older participants reporting more indirect forms of bullying (e.g., social exclusion or verbal bullying) than direct forms (e.g., physical bullying) (Zych et al., 2020) (Hypothesis 2a). Furthermore, I hypothesized that students from sexual minority groups would report significantly higher rates of victimization than their peers from non–minority groups (Eisenberg et al., 2015) and male participants would report higher levels of bullying involvement than female participants (Smith et al., 2018) (Hypothesis 2b). Due to the conflicting findings in prior literature on the effects of race/ethnicity on bullying (Gage et al., 2021; Jackman et al., 2020), I had no predetermined hypothesis on the association between race/ethnicity and bullying experiences in this sample of students with SLD.

With regard to the third research question, students who are more involved in the bullying dynamic have been shown to experience higher levels of negative psychosocial outcomes (Nylund et al., 2007). Therefore, I hypothesized that students who have bullying profiles that show more frequent involvement in bullying and/or involvement in more forms of bullying would report significantly higher levels of internalizing and/or externalizing outcomes and academic disengagement (Hypothesis 3).

Patterns in Reasoning about Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention (Hypotheses #4–#5)

With regard to research question four, prior literature shows that a majority of youth without disabilities evaluate social exclusion and victimization of peers with disabilities as unacceptable (e.g., Bottema–Beutel et al., 2017; Gasser et al., 2014; Mulvey et al., 2020). In line with these findings, I hypothesized that the majority of adolescents with SLD would evaluate intergroup and intragroup cyberbullying as unacceptable (Hypothesis 4). With regard to research question 4a, adolescents in middle and high school display more complex reasoning about social dilemmas than their younger peers. This complexity involves more attention to contextual differences and coordination of concerns across the moral, social conventional, and personal domains (Killen & Rutland, 2011). I hypothesized that adolescents with SLD would reason in more complex ways than their younger peers when confronted with decisions regarding cyberbullying situations, with more adolescents endorsing the acceptability of cyberbullying actions than their younger counterparts (Hypothesis 4a). In addition, drawing on the work of Shohoudi Mojdehi et al., (2019), I hypothesized that older adolescents and male participants would be more likely to find cyberbullying acceptable or have mixed evaluations (okay and not okay) than their female and younger counterparts (Hypothesis 4a).

Regarding research question 4b, I hypothesized that significant differences would emerge based on the context of the bullying, specifically relating to whether the bullying is an act of retaliation or not, and whether the transgressor and victim are friends are not. When the victim is victimized for having a disability, I hypothesized that participants would be more likely to evaluate the act of harm as unacceptable than when the harm is directed at a non–disabled peer (Mulvey et al., 2016; Mulvey et al., 2020; Palmer & Abbot., 2015) (Hypothesis 4b). In provoked (retaliatory) contexts of harm, I hypothesized that participants would have more mixed evaluations (okay and not okay) or evaluations of the act of harm being okay than in unprovoked contexts (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009) (Hypothesis 4b). Additionally, in scenarios in which the transgressor and victim are friends as compared to contexts in which there is no interpersonal tie between the two, I hypothesized that participants would endorse more mixed evaluations or evaluations that the act of cyberbullying is acceptable (Killen et al., 2002) (Hypothesis 4b).

Regarding research question five, in line with findings from Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2018), I hypothesized that adolescents who have profiles that indicate higher levels of bullying involvement would endorse inconsistent bystander involvement across hypothetical contexts (i.e., that the bystander who witnesses bullying should remain passive, intervene to support the bully, or defend the victim). In contrast, in line with findings from Malecki et al (2020), I hypothesized that adolescents with bullying profiles that indicate low levels of bullying perpetration would primarily endorse defending the victim in hypothetical cyberbullying situations (Hypothesis 5). Finally, Mulvey et al. (2020 found that youth who advocated for direct intervention in supporting victims of bullying were more likely to draw on moral justifications. I hypothesized that participants who endorsed bystander actions involving supporting the victim

directly would draw more on moral justifications, those who endorsed asking an adult for help would draw on a mixture of moral and social conventional justifications, and those who endorsed assisting the bully or staying uninvolved would draw more on personal or social conventional justifications than moral justifications.

Chapter Two: Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited from several sources: (a) research–practice partnerships with a large urban school district in the San Francisco Bay Area and a small private school serving students with dyslexia in the San Francisco Bay Area; and (b) parent groups for students with SLD on social media. Calls for voluntary participation in the study were sent out through emails by teachers, administrators, and parent engagement coordinators, and posted on social media platforms. The researcher was also invited to some classrooms online during distance learning, and in person when schools opened back up, in order to make announcements about the study and answer any questions that interested students had about study participation. In order to account for the high level of variability in educational climate and experience state–to–state during the COVID–19 pandemic, interested participants were invited to participate in both the interview and survey if they reported attending a school in California. Participants from across the United States were eligible for survey participation due to the larger sample size and resulting ability to control for geographic differences in the survey responses. Due to the unforeseen and significant challenges that many students faced during the time of recruitment and data collection, 12 participants completed the interview but did not complete the survey. Demographic information on age and gender for all interview participants was collected verbally at the start of the interview in order to analyze group differences amongst interview participants.

The samples of participants in this study varied for the survey and the interview components. This section first presents information about the survey sample followed by the interview sample. Primary data analysis for the survey was conducted with 221 youth, ages 7–18 in grades 1–12 who were all enrolled in school in the United States at the time of recruitment, spoke fluent English, and had a primary disability classification of SLD (as verified by a parent or teacher). Sample demographic statistics are shown in Table 1, and some descriptive information is reported here.

The sample of youth was 50.68% White, 28.96% Black, 8.14% Hispanic/ Latinx, 4.07% Asian, 7.24% Mixed Race, and 0.90% Other (Alaskan/ Native American or Pacific Islander). A majority of participants identified as male (59.28%), whereas 40.72% of participants identified as female. Approximately one–third of participants were in grades 1–5 (31.22%), about one third were in grades 6–8 (31.68%) and the largest percentage of students in the survey sample were in grades 9–12 (37.10%). A majority of students in this sample identified as Straight (84.62%) with 15.38% of students in this sample identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community (i.e., bisexual, lesbian, gay, demisexual, or pansexual). A majority of participants in the survey reported attending public school (79.64%) with 16.74% of the sample attending private school, 1.81% attending school online, and 1.81% of the sample declining to provide school information. A majority of participants (90.05%) in this study reported living in a stable home (i.e., a house or apartment with one or more parent/guardian), whereas 9.95% of participants reported living in

less stable housing (e.g., in a group home, foster home, or temporarily living with relatives or friends).

Table 1

Survey sample demographic characteristics (n = 221)

Variable	**Categories**	**n**	***(%)***
Grade	1st grade	4	1.81%
	2nd grade	6	2.71%
	3rd grade	18	8.14%
	4th grade	19	8.60%
	5th grade	22	9.95%
	6th grade	20	9.05%
	7th grade	24	10.86%
	8th grade	26	11.76%
	9th grade	25	11.31%
	10th grade	18	8.14%
	11th grade	21	9.50%
	12th grade	18	8.14%
Gender	Female	90	40.72%
	Male	131	59.28%
Race/Ethnicity	White	112	50.68%
	Black	64	28.96%
	Hispanic/Latinx	18	8.14%
	Asian	9	4.07%
	Mixed Race	16	7.24%
	Other	2	0.90%
Sexual Orientation	Straight	187	84.62%
	Not straight	34	15. 38%
Type of school attended	Public	176	79.64%
	Private	37	16.74%
	Online	4	1.81%

	Declined to state	4	1.81%
Housing	Traditional/stable	199	90.05%
	Non–traditional/less stable	22	9.95%

Interview participants were split into three age groups. The first group included children aged 7 to 10 (mean age 9.10), with 9 females and 13 males in this age group. The second group consisted of adolescents aged 11to14 (mean age 12.34) with 12 female and 17 male participants in this group. Finally, the third age group consisted of adolescents aged 15 to 18 (mean age 16.59) with 14 females and 13 males in this group.

Table 2

Interview sample demographic characteristics (n = 78)

Variable	**Categories**	**n**	***(%)***
Age group	7–10 years old	*22*	28.20%
	11–14 years old	*29*	37.18%
	15–18 years old	*27*	34.62%
Gender	Male	43	55.13%
	Female	35	44.87%

Design and Procedures

After obtaining IRB approval (ID 2020–11–13781), students were invited to participate in the study via the recruitment methods mentioned above. The recruitment materials included information on the background and purpose of the study; information on eligibility criteria; time commitment; compensation information, and information on benefits to society. The recruitment text also included a Qualtrics link which asked potential participants to complete screening questions that verified participants were eligible for study participation. Additionally, parents/guardians of prospective participants under the age of 18 completed the parental permission form, and those over 18 years of age completed the consent form. Qualtrics is an online survey software suite used for collecting identifying information and survey data. For those who agreed to participate by clicking "Yes", all prospective participants from California were first invited to sign up for a zoom interview. After completing the interview, these participants were sent the survey link. All prospective participants from outside the state of California could directly proceed to the survey on Qualtrics. Participants who were recruited through research–practice partnerships with schools in the San Francisco Bay Area were

provided these links through Google forms due to a request from partner schools to use this platform because students in these schools were familiar with Google forms from its use in distance learning.

Completion of the survey took participants an average of 15–25 minutes. The survey included demographic questions and questions to ascertain information on how COVID–19 impacted the student participant. The survey also included subscales with self–report questions to measure students' bullying victimization, perpetration, school engagement, and internalizing and externalizing symptoms. Upon receipt of the completed survey, each student received a $10 gift card as compensation for their time. To account for possible variation in students' reading abilities, the survey was formatted in a manner that is compatible with screen readers. Additionally, participants had the option to have the survey read aloud to them (two participants requested this support).

Interview participants met with the researcher on zoom for an individual interview that lasted between 30–60 minutes. During this time, participants read and signed the assent form, were given the opportunity to ask questions, and completed the research interview. The interview followed a semi–structured or "clinical" interview format. All interviews were video recorded and transcribed for analysis, after obtaining permission from participants' parents and consent/ ascent from participants. Participants' responses were coded using a coding scheme which is detailed in a subsequent section. These data made up the qualitative material that was also represented numerically and analyzed using quantitative statistical methods.

The interview consisted of four sub sections: check for understanding of key terms, assessments based on the hypothetical situations, counter probes, and bystander intervention questions. When checking for the participants' understanding of the questions, additional questions were posed about key terms with which participants would need familiarity in order to understand the hypothetical situations: disability, Instagram, and meme. Participants who indicated a lack of clarity or understanding of these terms were provided with a definition and accompanying visual for the last two terms. The four hypothetical situations contained depictions involving cyberbullying and follow–up questions associated with those situations. Details about the hypothetical situations and categories of questions are presented in the following section. The gender and age of the protagonist in the stories corresponded to the gender and age of the participant. Consistent with previous studies, the order of the stories was counterbalanced across participants to minimize any order effects (Gingo et al., 2017).

Measures

Bullying Involvement, Predictors, and Associated Outcomes *(Survey)*

Participants completed survey items to assess bullying victimization taken from the Delaware Bullying Victimization Scale, items on school engagement taken from the Delaware Student Engagement Scale (Bear et al., 2014), and items on mental health wellbeing taken from the Youth Internalizing + Externalizing Scale (Renshaw & Cook, 2018, 2019). Survey items on bullying perpetration were developed by altering items from the Delaware Bullying Victimization Scale to assess perpetration instead of victimization. See Appendix A for a full list of items included in the student survey and Table 3 for a summary of items on the student survey.

The Delaware Bullying Victimization Scale–Student consists of 12 items measured on a 6–point Likert scale that assess individual students' perceptions of how often they have been victims of the given bullying behavior "since the beginning of this school year." The student scales were used to identify students' bullying engagement profiles to answer research question one. Results of reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis support the student scale's reliability and validity. For all students combined across grade levels, internal consistency coefficients for each of the four subscales (verbal, physical, relational, and cyberbullying) ranged from .86 to .92. The scale demonstrated configural, weak, and strong factorial invariance across grade levels (4th and 5th grades in elementary, middle, and high school), gender, and racial–ethnic groups (i.e., White, African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Other race/ethnicity including multiracial) (Bear et al., 2014).

The Delaware School Engagement Scale–Student consists of 12 items measured on a 4–point Likert scale that assesses students' perceptions of their school engagement both cognitive/behaviorally and emotionally. The student scale was used to measure students' school engagement to respond to research question three. Results of reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis support the student scale's reliability and validity. For all students combined across grade levels, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients were .84 for Cognitive and Behavioral Engagement, .88 for Emotional Engagement, and .87 for Total Engagement. The scale demonstrated configural, weak, and strong factorial invariance across grade levels (4th and 5th grades in elementary, middle, and high school), gender, and racial–ethnic groups (i.e., White, African American, and Hispanic/Latino) (Bear et al., 2014).

The Youth Externalizing Problems Screener (YEPS) and Youth Internalizing Problems Screener (YIPs) are each 10–item self–report rating scales and were used to collect data on students' mental health wellbeing in order to answer research question three. The YEPS and YIPS were designed to facilitate the screening of broad mental health problems among students in secondary school settings. Results of reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis support the reliability and validity of both the YEPs and YIPs (Renshaw & Cook, 2018, 2019). Findings also showed that YEPs and YIPs scores were meaningfully associated with other self–reported, theoretically relevant mental health variables, providing initial convergent evidence in favor of construct interpretation (Renshaw & Cook, 2018, 2019). It is important to note, the YEPs and YIPs were validated with high school samples of primarily Black or African American students.

Table 3

Summary of Student Survey Items

Survey sub–scale	Directions and Response Options	Example Items
Bullying Victimization: (physical, relational, verbal, cyber)	Since the beginning of this school year, how often has one or more than one other student at your school done the following to you? Never, Less than Once a Month, Once or Twice a Month, Once a Week, Several Times a Week, Everyday	I was teased by another student who said hurtful things to me.

Bullying Perpetration: (physical, relational, verbal, cyber)	Since the beginning of the school year how often have *you* done the following to one or more than one other student at your school? Please mark the response that best describes how often. Never, Less than Once a Month, Once or Twice a Month, Once a Week, Several Times a Week, Everyday	I teased or said hurtful things to another student.
Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors	Here are some questions about what you think, feel, and do. Read each sentence and choose the <u>one</u> best answer for how you felt <u>in the past month</u>. Almost never, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	I feel nervous or afraid.
School engagement: (cognitive–behavioral, emotional)	Please read each statement and mark the response that best shows how much you agree. Disagree a lot, Disagree, Agree, Agree a lot	I turn in my homework on time.

Patterns in Reasoning about Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention: Interview

After reviewing key terms that were present in the interview (i.e., disability, Instagram, and meme), participants were next presented with descriptions of four different socio–moral situations in which an act of cyberbullying took place. The clinical interview method for this study was intended to ascertain how students with SLDs make moral judgments about harm in different cyberbullying contexts. The first step in developing the hypothetical situations involved information gathering from news reports, research articles, and anecdotes from educators and students, that described elementary and secondary school students' experiences of interpersonal harm in the context of distance learning. I conducted informal pilot interviews with five children and adolescents in December 2020. Stories were modified and refined according to feedback provided. Permission for student collaboration and pilot interviews was requested from their parents and all students agreed to participate in the pilot study. Consistent with ethical practice, no information gathered from pilot interviews was included as data in the proposed study.

The interviews included four hypothetical situations in which a story character chooses to bully a peer, either because the victim has a learning disability or demonstrates characteristics that reflected less social power (e.g., shy temperament or no friends in a school context). Situations were developed to reflect age–appropriate social contexts. Each situation contains a description of the characters' activities, a description of the effects of the victim's learning disability or social difficulties (dependent on the story) and concludes with the protagonist's decision to bully the character with learning or social difficulties. The victim who is bullied does

not have a diagnosed learning disability in two of the four situations, in order to tease apart how adolescents may reason differently about intergroup (student without a disability bullying a peer with a disability) and intragroup bullying (student without a disability bullying a peer without a disability). The situations were also split by the context in which the bullying took place (i.e., in a zoom classroom or in a private context on social media outside of school). Table 4 presents each of the four situations, illustrating how they compare with one another.

Table 4

Comparison Matrix of Contextualized Conditions

Conditions	**Academic Online School**	**Social Outside of School**
Intergroup Bullying	Jocelyn and some classmates are in a Zoom study group for their next math test. During a study break Jocelyn starts making fun of some people in her class who are not in the study group. Monica is one of Jocelyn's classmates. Monica has a learning disability that makes it difficult for her to understand math. She often works with a Special Education teacher in class at a slower pace. Jocelyn says some mean things about Monica's disability.	Leslie and her friends are all playing a card game together online. The card game involves that each player reads words on a card and gives clues to their team to guess the words. Morgan, one of Leslie's classmates, joins in on the game. When it is Morgan's turn to give other players clues, she takes a long time to read each card. Morgan has a learning disability that makes it difficult for her to read. Leslie records the game and posts a clip of Morgan reading on her Instagram to make fun of Leslie's disability.
Intragroup Bullying	Jessica is attending her science class on Zoom one day when her teacher announces that the class will be working on a weeklong project. Students have a choice of working alone or in small groups on the project. Sally is another student in the science class. Sally has difficulty reading and managing her time effectively. Sally is the only student in class who doesn't have a group. When Jessica notices that Sally doesn't have a group, Jessica sends a mean joke about Sally to her group members.	Audrey and her friends love spending time afterschool chatting and catching up on what happened during the day. One day when they are talking on a private Zoom hangout after class, Audrey and her friends decide to look at their classmates' Instagram accounts. They find Karen's account. Karen struggles with math and writing and spends time after school every day working with a small group to catch up. Audrey writes a mean comment on Karen's latest post.

Table 5

Sample of Interview Questions

Questions	**Science Class (victim with social difficulty)**	**Card game (Victim with learning disability)**
General Evaluation	Do you think Jessica's actions are okay or not okay?	Do you think Leslie's actions are okay or not okay?
Attribution	Why do you think Jessica chose to treat Sally this way?	Why do you think Leslie chose to treat Morgan this way?
Disability	Would it be okay for Jessica to treat Sally this way if Sally had a disability?	Would it be okay for Leslie to treat Morgan this way if Morgan did not have a disability?
Retaliation	Would it be okay for Jessica to treat Sally this way if Sally had said mean things about Jessica first**?**	Would it be okay for Leslie to treat Morgan this way if Morgan had posted mean things about Leslie first?
Friendship	Would it be okay/ not okay for Jessica to treat Sally this way if Sally and Jessica were close friends?	Would it be okay for Leslie to treat Morgan this way if Leslie and Morgan were close friends?
Bystander Evaluation and Justification	**Evaluation**: How do you think Jessica's classmates should respond to her mean message about Sally**?** **Justification:** Why do you think they should respond this way?	**Evaluation**: How do you think Leslie's Instagram followers should respond to her mean post about Morgan? **Justification:** Why do you think they should respond this way?

After each hypothetical situation, participants were first asked to summarize the story, and the researcher clarified any misunderstandings that came up. Then, participants were asked questions to evaluate the acts of bullying (i.e., Do you think *the bully's* decision is okay or not okay?). They were then asked to justify their evaluation (i.e., Why do you think it's okay or not okay?), in order to ascertain how they conceptualize the act of bullying (e.g., as a moral, social–conventional, or personal issue). Participants were also asked questions to understand the factors they attribute the act of bullying to (i.e., Why do you think *the bully* chose to harm *the victim*?).

Participants were then presented with counter probes in order to elicit judgments and reasoning in response to intentional alterations to the situations. The first counter probe was intended to assess the significance of disability–based in comparison to general bullying (e.g., Would it be okay / not okay for *the bully* to harm *the victim* if *the victim* did not have a disability?). The second counter probe was designed to assess the impact of the cyberbullying act being provoked (i.e., the victim cyberbullied the transgressor first) as compared to if the

transgressor harmed the victim without any provocation. The third counter probe was intended to assess how participants reasoned about cyberbullying in the context of a friendship (i.e., would it be okay for the *bully* to harm the v*ictim* if the *bully* and *victim* were friends?).

Finally, participants were asked questions about the role of bystanders who witnessed the act of bullying. Specifically, participants were asked how the bystanders in the situations should respond when witnessing each act of cyberbullying. Participants were then asked to explain why the bystander should respond in this way, in order to assess how they are conceptualizing the action of bystander intervention or nonintervention (e.g., as a moral, social–conventional, or personal issue). See Appendix B for the full clinical interview protocol and Table 5 for a sample of interview questions.

Data Analysis

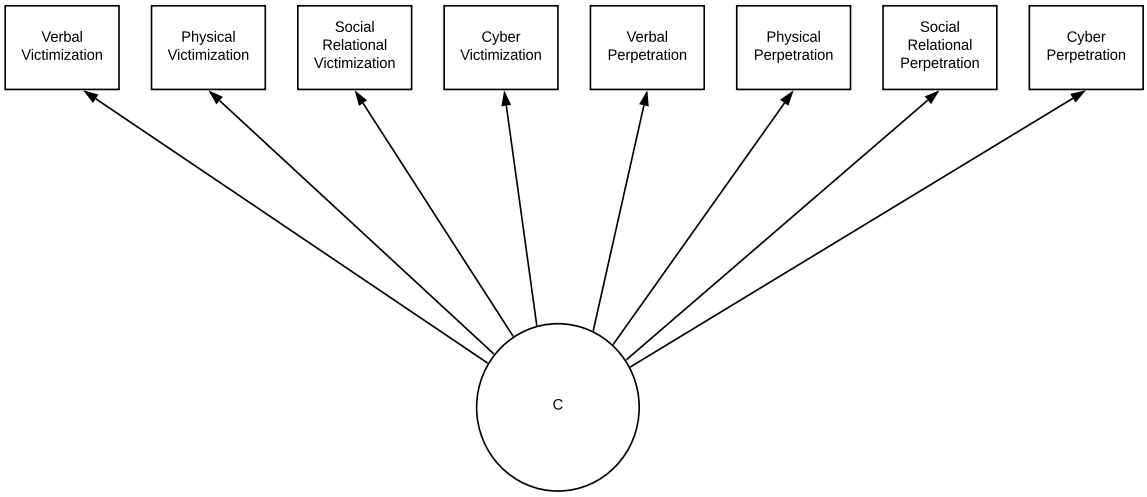
Bullying Involvement, Predictors, and Associated Outcomes (RQ 1–3)

This study utilized Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) which is a person–centered as opposed to variable–centered analytic method. LPA was used to model eight types of engagement in bullying victimization and perpetration. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the indicators. The results of LPA are based on exploratory analyses with no specific a priori assumptions about the structure or distribution of classes (Nylund et al., 2007). Using Stata 18 (StataCorp, 2023), I conducted a series of LPAs with eight continuous indicators using subscale scores, rather than individual item scores. Because LPA estimates profile–specific means and variances for each indicator included, the choice to use the subscale mean scores (rather than items within each subscale) reduced the number of estimated parameters and yielded results that were more amenable to conceptual interpretation (i.e., aligned with the subscales generated through prior use of factor analysis).

I began by fitting a one–profile model and then progressively increased the number of profiles by one. I evaluated whether adding each additional profile resulted in conceptually and statistically more adequate solutions. To determine the optimal number of profiles, I relied on an analysis of multiple fit statistics (Masyn, 2013). I examined approximate fit criteria including the log likelihood (LL), Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1987), and Bayesian information criterion (BIC), with lower values indicating better model fit. Finally, as incongruence among fit statistics is common (Masyn, 2013), and because methodological findings are limited regarding the performance of fit indices for LPAs and similar mixture models (e.g., Nylund et al., 2007;), I prioritized substantive meaningfulness and parsimony of the profile solution in my evaluation of each model (Muthén, 2003). I stopped adding profiles after analyzing the five–profile solution due to the fact that adding additional profiles posed the risk of low student membership in that profile, and the likelihood of conceptual ambiguity in explaining the differences between six or more profiles (Nylund et al., 2007). After I chose the final LPA model, I evaluated how adequately the best fit model separated each profile (Masyn, 2013) through looking at entropy (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996). An entropy value of 0 indicates perfect classification, therefore, values closer to 0 indicate better classification (Asparouhov & Muth´en, 2018).

Figure 1

LPA Indicators of Bullying Victimization and Perpetration



After conducting LPA and evaluating each profile solution, I generated a categorical variable for bullying class involvement and separate dichotomous variables for each bullying class that emerged, assigning each participant to the profile they were most likely to have. I then calculated mean subscale scores for student responses to the internalizing and externalizing behavior subscales and the school engagement subscale. Then, I estimated auxiliary variable associations with the latent profile variable using multinomial logistic regressions. I included demographic characteristics as predictors of profile membership. Demographic variables included grade (0 = 1st–5th grade; 1 = 6th –12th grade); gender (0 = male; 1 = female); racial/ethnic group affiliation (0 = White; 1 = non–White), and sexuality (0= straight; 1= not straight). I then looked at associations between bullying profile as the independent variable and internalizing symptoms, externalizing symptoms, and school engagement as dependent outcome variables using multiple linear regressions. I controlled for demographic variables in these models as well as a few additional variables. The additional covariates were home type (0= traditional/ more stable and 1= less traditional/ less stable), school type (0= public 1= non–public), and level of daily internet use (0=0–6 hours, 1= 7–9 hours, 2= 9 hours or more a day).

Patterns in Reasoning about Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention (RQ 4–5)

Coding and reliability. Clinical interviews were transcribed and coded using a framework reliably established in many previous studies (Bottema–Beutel et al., 2017; Davidson et al., 1983). Two components of the responses were coded: judgments and justifications. Judgments were coded as positive (the act is alright or acceptable), negative (the act is not alright or unacceptable), or mixed (maybe/depends). Justifications were coded in accordance with previous reliable scoring systems of justification categories that are relevant to the objectives of the proposed study. Additional codes were included that stemmed from the justifications provided by participants in this study. Table 6 summarizes relevant descriptions of bystander evaluations and summarizes justification categories used in response to questions about

bystander intervention. This coding scheme focuses on bystander evaluation because this was the primary research question that justifications were intended to address (RQ 5).

Consistent with previous research (Tisak & Turiel, 1984), a dichotomous classification was used in coding each of the justification categories. Whenever a justification was used it was coded as present with a "1" and when a justification was not used it was coded as absent or "0". I coded the bystander responses by nature of the bystander response (i.e., helping the bullying, avoiding the bullying incident, asking an adult for support, or supporting the victim). The frequency of justification use was then calculated for each bystander response option.

To establish inter–rater reliability, 20% of the protocols (16 interviews) were coded by an independent rater. This second coder was trained in the research design, theoretical perspectives, and the coding categories and had some experience coding mixed– methods data. The codes from the second rater were then compared to the codes given by the original researcher, and the degree to which they matched was calculated. Using Cohen's kappa, inter–rater agreement for the evaluations of harm and counter probes was high with a result of $\kappa = .98$. Reliability for inter–rater agreement for bystander evaluations was $\kappa = .94$. Reliability for the justification codes was moderate with agreements of $\kappa = .78$ at the domain level and $\kappa = .65$ at the subdomain level. All inconsistent ratings were discussed and resolved before analyses were completed.

Table 6

Summary of Bystander Evaluations and Justifications

Category	Sub–code	Description
Support the victim	Defend the victim	Participant endorses standing up for the victim directly by speaking aloud and confronting the bully, direct messaging the bully privately, commenting on the social media post, or speaking up in defense of the victim in some other way (e.g., saying, "that's not okay" in front of the whole class).
	Comfort the victim	Participant's response includes checking in with the victim, asking how the victim feels, reassuring the victim, or offering comfort in another way (e.g., letting the victim know they have support).
	Empower the victim	Response includes a reference to helping the victim develop the skills, courage, and/or knowledge to stand up for themselves and prevent future victimization. Skills may include academic skills to prevent being targeted by bullies.
	Mediate conflict	Participant's response refers to helping the bully and victim come to a resolution and may identify a particular strategy for doing so (e.g., restorative justice circle).
Tell an authority figure	Tell a teacher	Participant endorses telling a teacher as the best approach to respond and may include details about waiting for the teacher to return to class or reaching out to the teacher to share what has happened outside of school.
	Tell a parent/guardian	Participant endorses telling a parent/guardian or other trusted adult in the family about the incident.
	Tell a school administrator	Participant endorses telling a principal or other school administrator as the best approach to respond.

	Report to social media platform	Participant refers to contacting the social media platform directly to report content that should be removed or addressed by authorities.
Passive response	Ignore the bullying	Participant refers to ignoring the action and staying quiet in class or scrolling past the inappropriate content.
	Restrict app use	Participant refers to getting off the social media app, blocking the bully, or another action to limit exposure to the inappropriate content.
Support the bully	Understand bully's perspective	Response includes mention of asking the bully questions and seeking to understand why the bully hurt the victim.
	Reinforce bully's actions	Response refers to laughing, liking, or encouraging the bully's actions in some form.
Domain	**Code**	**Definition/ Example**
Moral	Psychological harm	Responses relating to concerns about the victim's psychological well–being, feelings, and/or an intention to avoid hurting others' feelings. Participants may refer to any type of mental suffering such as depression, anxiety, hurting the target's self–esteem, making the target feel isolated and alone. Responses may also refer to the risks of psychological harm including suicide or self–harm.
	Violation of rights	Participant implicitly or explicitly refers to the rights of a person or people and either indicates that one's rights are being violated, undermined, or it's against one's rights. Response may also indicate that one should be under the protection of rights (e.g., the right to safety and peace when attending school or engaging in online activities or the right to dignity).
	Categorically wrong	Participants may indicate that an act is not acceptable or wrong without additional justification (e.g., "Bullying is just not okay" or "there is no reason, it's just wrong").
	Fairness	Responses relating to concerns about the target receiving unfair or unjust treatment, being in a disadvantageous position, and/or the lack of ability to defend oneself or change one's position (i.e., in the case of having a disability). Participants may indicate that the protagonist is taking advantage of the target or refer to the principle of equality stating that everyone is equal, and people should be treated equally.
	Reciprocity	Participants may indicate that one should treat others like how you want to be treated; if you don't want to be teased then you shouldn't tease others. Participant may refer to empathy and taking the perspective of others in evaluating the bullying behavior.
	Protect victim	Response refers to the wellbeing of the victim and the intention to protect the victim's psychological wellbeing and/or social b wellbeing and safety (e.g., protect the victim's reputation by teaching the victim how to read).
	Discourage bully	Participant endorses an action that would discourage the bully from continuing the action(s) that are harming the victim in order to minimize the negative outcome of the conflict.

	Conflict resolution	Response refers to actions that a bystander can take to resolve the conflict between the bully and victim and create pace. The response may include considerations for the sustainability of the solution, efficacy of resolution, and promotion of mutual understanding and respect between the victim, bully, and bystanders.
	Respect	Responses relating to respecting or not respecting one's will, agency, or decision. Participants may indicate that the protagonist is being disrespectful by harming someone who does not wish to engage in this conflict and subjecting others to view this harm.
	Teach bully	Response indicates that the participant believes the bully may not be aware of the harm he/she is causing and needs to be taught right from wrong. Responses may also refer to promoting the bully's self–reflection and a desire to have the bully evaluate the impact of his/her actions in the process of teaching.
	Accountability	Participant refers to the need to hold a bully accountable for his or her actions in order to promote the bully's growth and learning from the situation. Response may also refer to the value of accountability in preventing future harm.
	Disability awareness	Participant discusses the need to promote a greater understanding of disability to help others with disabilities who may also be targeted and victimized in similar ways. Response refers to taking action on a larger scale than in the specific bullying incident, and to educating others on disability to promote greater empathy and respect.
	Discrimination	Response appeals to the wrongfulness of discrimination in the bullying interaction and may also refer to the consequences of prejudice for society at large.
Conventional	Authority and jurisdiction	Responses relating to authority and an authority's power (jurisdiction of authority) or the rights embedded in a particular position such as teachers, parents, organizations (school or social media agency).
	Social media norms	Response refers to the norms, culture, traditions, and expectations of behavior on a particular social media or virtual platform. Participant may refer to the violation of these norms as the impetus for taking action as a bystander.
	Group cohesion	Participant refers to how the bullying may disrupt the group cohesion or undermine the agreements established in a group (e.g., disrupt a class community).
	Punishment	Participant endorses a particular bystander intervention because of the anticipated punishment that a bully will face from an authority figure. Participant explicitly references the need for punishment as part of the response to the bullying incident.
	Diver attention	Response includes a consideration for the social dynamics at play in a particular context (e.g., responding to a social media post will generate more visibility for this post). Based on this understanding of the social goals of a particular action, the participant endorses diverting or limiting the attention a bully receives for his or her actions.

	Practical solution	Participants may indicate that the action will bring desirable consequences or is the only way to solve the problem. Response refer to the social conventions and rules of a particular context in determining whether a bystander intervention will be feasible or not.
Personal	Personal matter	Participant refers to the private or personal nature of the conflict between the bully and victim and may also raise questions that are left unanswered about the bullying incident (e.g., intention of the bully or relationship between the bully and victim).
	Disability disclosure	Participant discloses having a disability and reflects on their own experiences of being targeted or harmed based on having a disability as a justification for a particular bystander action (e.g., " I know how (the victim) feels").
	Personal choice	Response indicates that there is no right way to respond and that choosing a bystander response is a matter of personal choice and preference.
	Personal risk	Different bystander intervention options and endorses a response based on a lower level of personal risk.
	Permission	Participant emphasizes the importance of consent and permission in sharing information about the victim and making any public posts on social media.
	Self–efficacy	Participant describes having a similar experience as a bystander to what is described in the hypothetical situation and endorses a bystander action based on prior experience and self–efficacy in carrying out this action in real life.

Data analysis. After calculating interrater reliability, codes were quantitatively analyzed. I calculated percentages of negative (not okay), affirmative (okay), or divided (depends/ maybe) responses to questions about the acceptability of bullying in each of the four contexts. Due to the low frequency of responses in the "okay" category, I collapsed responses in the affirmative and divided categories into one category of "depends or okay". Subsequently, I conducted likelihood chi–square analyses in order to compare evaluations by participants in the three age groups in this study (7–10, 11–14, and 15–18), and to compare evaluations by male and female participants (addressing RQ 4a).

I then compared evaluations using McNemar's tests. I compared the contexts by social and academic contexts, addressing RQ 4bi). I then conducted McNemar's tests to assess: differences in evaluations between the original hypothetical situation and interpersonal connection between the bully and victim changing (RQ 4b ii); differences in evaluations between the original hypothetical situation and the act of harm being provoked or retaliatory (RQ 4b iii); and differences in evaluations between the original hypothetical situation and the victim's disability status changing (RQ 4biv).

In order to address research question 5a, I analyzed a subsample of the interview data (66 of 78 responses) and omitted responses from participants who did not complete the survey. For this analysis, I conducted likelihood chi–square tests comparing bystander responses by the bullying profile identified in RQ1. I conducted separate chi–square tests for each of the four scenarios in the interview. In order to answer research question 5b, I used data from the full sample of 78 interviews. I created variables for justification used to endorse bystander responses corresponding to the three domains explored in this study (moral, social conventional, and

personal) and then dichotomized the variable into a moral and non–moral(i.e., personal and conventional) variable. I subsequently conducted binary logistical regressions to explore associations between bystander intervention category as the independent variable and justification category as the dependent variable for each of the four scenarios in this study.

Chapter Three Results: Bullying Involvement, Predictors, and Associated Outcomes

The results of this chapter are presented in sections corresponding to the guiding research questions one, two, and three. First, I present a brief summary of descriptive statistics on the items used to generate the bullying involvement profiles and the items used as outcome measures in this study. Then, I present results from the Latent Profile Analysis that were used to select a model (research question one). Subsequently, I present findings on associations between bullying involvement profile and school engagement (research question two) and bullying profile and mental health outcomes (research question three).

Research Question One: Bullying Involvement Profiles

Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive data are presented on the variables used to generate profiles through Latent Profile Analysis, and the outcome variables for this study. Analyses were conducted to confirm the general tendencies of raw data and whether the normality assumption for LPA is fulfilled. All bullying victimization and perpetration items had a minimum response value of 0 and maximum response value of 4. The outcome variables in this study (school engagement, internalizing symptoms, and externalizing symptoms) had a minimum response value of 0 and maximum value of 3. A rule of thumb for assessing normality is that the absolute value of skewness is lower than 2 and that of kurtosis is under 7 (West et al., 1995). The skewness and kurtosis values satisfied these criteria, suggesting that the normality assumptions were not violated in variables analyzed for this study. See Table 7 for descriptive statistics on all variables used in the LPA and the outcome variables used in this analysis.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Category	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Victimization Indicators	Verbal Victimization	1.62	1.25	0.01	0.02
	Physical Victimization	1.31	1.18	0.00	0.09
	Relational Victimization	1.53	1.29	0.00	0.11
	Cyber Victimization	1.10	1.09	0.00	0.00

Perpetration Indicators	Verbal Perpetration	1.05	1.09	0.00	0.01
	Physical Perpetration	0.83	1.01	0.00	0.00
	Relational Perpetration	0.87	1.00	0.00	0.00
	Cyber Perpetration	0.72	0.93	0.00	0.13
Outcomes	School engagement	1.81	0.51	0.23	0.23
	Internalizing Symptoms	1.08	0.56	0.15	0.37
	Externalizing Symptoms	0.85	0.50	0.40	0.00

Analyses of correlations between study variables were also conducted. All coefficients of the correlation analyses were statistically significant at the 5% level, with the exception of the correlations between cyberbullying and internalizing symptoms and relational bullying and internalizing symptoms. Correlations aligned with expectations based on prior literature. Victimization items were more closely correlated with other victimization items, and perpetration items were more closely correlated with other perpetration items. Both bullying victimization and perpetration items had a negative correlation with school engagement and positive correlations with internalizing and externalizing symptoms. See Table 8 for a full correlation matrix for the items.

Table 8

Correlations between LLPA and Outcome Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	1										
2	0.76	1									
3	0.83	0.78	1								
4	0.55	0.80	0.63	1							
5	0.31	0.56	0.36	0.69	1						
6	0.35	0.55	0.35	0.67	0.79	1					
7	0.33	0.56	0.35	0.69	0.87	0.78	1				
8	0.30	0.54	0.34	0.69	0.88	0.71	0.84	1			
9	-0.23	-0.34	-0.29	-0.38	-0.45	-0.53	-0.44	-0.42	1		
10	0.32	0.28	0.35	0.30	0.14	0.22	0.12	0.13	-0.35	1	
11	0.17	0.25	0.30	0.31	0.42	0.55	0.42	0.38	-0.47	0.52	1

1= verbal victimization, 2=physical victimization, 3= relational victimization, 4=cybervictimization, 5= physical bullying, 6= verbal bullying, 7 = relational bullying, 8 = cyberbullying, 9=academic engagement, 10= internalizing symptoms, 11-= externalizing symptoms

LPA Model Analyses

In order to answer the first research question, I conducted a latent profile analysis to explore the distinct profiles of youth with SLD who demonstrate particular patterns of bullying involvement. Fit statistics are shown in Table 9. The information criteria (AIC, and BIC) suggested a five–profile solution. However, the entropy value suggested worse classification accuracy for the five–profile model. The four and five–profile solutions were candidate models. In order to decide on the final model, I considered the information from fit statistics, model parsimony, and conceptual interpretability, which led me to select the four–profile model.

In selecting the four–profile solution, I considered the following factors in addition to fit statistics. In the five–profile solution, Profile 2 had the lowest prevalence rate of classes across all models (i.e.,12 percent or about 26 people). Low prevalence rates in profiles are evaluated as less reliable (Depaoli, 2013; Tueller & Lubke, 2010) and may result in problems in predicting one's class membership's association with covariates (Muthén, 2003). When evaluating the models for conceptual clarity, some differences emerged. Both the four–profile and five–profile solutions were not conceptually novel as they both represented a range of profiles that indicated generally uninvolved participants, primarily victimized, or bully–victims. However, the profiles differed in the degree to which participants were involved or uninvolved in each form of victimization or perpetration. In the five–profile solution, two profiles were difficult to distinguish from one another conceptually as they both indicated low perpetration levels and mild levels of victimization. These profiles had minor differences in the degree to which participants in each profile experienced each form of victimization and perpetration (based on mean item scores). Additionally, the entropy value indicated high differentiation and distinctiveness among the profiles, and excellent classification of individual cases amongst the profiles in the four–profile model. Following the principle of parsimony and theoretical considerations, I chose the four–profile model.

Table 9

Model Fit Summary Statistics

	df	LL	AIC	BIC	Entropy	% of	Sample	Per	Profile	
						1	2	3	4	5
1	16	2670.96	5373.92	5428.29	—	100.00				
2	25	2073.66	4197.31	4282.27	0.004	0.65	0.35			
3	34	1855.12	3778.24	3893.77	0.03	0.46	0.20	0.34		
4	43	1746.35	3578.70	3724.82	0.04	0.37	0.14	0.18	0.31	
5	52	1666.21	3436.43	3613.13	0.09	0.36	0.12	0.18	0.16	0.18

Prior studies have examined bullying involvement through a Latent Class Analysis approach and found involvement to vary based on role (i.e., bully, victim, or uninvolved), the form of bullying (i.e., verbal, physical, relational, or cyber) and/or based on the frequency of involvement. Studies that have identified bullying classes based on role and frequency have yielded mixed results. For example, Nylund et al. (2007) identified three distinct classes of victimization: frequently victimized, sometimes victimized, and uninvolved. In a study on the bullying involvement typologies among students in middle schools across the United States, four classes were identified: victims, bullies, bully/victims, and noninvolved students (Lovegrove et al., 2012). Liu et al. (2020) examined bullying victimization and perpetration among secondary

students and found four latent classes: severe bully–victims, moderate bullies, moderate victims and those not involved. Alternatively, bullying involvement classes have been identified based on the form of bullying. For example, Wang et al. (2010) identified three different classes of bullying involvement: an all–types of victimization class, a verbal and relational victimization class, and a nonvictim class. Bradshaw et al. (2015) identified four classes of bullying victimization: uninvolved, physical, relational, and youth who experienced multiple forms of bullying victimization.

Labels given to the four profiles in this study are based on findings from prior literature cited above and take into account the three commonly used criteria: participants' role, frequency of bullying experienced, and the form of bullying experienced in each class. Table 10 reports the item means and variances for the four– profile solution for bullying involvement. The four profiles were labelled as follows: Profile 1 "low involvement"; Profile 2 "mildly involved"; Profile 3 "moderately/ highly victimized"; and Profile 4 "moderately frequent bully–victims". Mean scores for each of the eight indicators of bullying involvement that were under 1 were classified as low, scores between 1–2 were in the mild range, 2–3 in the moderate range, and 3 or more in the high range.

The highest percentage of youth (37%) were in Profile 1, or the low involvement group. Bullying victimization and perpetration items included responses that ranged from experiencing the particular form of bullying "0" or "never" to "5 or "everyday". Mean responses for participants in this group across bullying victimization indicators ranged from 0.14 to 0.44. Although participants in this group were generally uninvolved, the form of bullying victimization participants in this group experienced most often was verbal victimization whereas participants in this group experienced cybervictimization least often. Participants in this group indicated low involvement in perpetration with mean values ranging from 0.01 to 0.14. Similar to patterns in victimization, participants reported the highest levels of perpetration in verbal bullying and lowest level in cyberbullying.

Profile 2, or the mildly involved group, was the smallest profile in this study with 14% of participants classified in this group. Participants in this group experienced mild levels of both victimization and perpetration in comparison to participants in other profiles. Means for victimization ranged from 1.16 to 1.48 with participants in this group reporting experiencing physical victimization least frequently and verbal victimization most frequently. Although participants in this group reported mild levels of perpetration there was a range of frequencies for different forms of perpetration from 0.65 to 1.67. Means for relational and verbal bullying were higher than 1.0 whereas means for cyber and physical bullying were lower than 1.0 for this group, indicating higher rates of verbal and relational bullying for members of this group.

Profile 3, or the moderately/highly victimized group, included 18% of participants in this study. Members of this group reported the highest mean scores for victimization across all groups for verbal and relational victimization. The range of mean scores for victimization indicators in this group was from 1.12 to 3.34 with cyber victimization experienced least frequently and verbal victimization experienced the most frequently. Therefore, although this group is labeled moderately to highly victimized, this group is specifically highly victimized most in verbal and physical forms of bullying, moderately victimized in relational bullying, and mildly victimized in cyberbullying. Means for bullying perpetration ranged from 0.14 to 0.51 indicating low levels of perpetration across all forms of bullying for this group.

Finally, I labeled the fourth profile moderately frequent bully–victims. This profile was the second largest of the four profiles with 31% of participants classified in this group. Means for

bullying victimization ranged from 2.11 to 2.25 with the lowest mean reported for verbal victimization and highest mean reported for physical victimization. Means for perpetration ranged from 1.97 to 2.20 with the lowest mean noted for cyberbullying and highest means for verbal and physical bullying.

Table 10

Item means and variances: 4– profile solution for bullying involvement

	Profile 1	Profile 2	Profile 3	Profile 4
Means				
Verbal Victimization	0.44	1.48	3.34	2.11
Physical Victimization	0.18	1.16	2.17	2.25
Relational Victimization	0.34	1.22	3.15	2.16
Cyber Victimization	0.14	1.28	1.12	2.16
Verbal Bullying	0.14	1.67	0.51	2.20
Physical Bullying	0.05	0.70	0.21	2.20
Relational Bullying	0.05	1.08	0.24	2.14
Cyber Bullying	0.01	0.65	0.14	1.97
Variances				
Verbal Victimization	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.08
Physical Victimization	0.08	0.13	0.11	0.09
Relational Victimization	0.08	0.13	0.12	0.09
Cyber Victimization	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.09
Verbal Bullying	0.07	0.12	0.10	0.07
Physical Bullying	0.04	0.09	0.06	0.05
Relational Bullying	0.05	0.09	0.07	0.05
Cyber Bullying	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.05

Summary

It was hypothesized that four groups of bullying involvement would emerge from the data (Hypothesis 1), with a majority of students reporting cyberbullying and victimization in each group: a) low victimization and low perpetration (uninvolved), b) high perpetration and low victimization (bully), c) high victimization and low perpetration (victim), and d) high victimization and high perpetration (bully/victim). This hypothesis was partially supported. Taking into account values from the fit statistics (i.e., AIC, BIC) as well as entropy, model parsimony, and conceptual considerations, the four–profile solution was selected. Some of the profiles aligned with the initial hypothesis. Specifically, a low–involvement group, moderate/highly victimized group, and a bully–victim group emerged in this model. The four profiles were labeled as follows: a) low–involvement group; b) mildly involved group; c) moderately/highly victimized group; and d) moderately frequent bully/victims. The largest profiles were Profile 1 (low involvement) and Profile 4 (moderately frequent bully/victims). The mildly involved group was one that was different from the hypothesized groups, and no frequent bully group emerged from the data. In addition, counter to my initial hypothesis, cyber victimization and cyber bullying were not the most frequent forms of victimization and

perpetration. Rather, verbal and physical bullying and victimization were most common across the profiles.

Research Question Two: Demographic Variable Associations with Latent Profile Variables

In order to answer research question two, I conducted multinomial logistic regressions with each bullying profile as baseline category in order to generate comparisons between each pair of profiles. Profile 1 indicates the lowest involvement in bullying followed by Profile 2, 3, and 4. Therefore, the risk level of bullying involvement increases from profiles 1 to 4. The columns of Table 11 report the coefficients and odds ratios of relative risk ratios (RRR) for each profile compared with a baseline profile. For example, column 1 reports RRR for each profile compared with profile 1, whereas column 2 compares each profile with profile 2. The demographic characteristics included in these analyses were gender, racial/ethnic group affiliation, sexuality, and grade–level of the participants. These demographic variables were dichotomized for these analyses as follows: race was dichotomized as white and non–white with white as the reference group, sexuality was dichotomized into a group of participants who identified as straight and all participants who did not identify as straight, and grade was dichotomized into elementary (1^{st}–5^{th} grade) and secondary (6^{th}–12^{th} grade).

Some significant findings and patterns emerged when exploring age and gender associations with bullying involvement profiles. Participants in secondary school (grades 6–12) when compared to participants in elementary school (grades 1–5) were more likely to be in the moderate/highly victimized group or profile 3 than in the low involvement bullying profile or Profile 1 (RRR =2.88, p =.03). Although findings on the association between gender and bullying involvement profile were not statistically significant, female participants had lower risks of being in higher involvement bullying groups than did male students. Specifically, female participants had a lower risk of being in group 2,3, and 4 than group 1. Female participants also had a lower risk of being in groups 3 and 4 than group 2, and a lower risk of being in group 4 than group 3. Because the bullying involvement groups are ordered from least to greatest involvement, female participants were generally most likely to be in the lower bullying involvement groups than male participants.

When compared to White youth, racial minority (non–White) youth were more likely to be in lower bullying involvement groups. Specifically, racial minority youth were more likely than White youth to be in the low involvement bullying group or profile 1 than the mild involvement group or profile 2 (RRR = 3.01, p=.01). Racial minority youth were also more likely to be in the low involvement group or profile 1 than in the moderate/high victimization group or profile 3 (RRR = 2.50, p = .03). Finally, racial minority youth were more likely than White youth to be in the low involvement bullying group or profile 1 than in the moderate bullying/victimization group or profile 4 (RRR = 3.59, p <.001).

Youth who identified as LGBTQIA+ were more likely to be in the lower bullying involvement groups than youth who identified as straight. In particular LGBTQIA+ youth were more likely to be in the low involvement group or Profile 1 than in the mild involvement group or Profile 2 (RRR = 8.34, p= .045). In addition, LGBTQIA+ youth were more likely to be in the

low involvement group or Profile 1 than in the moderate bullying/victimization group or Profile 4 (RRR = 3.76, p =.03).

Table 11

Covariate coefficients and relative risk ratios for 4- profile solution for bullying involvement

		baseline 1		baseline 2		baseline 3		baseline 4	
Profile	Covariate	Coef (SE)	RRR	Coef (SE)	RRR	Coef (SE)	RRR	Coef (SE)	RRR
1 less involved	Female			.22 (.43)	1.25	.59 (.42)	1.80	.59 (.38)	1.81
	Non-White			1.10 (.45)	3.01*	.92 (.40)	2.50*	1.28 (.35)	3.59***
	Not straight			2.12 (1.05)	8.34*	.04 (.49)	1.04	1.32 (.61)	3.76*
	Secondary			-.45 (.46)	.64	-1.06 (.48)	.35*	-.51 (.37)	.60
2 mild involvem.	Female	-.22 (.43)	.80			.37 (.50)	1.45	.37 (.45)	1.45
	Non-White	-1.10 (.45)	.15*			-.19 (.50)	.83	.18 (.45)	1.19
	Not straight	-2.12(1.05)	.13*			-2.08 (1.10)	.13	-.80 (1.15)	.45
	Secondary	.45 (.46)	.74			-.61 (.56)	.55	-.06 (.47)	.94
3 moderately highly victims	Female	-.59 (.41)	.55	-.37 (.50)	.69			.004 (.45)	1.00
	Non-White	-.92 (.41)	.40*	.19 (.50)	1.20			.36 (.41)	1.44
	Not straight	-.04 (.49)	.96	2.08 (1.10)	7.98			1.28 (.68)	3.60
	Secondary	1.06 (.47)	2.88*	.61 (.57)	1.83			.54 (.49)	1.721
4 moderate bully victims	Female	-.59 (.37)	.55	-.59 (.37)	.69	-.004 (.45)	.99		
	Non-White	-1.28 (.36)	.28**	-1.28 (.35)	.84	-.36 (.41)	.70		
	Not straight	-1.32 (.62)	.27*	-1.32 (.62)	2.22	-1.28 (.69)	.28		
	Secondary	.51 (.37)	1.67	.51 (.37)	1.06	-.54 (.49)	.58		

RRR = relative risk ratio; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Summary

It was hypothesized that bullying involvement would vary significantly by age, with students in elementary school reporting higher levels of engagement in bullying than their peers in high school. I also hypothesized that the form of bullying would change with age, with older participants reporting more indirect forms of bullying (e.g., social exclusion) (Hypothesis 2a). Furthermore, I hypothesized that students from sexual minority groups would report significantly higher rates of victimization than their peers from non–minority groups (Eisenberg et al., 2015), and male participants would report higher levels of bullying involvement than female participants (Smith et al., 2018) (Hypothesis 2b). I had no predetermined hypotheses on the associations between race/ethnicity and bullying experiences in this sample of students with SLD.

These hypotheses were not supported. Older participants (grades 6–12) when compared to younger participants (grades 1–5) were more likely to be in the moderate/highly victimized group or profile 3 than in the low involvement bullying profile or profile 1. Relational and verbal victimization were the most frequent forms of victimization reported in profile 3, partially

confirming the hypothesis of older students experiencing higher levels of indirect victimization than younger students. However, older students were more likely to also experience physical victimization than younger students, which was counter to the initial hypothesis. Although findings on the association between gender and bullying involvement profile were not statistically significant, female participants had lower risks of being in higher involvement bullying groups than did male students. When compared to White youth, racial minority (non–White) youth were more likely to be in lower bullying involvement groups. Furthermore, youth who identified as LGBTQIA+ were more likely to be in the lower bullying involvement groups than youth who identified as straight.

Research Question Three: Latent Profile Variable Associations with Outcome Variables

Associations between Bullying Involvement and School Engagement

The regression analysis aimed to determine the impact of profile of bullying involvement and various covariates on school engagement among students. The results revealed significant findings. The model exhibited overall statistical significance in predicting school engagement, as evidenced by a significant F–statistic (i.e., $F(17, 203) = 6.14$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the model explained 33.95% of the variance in school engagement, with an adjusted R–squared value of 28.42%. See Table 12 for the regression results.

Findings from the regression analysis revealed two significant associations between profile membership and school engagement. Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) was significantly associated with lower levels of school engagement than Profile 1 (low bullying involvement)($\hat{\beta}$= -0.41, $p < 0.001$). This negative association was also noted for Profile 4 (moderate bully–victims) ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.60, $p < 0.001$). In addition, Profile 3 (moderately/highly victimized) showed a negative trend that approached statistical significance ($\hat{\beta}$ = -0.18, $p = 0.05$). This suggests that the combination of bullying victimization and perpetration experiences was more significantly associated with negative school engagement outcomes than primarily victimization experiences (Profile 3). The covariates included in this model were all variables I controlled for in the analysis. However, some important findings emerged from these control variables. In this sample, identifying as Black, Latinx, or Mixed Race was associated with significantly higher rates of school engagement than identifying as White.

Table 12

Results of association between latent profiles of bullying involvement and school engagement

Variables	Est. Coefficient	Standard Error	95% CI	P value
Bullying Profiles				
Profile 2	-.41	.10	-.60–.21	<.001
Profile 3	-.18	.10	-.36–.00	.05
Profile 4	-.60	.08	-.76–.44	<.001
Race				
Black	.16	.08	.01–.31	.03
Latinx	.25	.12	.01–.48	.04
Asian	.16	.15	-.14–.47	.29
Mixed Race	.28	.13	.03–.53	.03
Other	.08	.34	-.59–.75	.82
Gender				
Female	.05	.06	-.07–.18	.39
Non–binary	.19	.29	-.39–.77	.52
Sexuality				
Not straight	-.11	.09	-.30–.07	.24
Grade				
Middle School	.10	.08	-.06–.25	.21
High School	.06	.08	-.10–.22	.47
Housing				
Less stable	.07	.10	-.14–.27	.51
Internet Use				
Moderate	.03	.07	-.11–.17	.67
Significant	-.04	.09	-.22–.13	.61
School type				
Non–public	.11	.08	-.04–.26	.14

Associations between Bullying Involvement and Internalizing Symptoms

In order to understand associations between bullying involvement and internalizing symptoms for youth with SLD, I conducted a regression analysis that also considered sociodemographic and other covariates. The regression model demonstrated statistical significance in predicting internalizing symptoms ($F(17, 203) = 2.99$, $p =<0.001$). The model accounted for 20.04% of the variance in internalizing symptoms, with an adjusted R–squared value of 13.34%. See Table 13 for the regression results.

Results from this regression showed positive associations between membership in Profiles 2, 3, and 4 as compared to Profile 1 for internalizing symptoms. Membership in Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) was associated with significantly higher levels of internalizing symptoms than Profile 1 (low bullying involvement) ($\hat{\beta} = 0.34$, $p = 0.005$). Similarly, a significant positive relationship was found for membership in Profile 3 (moderate to high

victimization) when compared to Profile 1 (low bullying involvement) ($\hat{\beta} = 0.35$, $p = 0.002$). Finally, a significant positive association with internalizing symptoms was also noted for membership in Profile 4 (moderate bully–victims) when compared to Profile 1 (low involvement) ($\hat{\beta} = 0.33$, $p = 0.001$).

Again, in this analysis I included covariates as control variables. Some significant findings emerged with these covariates. Specifically, not identifying as straight with regard to sexual orientation, was significantly associated with higher levels of internalizing symptoms ($\beta = 0.30$, $p = 0.008$). In addition, youth with SLD who identified as Asian had lower rates of internalizing symptoms ($\beta = –0.32$, $p = 0.09$). This result was approaching's statistical significance.

Table 13

Results of association between latent profiles of bullying involvement and internalizing symptoms

Variables	Est. Coefficient	Standard Error	95% CI	P Value
Bullying Profiles				
Profile 2	.34	.12	.10–.58	.01
Profile 3	.35	.11	.13–.56	.00
Profile 4	.33	.10	.14–.53	.00
Race				
Black	-.13	.09	-.31–.05	.15
Latinx	-.03	.15	-.32–.26	.82
Asian	.32	.19	-.70–.05	.09
Mixed Race	.15	.15	-.45–.16	.35
Other	36	.41	–1.17–.46	.39
Gender				
Female	-.01	.08	-.16–.14	.87
Non–binary	.46	.36	-.25–1.17	.21
Sexuality				
Not straight	.30	.112	.08–.52	.01
Grade				
Middle School	-.09	.10	.28–.10	.35
High School	.07	.10	-.12–.26	.47
Housing				
Less stable housing	.01	.125	-.24–.25	.96
Internet Use				
Moderate	.15	.09	-.02–.32	.08
Significant	.25	.11	.04–.47	.02
School type				
Non–public	.15	.09	.56–.99	<0.001

Associations between Bullying Involvement and Externalizing Symptoms

A regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between externalizing symptoms and bullying involvement amongst this sample of youth with SLD, controlling for sociodemographic and other covariates. The regression model significantly predicted externalizing symptoms $F(17, 203) = 6.30$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 34.54% of the variance, With an adjusted R–squared value of 29.06%. See Table 14 for the regression results.

Results from this regression showed positive associations between membership in Profiles 2 and 4 as compared to Profile 1 for externalizing symptoms. Membership in Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) was significantly and associated with higher levels of externalizing symptoms than Profile 1 (low bullying involvement) ($\hat{\beta} = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$). The association between membership in Profile 3 (moderate/high victimization) as compared to Profile 1(low bullying involvement) with externalizing symptoms was positive but not statistically significant ($\hat{\beta} = 0.10$, $p = 0.25$). Finally, a significant positive association was observed between Profile 4 (moderate bully–victims) as compared to Profile 1 (low bullying involvement) and externalizing symptoms ($\hat{\beta} = 0.53$, $p = <.001$).

A few of the covariates that were included as control variables in this model demonstrated significant effects. In this sample, identifying as Asian was associated with statistically significantly lower levels of externalizing symptoms than identifying as White ($\hat{\beta} = -0.35$, $p = 0.02$). In addition, middle school ($\hat{\beta} = –0.22$, $p = 0.005$). and high school ($\hat{\beta} = -0.17$, $p = 0.04$). students had statistically significantly lower rates of externalizing symptoms than elementary school students. Finally, youth with SLD who reported significant internet use daily (9 or more hours) demonstrated significantly higher levels of externalizing symptoms than youth who reported mild use (6 or fewer hours) ($\hat{\beta} = 0.22$, $p = 0.01$).

Table 14

Results of association between latent profiles of bullying involvement and externalizing symptoms

Variables	Est. Coefficient	Standard Error	95% CI	P Value
4–profiles of bullying involvement				
Profile 2	.57	.10	.38–.76	<.001
Profile 3	.10	.09	-.07 –.28	0.25
Profile 4	.53	.08	.38–.69	<.001
Race				
Black	-.11	.07	-.25–.04	.15
Latinx	.05	.12	-.19–.28	.69
Asian	-.35	.15	-.65–-.05	.02
Mixed Race	-.00	.12	-.25–.24	.99
Other	.34	.33	-.10–.32	.31
Gender				
Female	-.07	.06	-.19–.06	.29
Non–binary	-.22	.29	-.79–.35	.45
Sexuality				
Not straight	.13	.09	-.05–.30	0.17
Grade				
Middle School	-.22	.08	-.37–.07	.005
High School	-.17	.08	-.32–.01	.04
Housing				
Less stable housing	.06	.10	-.14–.26	0.53
Internet Use				
Moderate	.12	.07	-.02–.25	0.10
Significant	.22	.09	.05 – .39	0.01
School type				
Non–public	.11	.08	-.04–.26	0.15

Summary

It was hypothesized that students who have bullying profiles that show more frequent involvement in bullying and/or involvement in more forms of bullying will report significantly higher levels of internalizing and/or externalizing outcomes and lower school engagement (Hypothesis 3). This hypothesis was confirmed. Membership in Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) and Profile 4 (moderate bully–victims) was significantly and negatively associated with school engagement when compared to Profile 1 (low bullying involvement). In addition, Profile 3 (moderately/highly victimized) showed a negative trend that approached statistical significance. Results showed positive associations between membership in Profiles 2, 3, and 4 as compared to Profile 1 for internalizing symptoms. In addition, results found positive associations between membership in Profiles 2 and 4 as compared to Profile 1 for externalizing symptoms).

Taken together, these results highlight the negative effects on school engagement, and increased rates of internalizing and externalizing symptoms associated with bullying involvement (particularly the combination of perpetration and victimization noted in profiles 2 and 4).

Chapter Four Results: Patterns in Reasoning about Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention

The results of this study are presented in four parts, corresponding to the guiding research questions 4 and 5. First, I present the analysis on differences in participants' judgments based on gender and age (research question 4a). Next, I present the analysis of students' judgments about bullying, and differences based on contextual factors, disability status of the victim, whether the act of harm is provoked or unprovoked, and the nature of the interpersonal relationship between the bully and victim (research question 4bi–iv). Then, I present findings on associations between bullying involvement profile, age, gender and bystander intervention choice (research question 5a), and associations between bystander intervention decision and justifications for each decision (research question 5b).

Research Question Four: Differences in Evaluations

Age and Gender Differences

I examined differences in evaluations across the three age groups in this study (7–10, 11–14, and 15–18–year–old) using chi–square tests of independence. Because three age groups were compared, I conducted post hoc pairwise comparison tests on all statistically significant chi–square results at the $p < .05$ level with a Bonferroni Adjustment. I also performed chi–square tests to determine if there were any significant differences in evaluations based on gender of the participant (male or female). Table 15 presents the breakdown of responses by age group, gender, and overall sample in two categories (not okay and okay or depends). Responses that were indicative of mixed evaluations ("both okay and not okay") or an evaluation that depended on different considerations (depends) were collapsed with evaluations of the act being okay due to the lower frequency count of these responses and the objective of comparing responses of not okay with any other response a participant provided. Table 15 presents the percentages of participants who endorsed each response and includes the percentage breakdown for general evaluations as well as the percentages of responses given to each counter probe (i.e., disability of victim changing, retaliation, and friendship between the bully and victim) for each hypothetical situation.

As shown in Table 15, a majority of participants, regardless of gender and age, negatively evaluated acts of cyberbullying in the hypothetical situations. When asked to provide an initial evaluation, 94.87%–100% of participants negatively evaluated cyberbullying in the hypothetical situations. The highest percentage of participants that evaluated the act of cyberbullying as acceptable or mixed was in the zoom conversation situation (5.13%), whereas the lowest percentage of participants that evaluated the act of cyberbullying as acceptable or mixed was in the math class situation (0%) which involved bullying targeted at a victim with a learning disability during distance learning. Overall, participants evaluated all contexts of cyberbullying as unacceptable when asked for a general evaluation. More heterogeneity was observed when participants were asked counter probes, and these results are discussed below.

Differences between the two gender groups and three age groups were analyzed for general evaluations, and for each counter probe. Results from chi–square tests yielded no significant differences between the gender groups or age groups ($p > 0.05$) for general evaluations in all four hypothetical situations. In the science class situation, there were significant age–related differences in evaluations in response to the retaliation counter probe (i.e., if the act of cyberbullying was retaliatory). Specifically, participants in the 7–10–year group had significantly more negative evaluations of retaliation than did participants in the 15–18–year group ($X^2(1) = 12.95$, $p < .001$). Participants in the 11–14–year group also had significantly more negative evaluations of retaliation in the science class situation than did participants in the 15–18–year group, (X^2 (1) = 6.44, $p = .01$). In addition, participants in the 7–10–year group had significantly more negative evaluations in response to the friend counter probe (i.e., if the bully and victim were friends) than participants in the 15–18–year group ($X^2(1) = 6.23$, $p = .01$.).

For the three other hypothetical situations (i.e., zoom conversation, math class, and card game), there were significant differences between the 7–10–year–old group and 15–18–year–old group in evaluations about the retaliation counter probe. The evaluations were significantly more negative in the younger age group for each situation: $X^2(1) = 8.59$, $p = .003$ for the zoom conversation situation ($X^2(1) = 8.99$, $p = .003$ for the math class situation, and $X^2(1) = 10.24$, $p = .001$ for the card game situation). With regard to gender, there was a significant difference between how male and female participants evaluated the friendship counter probe in the zoom conversation situation. Females had significantly more negative evaluations in response to this counter probe than males ($X^2(1) = 5.58$, $p = .002$).

Summary

It was hypothesized that the majority of adolescents with SLD would evaluate both intergroup and intragroup cyberbullying as unacceptable (Hypothesis 4). This hypothesis was confirmed with the majority of participants evaluating cyberbullying as unacceptable across all four situations. With regard to gender and age differences, I hypothesized that older adolescents and male participants would be more likely to evaluate cyberbullying as acceptable or to have mixed evaluations of cyberbullying situations (Hypothesis 4a). This hypothesis was partially confirmed. Although there were no significant age or gender differences in general evaluations of each situation, there were significant age and gender differences in response to the retaliation and friendship counter probes. Younger participants (7–10–year–old) had more negative evaluations of cyberbullying in response to counter probes about whether the act of cyberbullying was an act of retaliation than did older adolescent participants (15–18–year–old). These age differences were also observed in how younger participants (7–10–year–old) evaluated cyberbullying between friends in the science classroom significantly more negatively than did older adolescents (15–18–year–old). With regard to gender differences, in the zoom conversation situation, female participants had significantly more negative evaluations of cyberbullying between friends than did males. Therefore, although age and gender differences were observed, they were more significant in response to these contextual features.

Differences in Evaluations by Contexts and Counter probes

McNemar's tests were conducted in order to analyze how participants' evaluations may have differed based on the context of the situation (i.e., school or personal social media use), the

disability status of the victim, whether the act of harm was retaliatory or not, and whether the bully and victim were friends or not. When comparing the online school bullying contexts (science and math classes) with the personal social media contexts (zoom conversation and card game), the results were approaching but not statistically significant at the 5% level ($X^2(1) = 3.00$, $p = .08$). Participants had more negative evaluations of cyber harm in the school contexts than in personal social media contexts, with the majority of participants evaluating cyberbullying as unacceptable across all contexts.

When comparing participants' general evaluations to evaluations in response to the counter probe of disability, there were significant results in the card game and math class situations. For this counter probe, participants were asked if the act of cyberbullying would be okay if the participant had a disability in the conditions in which participants did not have a disability originally (science class and zoom conversation) and participants were asked if it would be okay to engage in cyberbullying if the victim did not have a disability in the situations in which victims originally had a disability (math class and card game). In the math class and card game situations, participants had significantly more positive evaluations of the cyberbullying act if the victim did not have a disability than when the victim originally had a disability based on chi–square results (X^2 (1)= 16.00 $p < .001$ for the card game situation, and $X^2(1)= 5.00$ $p = .03$ for the math class situation). This suggests that participants in this study conceptualize harm that is directed at a disabled victim as more unacceptable than harm directed at a victim without a disability.

In response to the counter probe of retaliation (i.e., would the act of cyberbullying be acceptable if it was an act of retaliation?) and friendship (i.e., would the act of cyberbullying be okay if the transgressor and victim were friends?) participants had significantly more positive evaluations in all four hypothetical situations. Chi–square test results were as follows for the retaliation counter probe: X^2 (1) = 15.00 $p < .001$ in the science class situation, $X^2(1) = 10.89$ $p = .001$ in the zoom conversation situation, $X^2(1) = 12.00$ $p < .001$ in the math class situation, and $X^2(1) = 15.00$ $p < .001$ in the card game situation. Chi–square results for the friendship counter probe were as follows: $X^2(1) = 21.00$ $p < .001$ in the science class situation, X^2 (1) = 10.89 $p = .001$ in the zoom conversation situation, $X^2(1) = 12.00$ $p < .001$ in the math class situation, and $X^2(1) = 12.25$ $p < .001$ in the card game situation.

Table 15

Percentages of evaluations by age group, gender, and total sample

	General Evaluation		Disability		Retaliation		Friend	
Science Class	Not ok	Ok/ Mixed	Not ok	Ok/ Mixed	Not ok	Ok/ Mixed	Not ok	Ok/ Mixed
7-10 years	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	95.45	4.55	90.91	9.09
11-14 years	96.55	3.45	96.55	3.45	86.21	13.79	68.97	31.03
15-18 years	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	55.56	44.44	59.26	40.74
Male	97.67	2.33	97.67	2.33	79.07	20.93	80.00	20.00
Female	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	65.12	34.88	80.00	20.00
Total	98.72	1.28	98.72	1.28	79.49	20.51	71.79	28.21
Zoom conversation								
7-10 years	100.00	0.00	100.0	0.00	95.45	4.55	63.64	36.36
11-14 years	86.21	13.79	96.55	3.45	79.31	20.69	58.62	41.38
15-18 years	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	59.26	40.74	66.67	33.33
Male	93.02	6.98	97.67	2.33	76.74	23.26	51.16	48.84
Female	97.14	2.86	100.0	0.00	77.14	22.86	77.14	22.86
Total	94.87	5.13	98.72	1.28	76.92	23.08	62.82	37.18
Math Class								
7-10 years	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00
11-14 years	100.00	0.00	89.65	10.34	89.66	10.34	79.31	20.69
15-18 years	100.00	0.00	92.59	7.41	66.67	33.33	77.78	22.22
Male	100.00	0.00	93.02	6.98	81.40	18.60	79.07	20.93
Female	100.00	0.00	94.29	5.71	88.57	11.43	91.43	8.57
Total	100.00	0.00	93.59	6.41	84.62	15.38	84.62	15.38
Card game								
7-10 years	100.00	0.00	81.82	18.18	100.00	0.00	81.82	18.18
11-14 years	96.55	3.45	68.97	31.03	79.31	20.69	82.76	17.24
15-18 years	100.00	0.00	85.19	14.81	62.96	37.04	77.78	22.22
Male	97.67	2.33	76.74	23.26	74.42	25.58	76.74	23.26
Female	100.00	0.00	80.00	20.00	85.71	14.29	85.71	14.29
Total	98.72	1.28	78.21	21.79	79.49	20.51	80.77	19.23

Summary

It was hypothesized that participants would be more likely to evaluate the act of harm as unacceptable when the harm is directed at a disabled victim than when the harm is directed at a non–disabled peer. In addition, I hypothesized that participants would evaluate cyberbullying in provoked (retaliatory) contexts and within friendship contexts as more acceptable than in situations of cyberbullying that are unprovoked and between a transgressor and victim who are not friends (Hypothesis 4b). Results from the above–mentioned analyses support these hypotheses highlighting the ways in which participants considered the disability of a victim,

interpersonal ties between a transgressor and victim, and the intention of these acts of harm in evaluating the acceptability of these actions.

Research Question Five: Patterns in Bystander Evaluations and Justifications

Participants in this study were asked to identify the way(s) in which a bystander should respond when witnessing each of the four hypothetical situations in this study. This question was open ended, and participants were able to endorse multiple bystander actions. Endorsement of a particular bystander intervention was coded as "1" and lack of mention of this bystander intervention was coded as "0". Table 16 presents the percentages of participants who endorsed each of the four types of bystander interventions broken down by bullying involvement group, age, and gender.

Across all four hypothetical situations, the highest percentage of participants endorsed supporting the victim as the way to respond when witnessing cyberbullying. In the science class situation 64.10% of participants endorsed supporting the victim,61.54% of participants endorsed this response in the zoom conversation situation, 74.36% endorsed this response in the math class situation, and 71.79% endorsed supporting the victim in the card game context. The highest percentage of participants endorsed supporting the victim in the math class situation, and a higher percentage of participants endorsed supporting the victim in the two situations involving victims with disabilities (math class and card game) in comparison to the situations with victims without disabilities (zoom conversation and science class). The second most frequently endorsed bystander response was telling an authority figure (i.e., reporting the cyberbullying to a teacher, parent, administrator, or social media platform). In the science class context, 44.87% of participants supported this response, 19.23% endorsed this response in the zoom conversation context, 44.87% endorsed this response in the math class context, and 17.95% endorsed this response in the card game context. This response was more frequently endorsed in the online class contexts than in the personal social media use contexts. The third most frequently endorsed bystander response was a passive response (e.g., ignoring the situation). In the science class situation, 15.38% of participants endorsed this response, 19.23% supported this response in the zoom conversation context, 10.26% of participants supported this action in the math class context, and 17.95% of participants supported this response in the card game context. This response was more frequently endorsed in the social media contexts than in the online classroom settings. The least endorsed bystander response was supporting the bully (either by understanding the bully's perspective or encouraging the bully's actions). This bystander response was most frequently endorsed in the zoom conversation context, with 6.41% of participants stating this was the best way to respond when witnessing the cyberbullying.

Differences in Bystander Responses by Bullying Involvement Group, Gender, and Age

As mentioned in chapter two, a total of 66 participants completed both the survey and interview components of this study. These 66 participants were assigned a bullying involvement group based on the findings in chapter three (research question one). Although four bullying involvement profiles were identified, a majority of participants in the interview component of this study were in Profile 1 or the low involvement group. Therefore, participants in profiles 2, 3, and 4 were combined into one group that represented participants with mild to high levels of bullying involvement (both as victim and transgressor). Of the 66 participants who were assigned

to bullying profiles, 58 or 81.82% were in the low involvement group and 12 or 18.18% of participants were in the mild to high involvement group.

Some patterns in bystander intervention judgments were noted in the frequencies of participants who endorsed each action in each of the two bullying groups. A higher percentage of participants in the mild to high bullying involvement group endorsed supporting the victim than did participants in the low bullying involvement group in all hypothetical situations except the card game situation (75% of mild to high involvement participants as compared to 61.11% of low involvement participants in the science class context, 66.67% as opposed to 61.11% in the zoom conversation context, and 83.33% as opposed to 72.22% in the math class context). In the card game context, 66.67% of participants in the mild to high involvement group endorsed supporting the victim, whereas 75.93% endorsed this response in the low involvement group. A lower percentage of participants in the mild to high bullying involvement group than in the low involvement group endorsed telling an authority figure in all situations except for the zoom conversation situation (50% of low involvement participants as compared to 33.33% of mild to high involvement participants in the science class context, 50% as compared to 25% in the math class context, and 18.52% as opposed to 16.67% in the card game context). In the zoom conversation context, 14.81% of low involvement participants endorsed telling an authority figure, whereas 25% of mild to high involvement participants endorsed telling an authority figure. A higher percentage of participants in the mild to high bullying involvement group endorsed a passive response to witnessing cyberbullying than did participants in the low involvement group in all four situations (25% of mild to high involvement participants as compared to 11.11% of low involvement participants in the science class context, 33.33% as compared to 25% in the zoom conversation context, 8.33% as compared to 7.41% in the math class context, and 16.67% as compared to 14.81% in the card game context) .

Chi–square tests were conducted to test for differences in bystander evaluations between participants in each bullying group, age group, and by gender. In the math class situation, there was a significant difference in bystander evaluations in the support the bully response between the low and mild to high bullying involvement groups with 8.33% of participants in the mild to high involvement group supporting this action and 0% of the low involvement participants supporting this action (X^2 (1)= 4.57, p =.03). The participant in the higher involvement group who endorsed this bystander response justified this response by saying the bystander should, “check in with the person that is getting bullied and also check in with the person that is bullying because they both might be going through some stuff. And that might be why he's bullying him.” This participant chose a bystander response that also included caring for the wellbeing of the bully in addition to the victim.

There were no significant differences noted in bystander evaluations by age group at the p <.05 level. Although not statistically significant, there was a general trend in lower levels of endorsement of telling an authority figure in the older adolescent age groups (11–14–years and 15–18–years) when compared to the younger age group (7–10 years). Specifically, 59.09% of 7–10–year–old students endorsed telling an authority figure as compared to 34.48% of 11–14–year–old students, and 44.44% of 15–18–year–old students in the science class context. In the zoom conversation context, 27.27% of the 7–10–year–old students as compared to 13.79% of the 11–14–year–old students, and 18.52% of the 15–18–year–old students endorsed telling an authority figure. In the math class context, 50% of 7–10– year–old students endorsed telling an authority figure compared to 51.72% of 11–14–year–old students and 33.33% of 15–18–year–old students. Finally, in the card game context, 22.73% of 7–10–year–old students endorsed

telling an authority figure compared to 17.24% of 11–14–year–old students and 14.81% of 15–18–year–old students.

Again, although not statistically significant, there was a general trend of higher levels of endorsement of passive responses in the middle age group (11–14–years) when compared to the other age groups. Specifically, 24.14% of 11–14–year–old students endorsed this action compared to 9.09% of 7–10–year–old students and 11.11% of 15–18–year old students in the science class context. In the zoom conversation context, 27.59% of 11–14–year–old students endorsed this action compared to 13.64% of 7–10–year–old students and 14.81% of 15–18–year–old students. In the math class context, 17.24% of 11–14–year–old students endorsed this action compared to 4.55% of 7–10–year–old and 7.41% of 15–18–year–old students. Finally, in the card game context, 20.69% of 11–14–year–old students endorsed this bystander action compared to 18.18% of 7–10–year–old students and 14.81% of 15–17–year–old students.

Significant gender differences were found in the math class situation and differences were approaching statistical significance in the card game situation (both situations involving a victim with a disability). More females than males endorsed supporting the victim in each scenario with 85.71% of female students compared to 65.12% of male students endorsing this action in the math class situation, X^2 (1)= 4.29 p =.04. In the card game situation, 82.86% of female students compared to 62.79% of male students endorsed supporting the victim, X^2 (1)= 3.84 p =.05.

Table 16

Percentages of participants' bystander intervention choices

Bystander Responses	Total	Bullying Involvement		Age Group			Gender	
		Low	Mild/ high	7-10 yr	11-14 yr	15-18 yr	Male	Female
Science Class								
Support victim								
Not endorsed	35.90	38.89	25.00	36.36	34.48	37.04	37.21	34.29
Endorsed	64.10	61.11	75.00	63.64	65.52	62.96	62.79	65.71
Tell an authority								
Not endorsed	55.13	50.00	66.67	40.91	65.52	55.56	51.16	60.00
Endorsed	44.87	50.00	33.33	59.09	34.48	44.44	48.84	40.00
Passive response								
Not endorsed	84.62	88.89	75.00	90.91	75.86	88.89	81.40	88.57
Endorsed	15.38	11.11	25.00	9.09	24.14	11.11	18.60	11.43
Support bully								
Not endorsed	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Endorsed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Zoom conversation								
Support victim								
Not endorsed	38.46	38.89	33.33	45.45	34.48	37.04	37.21	40.00
Endorsed	61.54	61.11	66.67	54.55	65.52	62.96	62.79	60.00
Tell an authority								
Not endorsed	80.77	85.19	75.00	72.73	86.21	81.48	83.72	77.14
Endorsed	19.23	14.81	25.00	27.27	13.79	18.52	16.28	22.86
Passive response								

Not endorsed	80.77	75.00	66.67	86.36	72.41	85.19	79.07	82.86
Endorsed	19.23	25.00	33.33	13.64	27.59	14.81	20.93	17.14
Support bully								
Not endorsed	93.59	90.74	100.00	90.91	93.10	96.30	95.35	91.43
Endorsed	6.41	9.26	0.00	9.09	6.90	3.70	4.65	8.57
Math class								
Support victim								
Not endorsed	25.64	27.78	16.67	27.27	27.59	22.22	34.88	14.29
Endorsed	74.36	72.22	83.33	72.73	72.41	77.78	65.12	85.71
Tell an authority								
Not endorsed	55.13	50.00	75.00	50.00	48.28	66.67	48.84	62.86
Endorsed	44.87	50.00	25.00	50.00	51.72	33.33	51.16	37.14
Passive response								
Not endorsed	89.74	92.59	91.67	95.45	82.76	92.59	86.05	94.29
Endorsed	10.26	7.41	8.33	4.55	17.24	7.41	13.95	5.71
Support bully								
Not endorsed	98.72	100.00	91.67	100.00	100.00	96.30	97.67	100.00
Endorsed	1.28	0.00	8.33	0.00	0.00	3.70	2.33	0.00
Card game								
Support victim								
Not endorsed	28.21	24.07	33.33	40.91	17.24	29.63	37.21	17.14
Endorsed	71.79	75.93	66.67	59.09	82.76	70.37	62.79	82.86
Tell an authority								
Not endorsed	82.05	81.48	83.33	77.27	82.76	85.19	79.07	85.71
Endorsed	17.95	18.52	16.67	22.73	17.24	14.81	20.93	14.29
Passive response								
Not endorsed	82.05	85.19	83.33	81.82	79.31	85.19	79.07	85.71
Endorsed	17.95	14.81	16.67	18.18	20.69	14.81	20.93	14.29
Support bully								
Not endorsed	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Endorsed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Associations between Bystander Responses and Domain of Justification

Participants 'justifications for each bystander intervention evaluation were coded in alignment with Social Domain Theory. Participants provided judgments that reflected considerations that aligned with the moral, social conventional, and personal domains individually as well as some mixed justifications. All mixed justifications participants provided included moral and social conventional or personal considerations. Table 17 provides a breakdown of the percentage of justifications used in each situation by domain classification. In addition, this table shows the percentages of participants who endorsed and did not endorse each bystander response drawing on each type of justification.

The highest percentage of participants in this study drew on moral justifications to endorse supporting the victim. Specifically, 62.82% of participants drew on moral justifications as compared to 16.67% who drew on social conventional, 6.41% who drew on personal, and 14.10% who drew on mixed–moral justifications in reasoning about a bystander response in the science class context. Of the 62.82% who drew on moral justifications, 75.51% endorsed supporting the victim. In the zoom conversation context, 70.51% of participants drew on moral

reasoning. 8.97% drew on social conventional reasoning, 2.56% drew on personal reasoning, and 17.95% drew on mixed–moral reasoning. Of the 70.51% who drew on moral reasoning, 65.45% endorsed supporting the victim. In the math class context, 70.51% of participants drew on moral reasoning. 8.97% drew on social conventional reasoning, 0% of participants drew on personal reasoning, and 20.51% of participants drew on mixed–moral reasoning. Of the70.51% of participants who drew on moral reasoning, 80% endorsed supporting the victim. Finally, in the card game situation, 62.82% of participants drew on moral reasoning, 11.54% drew on social conventional reasoning, 3.85% drew on personal reasoning, and 21.79% drew on mixed–moral reasoning. Of the 62.82% who drew on moral reasoning, 83.67% endorsed supporting the victim.

The highest percentage of participants drew on social conventional justifications to endorse telling an authority figure. Specifically, in the science class context, 92.31% of participants who drew on social conventional reasoning endorsed telling an authority figure compared to 30.61% of those who drew on moral reasoning, 20% of those who drew on personal reasoning, and 63.64% who drew on mixed–moral reasoning. In the zoom conversation context, 57.14% of those who drew on social conventional reasoning endorsed telling an authority figure compared to 20% of those who drew on moral reasoning, and 0% of those who drew on personal or mixed–moral reasoning. In the math class context, 85.71% of participants who drew on social conventional reasoning endorsed telling an authority figure compared to 29.09% of those who drew on moral reasoning, 0% who drew on personal reasoning, and 81.25% of participants who drew on mixed–moral reasoning. Finally, in the card game situation, 66.67% of those who drew on social conventional reasoning endorsed telling an authority figure compared to 12.24% of those who drew on moral reasoning, 0% who drew on personal reasoning, and 11.76% who drew on mixed–moral reasoning.

Table 17

Percentages of participants' bystander intervention choices and domain of justification

	Moral	Social Conventional	Personal	Mixed–Moral
Bystander Responses by Context				
Science Class Total	62.82	16.67	6.41	14.10
Support victim				
Not endorsed	24.49	84.62	20.00	36.36
Endorsed	75.51	15.38	80.00	63.64
Tell an authority				
Not endorsed	69.39	7.69	80.00	36.36
Endorsed	30.61	92.31	20.00	63.64
Passive response				
Not endorsed	89.80	84.62	60.00	72.73
Endorsed	10.20	15.38	40.00	27.27
Support bully				
Not endorsed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Endorsed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Zoom Conversation Total	70.51	8.97	2.56	17.95
Support victim				
Not endorsed	34.55	71.43	0.00	42.86
Endorsed	65.45	28.57	100.00	57.14

Tell an authority				
Not endorsed	80.00	42.86	100.00	100.00
Endorsed	20.00	57.14	0.00	0.00
Passive response				
Not endorsed	87.27	85.71	100.00	50.00
Endorsed	12.73	14.29	0.00	50.00
Support bully				
Not endorsed	96.36	100.00	50.00	85.71
Endorsed	3.64	0.00	50.00	14.29
Math Class Total	70.51	8.97	0.00	20.51
Support victim				
Not endorsed	20.00	42.86	0.00	37.50
Endorsed	80.00	57.14	0.00	62.50
Tell an authority				
Not endorsed	70.91	14.29	0.00	18.75
Endorsed	29.09	85.71	0.00	81.25
Passive response				
Not endorsed	90.91	85.71	0.00	87.50
Endorsed	9.09	14.29	0.00	12.50
Support bully				
Not endorsed	98.18	100.00	0.00	100.00
Endorsed	1.82	0.00	0.00	0.00
Card Game Total	62.82	11.54	3.85	21.79
Support victim				
Not endorsed	16.33	66.67	100.00	29.41
Endorsed	83.67	33.33	0.00	70.59
Tell an authority				
Not endorsed	87.76	33.33	100.00	88.24
Endorsed	12.24	66.67	0.00	11.76
Passive response				
Not endorsed	85.71	100.00	0.00	76.47
Endorsed	14.29	0.00	100.00	23.53
Support bully				
Not endorsed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Endorsed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

A series of binary logistical regressions were performed to determine whether students' bystander evaluations were associated with the type of justifications (moral or non-moral). Justifications in the conventional and personal domains were collapsed into the non-moral category, and moral and mixed–moral justifications were collapsed into the moral category. Additionally, because few participants endorsed supporting the bully, this response was omitted from the analyses. Results indicated that justification type (moral or non-moral) and bystander evaluation were significantly associated in many situations (see Table 18).

Statistically significant associations between justification category and bystander response were found in the science class and card game situations. In the science class situation, the estimated odds of endorsing a bystander response of support the victim are significantly lower when drawing on non–moral justifications than moral justifications (OR=.18, z=-2.94, p = .033). However, when drawing on non–moral as compared to moral justifications in the science situation, the odds of endorsing telling an authority (OR= 4.49, z= 2.54, p=001) and a passive

response (OR= 1.86, z=.91,p=.36) were higher, although results are approaching but not statistically significant for the passive response. In the card game situation, the likelihood of endorsing a bystander response of supporting the victim was significantly lower when drawing on non–moral as opposed to moral justifications (OR=.08, z=-3.48, p=.001). The odds of endorsing a bystander response of telling an authority figure or a passive response were higher when drawing on non–moral rather than moral justifications, with statistically significant associations between justification type and telling an authority figure (OR= 7.25, z=2.87, p=.004).

In the zoom conversation and math class situations, associations between justifications and bystander interventions were weaker than in the science class and the card game situations. When drawing on non-moral as opposed to moral justifications in the zoom conversation situation, the odds of endorsing a bystander response of telling an authority figure was higher and approaching statistical significance (OR =4.22, z=1.03, p=.05). Although not statistically significant, there was a higher likelihood of endorsing a bystander response of supporting the victim or a passive response when drawing on moral justifications in this situation. Similarly, when drawing on non-moral as opposed to moral justifications in the math class situation, the odds of endorsing a bystander response of telling an authority figure was higher and approaching statistical significance (OR =8.68, z=1.95, p=.05). Although not statistically significant, there was a lower likelihood of endorsing a bystander response of supporting the victim, and a higher likelihood of endorsing a passive response when drawing on non–moral justifications in this situation.

Table 18

Logistic regression model estimates for the probability of giving moral justifications

	Logit	Std. Error	Odds Ratio	z-value	p-value
Science class					
Support victim	-1.70	.58	.18	-2.94	.003
Tell an authority	1.50	.59	4.49	2.54	.01
Passive response	.62	.68	1.857	.91	.36
Zoom conversation					
Support victim	-.79	.71	.45	-1.10	.27
Tell an authority	1.43	.75	4.22	1.93	.05
Passive response	-.71	1.10	.49	-.65	.52
Math class					
Support victim	-.87	.81	.42	-1.07	.28
Tell an authority	2.16	1.10	8.68	1.95	.05
Passive response	.42	1.15	1.52	.37	.71
Card game					
Support victim	-2.50	.73	.08	-3.41	.001
Tell an authority	1.98	.69	7.25	2.87	.004
Passive response	.51	.74	1.67	.69	.49

Summary

It was hypothesized that participants who had profiles that indicated higher levels of bullying involvement would endorse inconsistent or mixed bystander involvement across hypothetical contexts (i.e., a mix between the bystander remaining passive, intervening to support the bully, and defending the victim), whereas students with bullying profiles that indicate low levels of bullying involvement would primarily endorse supporting the victim in hypothetical cyberbullying situations (Hypothesis 5). When compared to the low involvement bullying group, a higher percentage of participants in the mild to high involvement group endorsed supporting the victim and a passive response, and a lower percentage endorsed telling an authority figure in most situations. These hypotheses were partially supported. The findings did not substantiate higher levels of endorsement for supporting the victim in the low involvement group but did support the mixed bystander response hypothesis for the higher involvement bullying group.

It was also hypothesized that participants who endorsed bystander actions involving supporting the victim would draw more on moral justifications, those who endorsed asking an adult for help would draw on a mixture of moral and social conventional justifications, and those who endorsed assisting the bully or staying uninvolved would draw more on personal or social conventional justifications than moral justifications. Findings partially supported this hypothesis with associations between moral justifications and a higher likelihood of endorsing the bystander response of supporting the victim across all contexts. Additionally, there was a higher likelihood of endorsing telling an authority figure when drawing on non–moral justifications. Findings were mixed with regard to endorsing a passive response. Furthermore, because few participants endorsed supporting the bully, this response was omitted from the analyses.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This multi–method study aimed to understand how students with SLD have been involved in bullying, and how this involvement has impacted critical outcomes. Specifically, I analyzed categorical within–group differences in bullying involvement, their auxiliary associations with demographic characteristics, and associations with school engagement and internalizing and externalizing symptoms. In addition, I studied how these youth think about bullying in online contexts with an emphasis on developmental trends, gender differences, and particular social–situational factors (i.e., disability status of the victim, intention of the harm, and interpersonal connection between the transgressor and target). Additionally, the study examined how youth with SLD think about bystander intervention, and the justifications they provide for endorsing different forms of intervention in response to cyberbullying. In doing so, this dissertation drew on quantitative analyses of surveys (N=221) and mixed methods analyses of clinical interviews (N=78).

My analysis yielded a four–profile model for bullying involvement. These profiles had significant associations with demographic variables, and school engagement and mental health outcomes. Additionally, the research revealed significant findings related to age, gender, and social situational differences in how youth reason about cyberbullying. There were also meaningful differences in how youth evaluated bystander intervention and justified these interventions in response to cyberbullying. These results are discussed in further detail in this

chapter, and the discussion is broken down by the two main objectives of this study (i.e., bullying involvement and associated predictors and outcomes, and patterns in reasoning about cyberbullying and bystander intervention).

Bullying Involvement and Associated Predictors and Outcomes

In order to answer the first research question, I conducted a latent profile analysis to elucidate distinct profiles of patterns of bullying involvement amongst the sample of students with SLD in this study. This study revealed four distinct profiles of bullying involvement: Low Involvement Profile, Mildly Involved Profile, Moderately/ highly Victimized Profile, and Moderately Frequent Bully–Victim Profile. These findings are in line with previous person–centered research that has identified four common bullying victimization and perpetration profiles that exist among the general student population in the in–person educational context. However, the nature of these profiles differs from prior literature. Some previous studies have identified the four bullying involvement profiles as: victim, bully, bully/victim, and uninvolved students (Liu et al., 2021; Lovegrove et al., 2012) with variation in the severity of involvement and form of bullying that is reported within each group. Notably, no profile of youth with SLD that engaged primarily in bullying perpetration (bully profile) emerged from this data. Students with SLD have been found to be at higher risk of involvement in bullying both as victim and perpetrator, even before the COVID–19 pandemic (Mishna, 2003; Rose et al., 2011b), and this study adds to the existing body of research on how these youth have been involved in bullying during and after the pandemic.

Furthermore, in this research I examined how youth with SLDs have experienced and responded to interpersonal stressors (i.e., bullying involvement) during and after a period of global turmoil due to the COVID–19 pandemic drawing on the Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress model (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). With regard to the second research question, this study examined demographic variables as predictors of bullying involvement to assess additional risk factors that may be relevant to students with SLD. Addressing the third research question, this study examined associations between bullying involvement and academic as well as mental health outcomes. In doing so, this study addressed the need for more research on specific patterns of bullying involvement and associated outcomes amongst youth with SLD (Rose et al., 2011a) and has implications for informing bullying intervention programs that are more precise and tailored to the needs of youth with SLD.

Research Question One: Profiles of Bullying Involvement among Youth with SLD

Low Involvement Profile. The highest percentage of youth (37%) were in profile 1, or the low involvement group. Although this group was the largest in the sample, a little under 2/3 of participants were in bullying involvement groups that reported significantly higher frequencies of victimization and perpetration. This suggests that a majority of youth with SLD in this sample had relatively frequent experiences with bullying in one or more forms. The distribution of participants across profiles also aligns with prior literature documenting that youth with SLD are at high risk for bullying involvement (Ezzati Babi & Mikaeili, 2022; Rose et al., 2011b).

Youth in this group reported experiencing victimization at low levels, with mean scores across bullying victimization indicating that participants in this group who did experience

bullying victimization experienced this harm less than once a month. Although participants in this group were generally uninvolved, the form of bullying victimization most frequently experienced was verbal victimization followed by relational, and physical victimization. Participants in this group experienced cybervictimization least often. Members in the low involvement group also indicated low involvement in perpetration with, mean values indicating significantly less perpetration involvement than victimization (also less than once a month). Similar to patterns in victimization, participants who did report perpetration reported the highest levels of perpetration in verbal bullying, followed by relational and physical, and the lowest levels of cyber perpetration. Participants in this group , therefore, had more frequent experiences with indirect forms of victimization and perpetration. Counter to my hypothesis, participants had the lowest levels of involvement in cyber bullying and victimization. It may be the case that the strong association between face–to–face and cyberbullying noted in prior literature (e.g., Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015) is evident in this group. It is possible that because students reported low involvement in face–to–face bullying, the frequency of cyberbullying as a continuation of the face–to–face bullying was also lower (Modecki et al., 2014).

Mildly Involved Profile. Profile 2, or the mildly involved group, was the smallest profile in this study with 14% of participants classified in this group. Participants in this group experienced mild levels of both victimization and perpetration in comparison to participants in other profiles. Means for victimization indicated that profile members experienced victimization in the range from less than once a month to once or twice a month. Similar to in Profile 1, participants in this group reported the highest frequency of verbal victimization. However, participants in this group reported the second highest level of victimization in the cybervictimization category followed by relational and physical. Means for perpetration experiences in this group indicated bullying in the range from never perpetrating to perpetrating harm once or twice a month. Similar to in Profile 1, participants indicated the highest frequency of perpetration in the verbal bullying category followed by relational, physical, and cyber. It may be the case that the higher level of cybervictimization reported in this group is associated with higher levels of bullying perpetration and face–to–face victimization. For example, members in this group reported verbal bullying about once or twice a month that may be associated with retaliatory action that is enacted through cybervictimization. It is important to note that participants who fell in this profile were involved in multiple forms of perpetration and victimization. The means across victimization and perpetration items could lead to a classification of these participants as "bully–victims" who were most active in indirect bullying.

Moderately/ highly Victimized Profile. Profile 3, or the moderately/highly victimized group, included 18% of participants in this study. The range of mean scores for victimization in this group indicated experiences of victimization that ranged from less than once a month to several times a week. Members of this group reported the highest mean scores for victimization across all groups for verbal and relational victimization. Similar to Profiles 1 and 2, members of this profile reported the highest levels of verbal victimization. The second most common form of victimization in this group was relational, followed by physical and cyber. Members of this profile reported relatively low levels of perpetration that were slightly higher than rates reported in Profile 1, but still in the range for no perpetration to perpetration that took place less than once a month (if at all). The most frequent form of perpetration reported by members of this profile was verbal followed by relational, physical, and cyberbullying. The lower levels of cyberbullying and victimization rates reported in this profile suggest that cyberbullying involvement may be more closely associated with a bully–victim profile than with a more highly

victimized profile. In addition, engagement in verbal bullying amongst members of this profile may be connected to the high levels of verbal victimization. In other words, the verbal perpetration may have been in response to victimization as an attempt to engage in self–defense or retaliation. The relatively high levels of verbal victimization and perpetration noted across Profiles 1,2, and 3 in comparison to other forms of victimization and perpetration align with research conducted with a sample of 8th graders in Korea using LPA (Chung & Lee, 2020). This suggests that verbal bullying may be an important area to target for intervention across a range of ages, abilities, and cultural group of students.

Moderately Frequent Bully–Victim Profile. Finally, I labeled the fourth profile moderately frequent bully–victims. This profile was the second largest of the four profiles with 31% of participants classified in this group, and the profile that indicated the highest rates of bullying involvement across victimization and perpetration indicators. The range of mean scores in this group noted experiences of victimization that ranged from once or twice a month to once a week. Members of this group reported the highest mean scores for victimization across all groups for physical and cyber victimization. In contrast to Profiles 1,2, and 3, members of this profile reported the lowest levels of victimization in the verbal category. The most common form of victimization in this group was physical followed by relational and cyber.

Members of this profile reported relatively high levels of perpetration in comparison to the other profiles that ranged from less than once a month to once a week. The most frequent forms of perpetration reported by members of this profile were verbal and physical followed by relational and cyber perpetration. The higher levels of cyberbullying and victimization rates reported in this profile and Profile 2 highlight a closer association between cyberbullying involvement and a bully–victim profile. In addition, the higher rates of physical and cyber victimization in this profile may be associated with higher levels of perpetration across all forms. It can be maintained that physical and cyber victimization are both more direct forms of bullying victimization that may lead to higher levels of perpetration by victims of these forms of bullying as actions of self–defense or retaliation. An alternate explanation is that youth who engage in higher levels of perpetration are most at risk of being targeted as victims of direct forms of bullying.

Research Question Two: Demographic Variable Associations with Latent Profile Variables

In order to answer research question two, I conducted multinomial logistic regressions to understand the risk of belonging to each bullying involvement group based on demographic characteristics. Some significant findings emerged when exploring associations between demographic characteristics and bullying involvement profile. Participants in secondary school (grades 6–12) were more likely than participants in elementary school (grades 1–5) to be in the moderate/highly victimized group or Profile 3 than in the low involvement group or Profile 1. Members in Profile 3 reported the highest levels of verbal and relational victimization (indirect victimization) of all the four profiles. The finding that older participants were more likely to be in Profile 3 aligns with prior literature highlighting an increase in more indirect forms of bullying with age (Zych et al., 2020). However, the increased risk of victimization across forms of victimization was a finding that was not hypothesized. This suggests that developmental trends in bullying may be different for youth with SLD than the general population, reflecting an increase rather than decrease in risk for victimization with age. It is important to note that prior literature has found that bullying increases during transition years (i.e. from elementary to

middle school and middle school to high school) (Pepler et al., 2006; Zych et al., 2020). In this study, I was not able to isolate analyses to these transition periods. However, the transitions may account, at least in part, for the increase in victimization experiences in the older student group.

No significant findings emerged regarding gender and bullying involvement. Based on prior literature, I hypothesized that male participants would report higher levels of bullying involvement than female participants (Smith et al., 2018). Although findings on the association between gender and bullying involvement profile were not statistically significant, female participants had lower risks of being in higher involvement bullying groups than did male students. Specifically, female participants had a lower risk of being in Profiles 2,3, and 4 than Profile 1. Female participants also had a lower risk of being in Profiles 3 and 4 than Profile 2, and a lower risk of being in Profile 4 than Profile 3. Because the bullying involvement profiles are ordered from least to greatest involvement, female participants were generally most likely to be in the lower bullying involvement groups than male participants. Gender may not be as salient of a predictor for youth with SLD when evaluating risk for bullying involvement than in the general population. However, it also may be the case that this pattern was not statistically significant due to the smaller sample size in this study, and this association should be tested in future research.

Racial minority (non–White) youth were more likely to be in lower bullying involvement groups than White youth. Specifically, racial minority youth were more likely than White youth to be in the low involvement bullying group or Profile 1 than the mild involvement group or Profile 2. Racial minority youth were also more likely to be in the low involvement group or Profile 1 than in the moderate/high victimization group or profile 3. Finally, racial minority youth were more likely than White youth to be in Profile 1 than in the moderate bullying/victimization group or Profile 4. This finding suggests that for youth with SLD, belonging to a racial/ethnic minority group does not increase the risk of bullying involvement and may in fact decrease the risk of involvement. It is important to consider the school–level factors that may also be contributing to these findings. For example, the diversity of the student body at a particular school may actually place racial/minority youth in the majority group in a particular school context, changing the effect of race/ethnicity on bullying risk (e.g., Yang et al., 2021).

Surprising findings emerged when analyzing associations between sexual orientation and bullying involvement. Based on prior literature, I hypothesized that students from sexual minority groups would report significantly higher rates of victimization than their peers from non–minority groups (Eisenberg et al., 2015). However, youth who identified as LGBTQIA+ were more likely to be in the lower bullying involvement groups than youth who identified as straight. In particular LGBTQIA+ youth were more likely to be in the low involvement group or Profile 1 than in the mild involvement group or Profile 2. In addition, LGBTQIA+ youth were more likely to be in the low involvement group or Profile 1 than in the moderate bullying/victimization group or Profile 4. School–level or community–level factors may help explain this trend, such as a supportive and inclusive school climate, higher percentage of students who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, or inclusive programs and initiatives at the community level. It also may be the case that for youth with SLD, belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community serves as a protective factor from isolation and a higher risk of involvement in bullying perpetration or experiences of victimization. This finding highlights the need for further research employing an intersectional lens in understanding how holding

multiple marginalizing identities might interact to buffer or exacerbate the risk of bullying involvement.

Research Question Three: Latent Profile Variable Associations with Outcome Variables

Prior literature underscores the short– and long–term risks associated with bullying involvement. In particular, bullying involvement increases the risk of depression, anxiety, low self–esteem, self–harm, suicidal ideation (i.e., internalizing problems) and school absences and avoidance (i.e. greater risk of academic disengagement) (Cornell et al., 2013; Hysing et al., 2021; Klomek et al., 2010). Additionally, long–term implications of childhood bullying include greater levels of externalizing symptoms such as aggressive behaviors over the life span, adulthood criminality (e.g., assault/battery, rape) (Ttofi et al., 2012). Furthermore, when employing a person–centered approach to understanding bullying involvement and associations with psychosocial outcomes, Nylund et al. (2007) found that students who are more involved in the bullying dynamic have been shown to experience higher levels of negative psychosocial outcomes. Given the risks associated with bullying, and the risks posed by having a disability and exposure to additional stressors, this research drew on the Social–Ecological Diathesis–Stress model (Swearer & Hymel, 2015) in order to understand the effects of bullying involvement and additional vulnerabilities on mental health and academic outcomes for youth with SLD.

School engagement. Findings revealed two significant associations between bullying involvement profile and school engagement. Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) was significantly associated with lower school engagement than Profile 1 (low bullying involvement). This negative association was also noted for Profile 4 (moderate bully–victims). In addition, Profile 3 (moderately/highly victimized) showed a negative trend that approached statistical significance. These findings suggest that the combination of bullying victimization and perpetration experiences as opposed to primarily victimization experiences was more significantly associated with negative school engagement outcomes. This highlights the need to target intervention and support to students who are involved in bullying perpetration and who are victimized.

Although the covariates included in this model were all variables controlled in the analysis, some important findings emerged from these control variables that warrant future inquiry. In this sample, identifying as Black, Latinx, or Mixed Race was associated with significantly higher rates of school engagement than identifying as White. These findings suggest that membership in these racial/ethnic minority groups served as a protective factor from higher risks of bullying involvement (as discussed in the previous section) and increased the likelihood of higher levels of school engagement. Future research is needed to test whether this association holds in a larger sample, and to understand why, for youth with SLD, identifying as Black, Latinx, or Mixed Race is associated with higher levels of school engagement.

Internalizing symptoms. Results from this regression analysis showed more positive associations between membership in Profiles 2, 3, and 4 than Profile 1 for internalizing symptoms. Membership in Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) was more positively associated with internalizing symptoms than in Profile 1 (low bullying involvement). Similarly, a significant positive relationship was found for membership in Profile 3 (moderate to high victimization) than in Profile 1 (low bullying involvement). Finally, a significant positive association with internalizing symptoms was also noted for membership in Profile 4 (moderate

bully–victims) than in Profile 1 (low involvement). Taken together, these findings highlight the risks for internalizing symptoms associated with higher levels of bullying involvement (a as victim or both perpetrator and victim). For youth with SLD who are involved with bullying on a somewhat regular basis (once a month or more), it is important to design interventions to support internalizing symptoms.

Again, in this analysis I included covariates as control variables. Some significant findings emerged with these covariates that warrant future research. Specifically, not identifying as straight with regard to sexual orientation, was significantly associated with higher levels of internalizing symptoms. Although youth with SLD who identified as LGBTQIA+ had a lower likelihood of greater levels of bullying involvement, these youth had higher levels of internalizing symptoms. Future research is warranted that explores the risk factors associated with this higher level of risk, and interventions should be tailored to support youth with SLD who identify as LGBTQIA+. In addition, youth with SLD who identified as Asian had lower rates of internalizing symptoms than their White peers. This result was approaching statistical significance and should be studied with a larger sample of Asian youth with SLD.

Externalizing symptoms. Results from this study showed greater positive associations between membership in Profiles 2 and 4 than Profile 1 for externalizing symptoms. Profile 2 (mild bullying involvement) was significantly associated with higher levels of externalizing symptoms than Profile 1 (low bullying involvement). Profile 3 membership (moderate/high victimization) was associated with higher levels of externalizing symptoms than Profile 1(low bullying involvement) with externalizing symptoms but not statistically significant. Finally, there was a significant association between Profile 4 (moderate bully–victims) and higher levels of externalizing symptoms than Profile 1 (low bullying involvement). These results are similar to those found on associations between school engagement and bullying involvement. In particular, bullying involvement in both victimization and perpetration appears to put youth with SLD at higher risk of behavioral challenges (i.e., lower school engagement and externalizing symptoms). Youth who engage in both victimization and perpetration should be prioritized for interventions that address behavioral difficulties.

A few of the covariates that were included as control variables in this model yielded significant effects. In this sample, identifying as Asian was associated with statistically significantly lower levels of externalizing symptoms than identifying as White. In addition, middle school and high school students had statistically significantly lower rates of externalizing symptoms than elementary school students. Finally, youth with SLD who reported significant internet use daily (9 or more hours demonstrated significantly higher levels of externalizing symptoms than youth who reported mild use (6 or fewer hours). Taken together, these results highlight the need to conduct future research that explores associations between race/ethnicity, internet use, and age with externalizing symptoms amongst youth with SLD.

Patterns in Reasoning about Cyberbullying and Bystander Intervention

As discussed in the literature review, bullying poses a serious public health and safety concern in the United States. There are differing theoretical perspectives on how to understand why youth engage in these acts of harm, and how youth make decisions about intervening when witnessing bullying. Given the noted positive effects of defender bystander intervention, and the high levels of involvement of youth with SLD in bullying and bystander intervention, this study sought out to better understand how youth with SLD think about these issues. Acknowledging

the rise in internet use and the context of this study (during and after distance learning because of the COVID–19 pandemic), the focus of this study was on cyberbullying and bystander intervention. In particular, this study aimed to understand how youth think about issues of cyberbullying and bystander intervention in the context of situations that involved dilemmas faced in real life, and that included multiple competing considerations.

Accomplishing this task in a comprehensive way required analyzing various elements. Since people develop knowledge and evaluations of the social world through experiences and active engagement with others, it was necessary to explore variances in viewpoints related to development. In doing so, I considered development through the lens of age, gendered experiences in the world, and prior experiences with bullying involvement. Furthermore, I considered features of the social situation that have been shown to impact judgments and reasoning in prior literature. Specifically, I looked for differences in reasoning based on disability status of the victim, private or public context of the bullying (i.e., school or outside of school), interpersonal connection between the bully and victim, and the intention of the harm (i.e., an act of harm that was provoked or unprovoked).

Findings from these analyses highlighted significant differences, revealing nuanced reasoning in some contexts more than others. In this section, I present overarching themes in these findings and the most compelling trends. These high–level understandings offer insights in response to some critical questions in the field of bullying and bystander intervention research including: *How do youth think about cyberbullying, and when might this form of harm be acceptable? What factors do youth consider when making decisions about bystander intervention?* These questions were particularly crucial to ask with a sample of youth with SLD given the high risk of bullying involvement amongst youth in this group, and the lack of knowledge on how to effectively intervene to support youth with SLD involved in bullying. The framework of Social Domain Theory provided the theoretical guidance and methodological tools for studying the development of reasoning within the domains of morality, social convention, and personal choice in answering these questions.

Research Question Four: Cyberbullying Evaluations

A majority of participants negatively evaluated cyberbullying in the hypothetical situations. There was a small amount of variability in general evaluations, with a smaller percentage of youth evaluating acts of cyber harm as understandable or more acceptable in private social media contexts than in virtual classroom settings. Overall, participants evaluated all contexts of cyberbullying as unacceptable when asked for a general evaluation. More heterogeneity in reasoning was observed when participants were asked counter probes.

In response to cyberbullying that was disability–based, participants referred to the unfairness of targeting someone for something that one does not ask for and cannot change. For example, a 17–year–old female participant responded to the question about the acceptability of disability–based cyberbullying by stating:

> No. No, no, no. There are lows but then there's just you hit rock bottom. You can say this stuff all you want to talk crap all you want to. But once you start talking about someone, like about something that they cannot change, and they have to live with that, for the rest of their life… no.

Other participants also provided reasoning that condemned judging someone for what they can or cannot do. One participant expanded this reasoning outside of disability to talk about the unacceptability of judging someone for strengths or weaknesses and rooted this discussion in the understanding that all people are different. This 10–year–old female participant stated:

> You shouldn't judge. Some people can't do this weird thing like what I do with my finger. Some people can't do this and then some people are like "wow that's so easy". But then people are like wow she can't do that…Her finger might not be as flexible. That's kind of, it's not exactly racism but it's just, it's kind of judging her heritage in like the way that she was born.

Findings from this study also highlighted the ways in which participants considered interpersonal ties between a transgressor and victim, and the intention of these acts of harm in evaluating the acceptability of these actions. In response to the counter probe of retaliation (i.e., would the act of cyberbullying be acceptable if it was an act of retaliation?) older participants (15–18 years) were more likely to find cyberbullying acceptable in retaliatory contexts than younger participants (7–10 years and 11–14 years). Participants who evaluated the action as acceptable or had mixed evaluations often cited justifications pertaining to self–defense in support of retaliatory action and spoke about deterring conflict resolution in support of an evaluation that this action would not be acceptable. For example, a 15–year–old female showed this mixed reasoning, saying "I mean, yes. I would think it'd be okay because it's kind of like you're defending yourself. At the same time, it could be bad because you are just escalating the problem." In response to the friendship counter probe (i.e., would the act of cyberbullying be okay if the transgressor and victim were friends?) female participants and younger participants were more likely to evaluate cyberbullying as unacceptable than older participants (15–18–years) and male participants. Participants referred to mutual trust, comfort, and understanding within a friendship as justifications for why it might be okay to engage in cyber teasing or joking with a friend. Participants provided justifications for the unacceptability of cyber teasing or harm within. Friendship that included the private or sensitive nature of the jokes and seeking permission before making a joke in front of an audience. For example, a 17–year–old male participant said:

> To be honest, I feel like if they were friends and Morgan (victim) gave Luke (bully) permission to record her then it would be okay. But at the same time, it wouldn't if Morgan didn't give Luke permission because Morgan probably didn't want Luke to post any information about him having a learning disability.

His response captures a common theme in responses from other participants reflecting the differing rules or norms of conduct within a friendship than in less intimate personal ties. At the same time, his response reflects the need to communicate and ask for consent even in a closer intimate connection.

Research Question Five: Bystander Evaluations and Justifications

Participants in this study were asked to identify the way(s) in which a bystander should respond when witnessing each of the four hypothetical situations in this study. This question was open ended, and participants were able to endorse multiple bystander actions. Bystander responses fell into four main categories: 1) support the victim; 2) tell an authority figure; 3) passive response; and 4) support the bully. Across all four hypothetical situations, the highest percentage of participants endorsed supporting the victim as the way to respond when witnessing cyberbullying. A higher percentage of participants endorsed supporting the victim in the two situations involving victims with disabilities in comparison to the situations with victims without disabilities. In addition, a higher percentage of participants in the mild to high bullying involvement group endorsed supporting the victim than did participants in the low bullying involvement group. Finally, more females than males endorsed supporting the victim. Importantly, participants provided a range of strategies and examples of how bystanders could and should support the victim.

Many participants advocated for defending the victim as the best approach to take and described the specific ways that defending the victim could look in an online classroom setting and social media context. For example, in response to cyberbullying in an online classroom setting, a 12–year–old female participant said,"… they should probably stand up to her (Jessica/bully) and tell her this is not okay. Just because she (Sally/victim) is alone doesn't mean that she isn't as good as you are. "A 17–year–old male participant also described how to defend the victim in an online social media context. He said, "what they should do is that whoever posted that, go up to him and tell him to take it down and apologize to the victim." This finding aligns with prior research by Malecki et al. (2020) highlighting the high rates of defender bystander intervention reported by youth with SLD. In addition to endorsing a response of defending the victim by standing up to the bully, participants also suggested other strategies to support the victim. In particular, some participants stated that comforting the victim was the best way to approach intervening. For example, a 13–year–old participant said, "Ask if she's ok because she might be feeling down about her disability." Others advocated for empowering the victim to develop skills and sources of strength to defend themselves. For example, a 9–year–old participant said, "…they should tell Karen (victim) to tell Audrey (bully) that you don't like it… And could you please stop because I don't like it." Finally, another approach to supporting the victim was mediating the conflict. A 17–year–old participant said the bystanders should, "try to help out Sam and talk to him and Joe by having a restorative justice circle."

The second most frequently endorsed bystander response was telling an authority figure (i.e., reporting the cyberbullying to a teacher, parent, administrator, or social media platform. This response was more frequently endorsed in the online class contexts than in the personal social media use contexts. One possible explanation for this trend is that participants felt that authority figures had more power in classroom contexts than on social media. A lower percentage of participants in the mild to high bullying involvement group than in the low involvement group endorsed telling an authority figure. This pattern may be due to a lack of effective response from authority figures to bullying experienced by students in the mild to high bullying involvement group. Although not statistically significant, there was a general trend in lower levels of endorsement of telling an authority figure in the older adolescent age groups (11–14–years and 15–18–years) than the younger age group (7–10 years). It may be the case with age participants rely less on authority intervention and influence in response to resolving interpersonal conflicts.

The third most frequently endorsed bystander response was a passive response (e.g., ignoring the situation or restricting use of the app cyberbullying took place on). This response was more

frequently endorsed in the social media contexts than in the online classroom settings. One possible explanation for this trend may be that participants felt that authority intervention or direct intervention was less effective on social media than in online classroom contexts. A higher percentage of participants in the mild to high bullying involvement group endorsed a passive response to witnessing cyberbullying than did participants in the low involvement group. Additionally, there was a general trend of higher levels of endorsement of passive responses in the middle age group (11–14–years) than in the other age groups. Future research should explore why more participants with higher levels of bullying involvement, and young adolescents (11–14–year–old) endorse passive responses to witnessing cyberbullying.

The least endorsed bystander response was supporting the bully (either by understanding the bully's perspective or encouraging the bully's actions). In the math class situation, there was a significant difference in bystander evaluations in the support the bully response between the low and mild to high bullying involvement groups. Very few participants endorsed this response, but the few who did provided reasoning that reflected considerations for the bully's feelings and intentions. This bystander response should be investigated further in future research as it may provide better understandings into sophisticated reasoning that considers ways in which bullies can be treated in a humanizing and compassionate manner without further exacerbating the harm.

The highest percentage of participants in this study drew on moral justifications to endorse supporting the victim. Furthermore, the likelihood of endorsing a bystander response of supporting the victim was also significantly higher when participants drew on moral justifications than social conventional or personal. The moral justifications that participants used to endorse supporting the victim included considerations for the psychological harm caused by the cyberbullying, violation of the victim's rights, the victim's disability status and unfairness of the harm, respect, and conflict resolution. Some participants called for empathy or reciprocity in considering the victim's feelings. For example, a 17–year–old female stated:

> You know adults say this a lot, and it's the truth. How would you feel if somebody did that to you, or like, your family member, or just someone you had a really close bond to? You'd feel some type of way about that, and you would want to say something. So why not do it for the other person?

Some participants also assumed that the bully lacked awareness of the impact of their actions. These participants advocated for intervening to support the victim and to help the bully reflect on their actions. For example, a 17–year–old male participant said supporting the victim is the best way to intervene as a bystander, "because it asks the person to think about their actions, and also why they even think about doing that in the first place".

The highest percentage of participants drew on social conventional justifications to endorse telling an authority figure. In addition, the odds of endorsing a bystander response of telling an authority figure were also significantly higher when participants drew on either social conventional or personal justifications. The social conventional justifications used to endorse telling an authority figure included considerations for the power a particular figure held in a given context, the punishment this figure could enforce on the bully, and the norms or rules of a group or a particular platform. For example, a 17–year–old male advocated for reporting the cyberbullying incident to Instagram. He said, "just because like I said, it was cyber bullying, and sometimes, that is not tolerated for certain social media apps."

Although the associations were weaker, the likelihood of endorsing a passive response was also higher when participants drew on social conventional or personal justifications. When advocating for a passive response, some participants cited considerations for group functioning and a bully's intention to get attention or recognition for the cyberbullying. In response to this intention, participants reasoned that ignoring the bully was most effective. For example, a 17–year–old female said, "They shouldn't respond to it or give her any attention because sometimes, that's what people seek is your attention." Some participants drew on personal justifications, including considerations for personal risk of harm or personal preference to endorse a passive response. For example, a 10–year–old female said:

> Just because… it's not your business and some people are like step in. That's not okay and I'm like well, you're making that sound like it's actually punching and stuff which isn't happening on Zoom. I feel like it's not my fight. It's not something I should be dealing with, if it gets out of hand and turns into curse words and other sorts, someone should certainly step in and I would, but it all kind of depends on what their topic is and how bad it is.

This participant was weighing the risk of intervening with her perception of the harm enacted but her response may have been different if the harm was more physical. In this way, participants' evaluations of the cyberbullying situation factored into evaluations about bystander through the cyberbullying incident. The risks outweighed the need to intervene in this context.

Conclusion

For decades, national research, policy, and practice efforts have aimed to address the serious risks posed by bullying for youth in the United States, conceptualizing bullying as a public health, safety, and social justice issue (e.g., Herrera et al., 2015; NASEM, 2016). Youth with SLD are more vulnerable to bullying involvement in all forms and attuned to the serious risks associated with this involvement. For example, several participants in this study spoke about the high stakes involved in responding and selecting an appropriate bystander response when witnessing bullying:

> Because you can embarrass her in so many ways, and she could end up not wanting to come to school anymore or learning because of everybody making fun of her. – 17–year–old female

> Because it's bullying. You can hurt somebody's feelings and they can hurt themselves and they can kill themselves. – 17–year–old male

> They should solve it, because some people are done….You can bully… you can bully people so many times that they commit suicide.– 17–year–old male

This dissertation study found several overarching findings concerning the bullying involvement, predictors of this involvement, and the associated outcomes for youth with SLD. First, Latent Profile Analysis of bullying victimization and perpetration indicators revealed four distinct profiles of bullying involvement: Low Involvement Profile, Mildly Involved Profile,

Moderately/ highly Victimized Profile, and Moderately Frequent Bully–Victim Profile. The highest percentage of youth in this study were in Profile 1, however, almost 2/3 of youth in this study were in higher risk profiles (2,3, and 4) indicating that the majority of participants were involved in bullying at mild to high levels. Second, older participants (grades 6–12) were at higher risk of victimization than younger participants (grades 1–5), whereas racial/ethnic minority youth were at lower risk of victimization and perpetration than White youth, and LGBTQIA+ youth were at lower risk of victimization and perpetration than straight youth. Third, higher levels of bullying involvement were associated with greater academic and mental health risks. In particular, bullying involvement as both victim and perpetrator was more significantly associated with higher rates of externalizing symptoms and risk for academic disengagement whereas higher levels of bullying involvement in all forms was significantly associated with higher levels of internalizing symptoms.

Furthermore, this study found several overarching patterns in how youth with SLD think about cyberbullying and bystander intervention. First, a majority of participants negatively evaluated cyberbullying in the hypothetical situations, with a slightly higher level of acceptance for cyberbullying that took place in personal social media contexts than in online class settings. Second, participants took into account several contextual features when evaluating hypothetical acts of cyberbullying including the disability status of the victim, whether the harm was provoked or unprovoked, and interpersonal ties between the bully and victim. Specifically, a higher percentage of participants thought that cyberbullying was unacceptable when the victim was targeted for having a disability than when the bullying was not disability–based. In addition, older participants (15–18 years) and male participants were more likely to evaluate situations in which the bullying took place as an act of retaliation or within a friendship as more mixed or acceptable than younger participants and females. Third, across all four hypothetical situations, the highest percentage of participants endorsed supporting the victim as the way to respond when witnessing cyberbullying, and participants offered several ways a bystander could meaningfully support a victim. Finally, the domain of justifications provided were closely associated with the bystander response a participant endorsed. In particular, the highest percentage of participants in this study drew on moral justifications to endorse supporting the victim, and the likelihood of endorsing a bystander response of supporting the victim was also significantly higher when participants drew on moral justifications than social conventional or personal reasons. Furthermore, the odds of endorsing a bystander response of telling an authority figure were also significantly higher when participants drew on either social conventional or personal justifications.

Limitations and Future Directions

The results from this study should be interpreted with a few key limitations in mind. The sample size of youth with SLD included in this study (for both the interview and survey) was relatively small. Furthermore, data were collected primarily from public school sites with less representation from private school students. Although statistically significant findings did emerge with this sample of youth, future research should be conducted with a larger sample of youth with SLD from a wider range of school sites to test these findings and evaluate whether findings that approached statistical significance would be significant in a larger study. In addition, the interview participants were skewed towards those with lower involvement profiles. Of the 66 participants who were assigned to bullying profiles, 58 or 81.82% were in the low

involvement group and 12 or 18.18% of participants were in the mild to high involvement group. Future research should aim to include participants that represent a wider range of bullying involvement profiles in interviews to capture distinct patterns in reasoning that may exist based on bullying experiences. In addition, with a larger sample size, important topics should be examined in the future including shifts in bullying involvement during the transitions from elementary to middle school and middle to high school. Intersectional and multi–level analyses factoring in school–level variables should also be conducted to help clarify the unexpected findings from this study (e.g., lower risk of bullying involvement among LGBTQIA+ youth).

Furthermore, data for this study were collected over a 20–month period from April 2021–December 2022. Data collection was particularly difficult due to the range of constraints, challenges, and risks posed by the COVID–19 pandemic and return to school. The window of data collection may have inadvertently involved variables that were not directly measured in this study but that could have influenced the bullying experience of youth (e.g., time spent in person in school and exposure to peers). All youth in this study were attending school in person at the start of the study, however, those interviewed between April–June 2021 had just return to school in California whereas those interviewed in the spring and fall of 2022 had more time back in school. Additionally, cross sectional or single time point data were used for this study. These data may not adequately capture the patterns, and do not illuminate the direction of associations in youths' bullying involvement and related outcomes over time. Future research should aim to explore these topics longitudinally.

Both the survey and interview methods posed a risk for social desirability. Because this study only included self–report survey items, there was a risk of under or overreporting bullying and related experiences measured in this study. Future research should aim to integrate data from teachers, parents, or peers in addition to self–report data to help capture a more comprehensive picture of how youth have been experiencing bullying and related observable outcomes (e.g., school engagement). Observational data could also help enrich future research on bullying involvement, related outcomes, and reasoning about bullying. Furthermore, participants' responses during the semi–structured interviews could have been influenced by their interactions with the researcher who interviewed them. To help reduce the risk of bias during the interview process, participants were informed that they could turn off their cameras if this felt more comfortable. There was also a risk of disengagement or inattention with an interview that took place over Zoom rather than in person. Future research should systematically examine the differences, drawbacks, and affordances of interviewing young participants in person or via Zoom. Additionally, this study included a sample of youth with a range of learning disabilities. Although steps were taken to make the survey and interview accessible (i.e., text–to–speech capabilities, voice note recordings, offering text in addition to the interview read aloud), future research should aim to define best practices for conducting surveys and interviews with youth with SLD.

Implications

Findings from this study offer implications for practice and policy efforts, and theoretical expansion relevant to bullying and bystander intervention with vulnerable youth. Under the framework of Social Domain Theory, coordination, or the balancing of different considerations (moral, conventional, and personal) is a process that can best account for variability in evaluations pertaining to bullying and bystander intervention

(Nucci et al. 2017). This stands in contrast to the theory of moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002). This study's findings help extend previous research on processes of coordination processes in youths' bullying and bystander intervention evaluations. Some preliminary patterns emerged in how youth evaluated cyberbullying situations and ultimately prioritized personal or social conventional concerns over moral concerns. Some factors that emerged in this study included youths' opinions about the level of harm experienced through the act of cyberbullying and perceptions of relative risk or effort needed to intervene. In weighing these competing concerns, youth who felt the risks or work outweighed the level of harm experienced by the victim were more likely to prioritize personal or social conventional factors than moral concerns. This finding aligns with findings from Nucci et al. (2017) highlighting the importance of considering conflicted situations (i.e., situations in which the interests of a bystander may conflict with helping the victim) and factors that are associated with a prioritization of moral over personal or social conventional concerns in these conflicted situations.

In addition, informational assumptions, or beliefs about the facts of the situation have also been shown to play an important part in individual's evaluations of social issues (Turiel, 2002; Wainryb, 1991). In this study, youths' assumptions about power and authority informed evaluations of bystander intervention. For example, some youth had direct experience with reporting problematic content on social media and found that the platform did nothing in response. These youth assumed that reporting to social media would be ineffective in all cases based on these experiences. Additionally, younger participants tended to assume that school–based authority figures such as teachers and administrators had more power to influence change than did older students, which may have been an important factor in impacting their bystander evaluations. Participants' assumptions about the efficacy of certain bystander interventions were also associated with their feelings of self–efficacy in enacting those actions in real life situations. For example, some participants described responding as bystanders to similar cyberbullying situations in real life, and a sense of self–efficacy that developed based on these prior experiences. However, other participants who had less direct experience with similar situations expressed lower levels of confidence in knowing what to do or how to respond when asked about hypothetical situations. Drawing on findings from Darley and Latané (1968), future empirical work should seek to investigate informational assumptions including one's perceived competence in responding to a cyberbullying incident and one's assumptions about how others will respond (in situations with multiple bystanders).

With regard to practice and policy implications, the characteristics of the distinct bullying involvement profiles observed in this study's sample of youth with SLD indicate the need for more targeted school–based interventions across grades K–12. Youth in two of the four identified profiles (Profiles 2 and 4), reported engaging in mild to high levels of bullying perpetration and experiencing mild to high levels of bullying victimization. These youth were also at highest risk of lower school engagement, internalizing, and externalizing symptoms. These findings support those from prior research (e.g., Rodkin et al., 2015) and highlight the importance of developing interventions and prioritizing these interventions to meet the needs of youth who are involved in bullying both as victims and perpetrators. These interventions could involve addressing needs at the school–level for promoting safety, offering youth tools and strategies for avoiding or responding to victimization in empowered ways, and bystander supports to help prevent bullying in spaces where adults are not present or able to effectively intervene. Furthermore, internalizing symptoms were associated with all three higher level bullying involvement profiles indicating that group or individual therapeutic supports to address

internalizing symptoms should be offered to students who experience any form of consistent bullying. See Elbedour et al. (2020) for some specific psychotherapy techniques that can be used.

School psychologists can serve as change agents to address cyberbullying, particularly in designing and guiding the implementation of prevention and intervention work (Elbedour et al., 2020). Schools should have clear guidelines for internet safety at school, and proactively develop policies to address any violations of these safety guidelines that take place at school or in online contexts involving students from the school. Furthermore, school psychologists can help develop digital literacy and online safety programs (to be delivered to parents and students). Discussing issues of privacy, the long–lasting nature of online content, and digital citizenship may be important topics to start with in digital literacy education. Awareness programs should define cyberbullying and explain how it works, share information on prevalence, and discuss the importance of the cyber world as well as its ever–evolving nature. School psychologists can help facilitate spaces for youth to discuss these topics with one another and bring in parents/guardians to further enhance these conversations.

Findings from this study offer implications for how these interventions can be designed to be ecologically and developmentally effective for youth with SLD. This dissertation found that youth with learning disabilities are thinking in complex and nuanced ways about cyberbullying and bystander engagement, and bringing valuable knowledge, insights, and opinions that should inform the development and refinement of interventions. Findings from prior literature and youths' interview responses indicate that cyberbullying interventions should involve a component of bystander intervention. These interventions should be sensitive to the context of the incident (e.g., school or private). In addition, results from this study indicate that authority involvement is an essential component of the intervention process, and a greater emphasis on authority involvement may be more effective with younger students (i.e., elementary) than with older students. Teachers are often students' first point of contact and should be trained on how to respond to cyberbullying in a timely and proactive manner. Boundaries for what constitutes bullying and appropriate intervention are blurred in friendships. Additionally, important considerations came up in youths' reasoning about provoked cyberbullying (retaliatory cyberbullying) that should be included in the design of cyberbullying interventions.

As a result of these findings, a combination of a social domain based moral education (Ilten–Gee & Nucci, 2019; Midgette et al., 2018) and critical pedagogical approaches (Duncan– Andrade & Morrell, 2008) may be most effective in informing the cyberbullying intervention process (Ilten–Gee & Manchanda, 2021). These combined approaches will allow students to bring in experiences that are relevant to a specific school and classroom context, and to have in depth discussions about the particulars of the conflict. Furthermore, the critical pedagogy component will provide a framework for how adults and students can help move from discussions to action in co–creating solutions to bullying and cyberbullying incidents. This approach centers student voices and moves away from a deficit–based approach to intervening with youth with SLD. Furthermore, encouraging youth and adults to reflect on their individual life experiences and to take action in response to these understandings can help pave the way to larger scale social changes. In this study, many of the older adolescents called for bystander

responses to disability–based cyberbullying that not only addressed the individual incident but also responded to larger issues in how individuals with disabilities are perceived and treated in schools and society. For example, a 16–year–old female student share

> I have an example of my own. I bring up to people that I am special education, they think that I am so dumb to the point where I do not understand basic things and they would attempt to joke, they would slow down the way that they talk they would be like "Do you understand?" and stuff like that. I have common sense. It's so ridiculous that they think that all of us are like that and so it's really hard. So sometimes in schools I really wish they had the ability to share more what it is to be in special education because many people move on their own pace and we don't all have the same thing. I know I need extra help in some things and other people need help in others, but it doesn't mean I am slow. Well, I'm not slow, I don't like to be called slow, I'm not slow. I'm perfectly fine. I just need a little bit of help and that's it, but people who don't have a disability will never understand where I'm coming from and will never really care. So, it's like my opinion that I sit there and correct them because they don't go through it. I feel like the school should really treat us like normal. I remember in elementary school they would literally divide us from the other kids. That literally made no sense why they would do that. Why would they think that it's okay to divide us because we have different disabilities? And not only that but the lunch tables, everybody had regular lunch tables and I was put at the little little small table on the corner divided by everyone else. And it's just so messed up because it brings more attention to us. We didn't have the ability to go over there with the other kids and it's just so messed up like why can't we just be free and do whatever we want when it comes to lunch and recess? At least at that point, when I was in elementary, it's just so messed up.

Promoting disability awareness through conversations about lived experience, discussions about dilemmas involving equity and fair treatment of disabled individuals and centering disability justice through community partnerships can take place as part of efforts to change school culture and prevent disability–based exclusion and bullying. It is essential to not only make space for these conversations, but to also offer multiple options for youth with relevant lived experiences to contribute to and guide the conversations on what inclusion, safety, and wellbeing in a school community can and should look like.

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Appendix A: Student Survey

This year, some students have returned to their school buildings to attend school. Some students are working from home and not going to the school buildings at all. And some students are doing a combination.

1) Which of the following best describes your school schedule during the **past 30 days**?
   - **A)** I went to school in person at my school building for the entire day, Monday through Friday. [In-School Model]
   - **B)** I participated in school from home for the entire day on most or all weekdays and did not go to school in person. [Remote Learning Model]
   - **C)** I went to school in person at my school building for the entire day on some weekdays and participated in school from home on other weekdays. [Hybrid Model]
   - **D)** I went to school in person at my school building for half of the day and participated in classes from home during the other half of the day on most or all weekdays. [Hybrid Model]
2) Which of the following best describes your school schedule during the **current school year**?
   - **A)** I went to school in person at my school building for the entire day, Monday through Friday. [In-School Model]
   - **B)** I participated in school from home for the entire day on most or all weekdays and did not go to school in person. [Remote Learning Model]
   - **C)** I went to school in person at my school building for the entire day on some weekdays and participated in school from home on other weekdays. [Hybrid Model]
   - **D)** I went to school in person at my school building for half of the day and participated in classes from home during the other half of the day on most or all weekdays. [Hybrid Model]
3) During this school year have you participated in a learning pod (spent time in-person with other students while participating in remote learning)?
   - **A)** Yes
     If yes, how many other students are in your learning pod? ____
   - **B)** No

Next, we would like some background information about you.

4) What grade are you in?

   A) 6th grade
   B) 7th grade
   C) 8th grade
   D) 9th grade
   E) 10th grade
   F) 11th grade

G) 12th grade

5) What is your gender?
   - **A)** Female
   - **B)** Male
   - **C)** Nonbinary
   - **D)** Something else
6) Some people describe themselves as transgender when how they think or feel about their gender is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Are you transgender?
   - **A)** No, I'm not transgender
   - **B)** Yes, I am transgender
   - **C)** I am not sure if I am transgender
   - **D)** Decline to respond
7) Which of the following best describes you?
   - **A)** Straight
   - **B)** Lesbian or Gay
   - **C)** Bisexual
   - **D)** Something else
   - **E)** Not sure
   - **F)** Decline to respond
8) What is your race? (*Mark All That Apply.*)
   - **A)** American Indian or Alaska Native
   - **B)** Asian or Asian American
   - **C)** Black or African American (not Hispanic or Latinx)
   - **D)** Hispanic/Latinx
   - **E)** Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   - **F)** White (non-Hispanic/ Latinx)
   - **G)** Something else
9) If you are Asian or Pacific Islander, which groups best describe you? *(Mark All That Apply.)* If you are not of Asian/Pacific Islander background, mark "A) Does not apply."
   - **A)** Does not apply; I am not Asian or Pacific Islander
   - **B)** Asian Indian
   - **C)** Cambodian
   - **D)** Chinese
   - **E)** Filipino
   - **F)** Hmong
   - **G)** Japanese
   - **H)** Korean
   - **I)** Laotian
   - **J)** Vietnamese
   - **K)** Native Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, Tahitian, or another Pacific Islander
   - **L)** Other Asian
10) If you are Hispanic/Latinx, which groups best describe you? *(Mark All That Apply.)* If you are not of Hispanic/Latinx background, mark "A) Does not apply."
   - **A)** Does not apply; I am not Hispanic or Latinx
   - **B)** Columbian

C) Cuban
D) Dominican
E) Guatemalan
F) Honduran
G) Mexican
H) Puerto Rican
I) Salvadoran
J) Other Hispanic /Latinx

11) What best describes where you live? A home includes a house, apartment, trailer, or mobile home.
A) A home with one or more parent or guardian
B) Other relative's home
C) A home with more than one family
D) Friend's home
E) Foster home, group care, or waiting placement
F) Hotel or motel
G) Shelter, car, campground, or other transitional or temporary housing
H) Other living arrangement

12) What is the highest level of education your parents or guardians completed? *(Mark the educational level of the parent or guardian who went the furthest in school.)*
A) Did not finish high school
B) Graduated from high school
C) Attended college but did not complete four-year degree
D) Graduated from college
E) Don't know

13) Last year, did you receive free or reduced-price lunches at school? *(Receiving free or reduced-price lunches means that lunch at school is provided to you for free or you pay less for it.)*
A) No
B) Yes
C) Don't know

14) How reliable is your access to Internet in your home?
A) Very reliable
B) Somewhat reliable
C) Not at all reliable
D) I do not have internet access at home

15) On average, how many hours a day do you spend on the Internet? _____
16) On average, how many hours a day (Monday-Friday) do you spend in remote learning? ____
17) Do you receive Special Education services at your school? Yes/No
18) If yes, what kind of learning challenges do you experience? _____
19) Are you pulled out of class for extra help in your academic classes? Yes/ No
20) If yes, how many hours a week, on average, are you pulled out of class?

Directions: Since the beginning of **THIS s**chool year, how often has one or more than one other student at your school done the following to you? Please mark the response that best describes how often.

	Never	Less than Once a Month	Once or Twice a Month	Once a Week	Several Times a Week	Everyday
I was teased by another student who said hurtful things to me.						
A student spread mean rumors about me.						
I was called names I didn't like.						
I was pushed, hit, or kicked on purpose.						
A student stole or broke something of mine.						
A student threatened to harm me.						
Students left me out of things to make me feel bad.						
A student got others not to like me.						
A student got others to say mean things about me.						
A student *sent me* a mean or hurtful message about me using email, text messaging, instant messaging, or similar electronic messaging.						
A student *sent others* a mean or hurtful message about me using email, text messaging, instant messaging, or similar electronic messaging						
A student *posted* something mean or hurtful about me on a social media website such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.						

Directions: Since the beginning of **THIS s**chool year, how often have *you* done the following to one or more than one other student at your school? Please mark the response that best describes how often.

	Never	Less than Once a Month	Once or Twice a Month	Once a Week	Several Times a Week	Everyday
I teased or said hurtful things to another student.						
I spread rumors about another student.						
I called another student names they didn't like.						
I pushed, hit, or kicked another student on purpose.						
I stole or broke another student's belongings on purpose.						
I threatened to harm someone.						
I left someone out of things to make that person feel bad.						
I got others not to like a student in my school.						
I got others to say mean things about a student in my school.						
I sent a student in my school a mean or hurtful message using email, text messaging, instant messaging, or similar electronic messaging.						
I sent others a mean or hurtful message about a student in my school using email, text messaging, instant						

messaging, or similar electronic messaging						
I *posted* something mean or hurtful about another student on a social media website such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.						

Directions: Please read each statement and mark the response that best shows how much you agree.

	Disagree a lot	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Agree a lot**
I pay attention in class.				
I try my best in school.				
I feel happy in school.				
I follow the school rules.				
I turn in my homework on time.				
My school is a fun place to be.				
When I don't do well, I work harder.				
I get good grades in school.				
I like students who go to this school.				
I stay out of trouble at school.				
I have plans for after high school (college, service, trade school).				
I like this school.				

Directions: Here are some questions about what you think, feel, and do. Read each sentence and choose the <u>one</u> best answer for how you felt <u>in the past month</u>.

	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I feel nervous or afraid.				
I feel very tired or drained of energy.				
I find it hard to relax or settle down.				

I get bothered by things I didn't get bothered by before.				
I have uncomfortable and tense feelings in my body.				
I feel moody or grumpy.				
I feel like I'm going to panic or think I might lose control				
I do not really enjoy doing anything anymore.				
I feel worthless or lonely when I am around other people.				
I have headaches, stomachaches, or other pains.				
I lose my temper and get angry with other people.				
I have a hard time sitting still when other people want me to.				
I fight and argue with other people.				
I break rules whenever I feel like it.				
I talk a lot and interrupt others when they are talking.				
I say or do mean things to hurt other people.				
I have a hard time focusing on things that are important.				
I like to annoy people or make them upset.				
I get distracted by the little things happening around me.				
I choose not to follow directions and don't listen to adults.				

Appendix B: Clinical Interview Protocol

Note: The order of situations was counterbalanced across interviews and the gender of participants will match the gender of all gender conforming participants.

1) Jessica is attending her Biology class on Zoom one day when her teacher announces that the class will be working on a weeklong lab project. Students have a choice of working alone or in small groups on the project. Sally is another student in the Biology class. Sally has difficulty reading and managing her time effectively. Sally is the only student in class who doesn't have a group. When Jessica notices that Sally doesn't have a group, Jessica sends a mean joke about Sally to her group members.

   Evaluation: Do you think Jessica's actions are okay or not okay?
   Justification: Why do you think her actions are okay or not okay?
   Attribution: Why do you think Jessica chose to treat Sally this way?
   Attribution: How do you think she decided? What did she take into account?
   Counter probe: Would it be okay / not okay for Jessica to treat Sally this way if Sally had a disability?
   Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Jessica to treat Sally this way if Sally had told mean jokes about Jessica first?
   Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Jessica to treat Sally this way if Sally and Jessica were close friends?
   Bystander action: How do you think Jessica's group members should respond to her mean message about Sally?
   Bystander justification: Why do you think they should respond this way?

2) Audrey and her friends love spending time afterschool chatting and catching up on what happened during the day. One day when they are talking on a private Zoom hangout after class, Audrey and her friends decide to look at their classmates' Instagram accounts. They find Karen's account. Karen struggles with math and writing and spends time after school every day working with a small group to catch up. Audrey writes a mean comment on Karen's latest post.

   Evaluation: Do you think Audrey's actions are okay or not okay?
   Justification: Why do you think her actions are okay or not okay?
   Attribution: Why do you think Audrey chose to treat Karen this way?
   Attribution: How do you think she decided? What did she take into account?
   Counter probe: Would it be okay / not okay for Audrey to treat Karen this way if Karen had a disability?
   Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Audrey to treat Karen this way if Karen posted mean things about Audrey first?
   Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Audrey to treat Karen this way if Audrey and Karen were close friends?

Bystander action: How do you think Audrey's friends should respond to her mean message about Karen?
Bystander justification: Why do you think they should respond this way?

3) Jocelyn and some classmates are in a Zoom study group for their next Algebra exam. During a study break Jocelyn starts making fun of some people in her class who are not in the study group. Monica is one of Jocelyn's classmates. Monica has a learning disability that makes it difficult for her to understand math. She often works with a Special Education teacher in class at a slower pace. Jocelyn says some mean things about Monica's disability.

Evaluation: Do you think Jocelyn's actions are okay or not okay?
Justification: Why do you think her actions are okay or not okay?
Attribution: Why do you think Jocelyn chose to treat Monica this way?
Attribution: How do you think she decided? What did she take into account?
Counter probe: Would it be okay / not okay for Jocelyn to treat Monica this way if Monica did not have a disability?
Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Jocelyn to treat Monica this way if Monica had said mean things about Jocelyn first?
Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Jocelyn to treat Monica this way if Jocelyn and Monica were close friends?
Bystander action: How do you think Jocelyn's study group should respond to her mean words about Monica?
Bystander justification: Why do you think they should respond this way?

4) Leslie and her friends are all playing a card game together online. The card game involves that each player reads words on a card and gives clues to their team to guess the words. Morgan, one of Leslie's classmates, joins in on the game. When it is Morgan's turn to give other players clues, she takes a long time to read each card. Morgan has a learning disability that makes it difficult for her to read. Leslie records the game and posts a clip of Morgan reading on her Instagram to make fun of Leslie's disability.

Evaluation: Do you think Leslie's actions are okay or not okay?
Justification: Why do you think her actions are okay or not okay?
Attribution: Why do you think Leslie chose to treat Morgan this way?
Attribution: How do you think she decided? What did she take into account?
Counter probe: Would it be okay / not okay for Leslie to treat Morgan this way if Morgan did not have a disability?
Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Leslie to treat Morgan this way if Morgan had posted a mean video about Leslie first?
Counter probe: Would it be okay/ not okay for Leslie to treat Morgan this way if Leslie and Morgan were close friends?
Bystander action: How do you think Leslie's friends should respond to her mean words about Morgan?
Bystander justification: Why do you think they should respond this way?