PERCEIVED COLLECTIVE EFFICACY IN SCHOOLS: 
DOES IT PREDICT HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS AMONG 
BULLIED STUDENTS? 

by 
Raven A. Lewis 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Criminology 

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Approved: ____________________________________________
Ronet Bachman, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: ____________________________________________
Karen F. Parker, Ph.D.
Chair of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice

Approved: ____________________________________________
John Pelesko, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Approved: ____________________________________________
Douglas J. Doren, Ph.D.
Interim Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>vi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: COLLECTIVE EFFICACY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 PRIOR RESEARCH</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Social Cohesion and Bullying Help-Seeking</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Expectations for Control and Bullying Help-Seeking</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data and Sample</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variable</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Variables</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Related Variables</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual-Related Variables</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Strategy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 RESULTS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 DISCUSSION</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths and Limitations</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENDNOTES</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Descriptive Statistics (NCVS-SCS 2013) ......................................................... 18
Table 2  Percentage of Bullying Victimization Notified to School Personnel by School- and Individual-Related Characteristics (NCVS-SCS 2013) .......... 29
Table 3  Simple Logistic Regression Predicting Bivariate Relationships Between Bullying Reporting and Each Continuous Predictor Variable (NCVS-SCS 2013) ........................................................................................................... 32
Table 4  Multivariate Binomial Logistic Regression Predicting Reporting for Bullying (NCVS-SCS 2013) ................................................................. 33
ABSTRACT

Although little empirical work has examined whether the school context impacts help-seeking behaviors among adolescent bullied victims, extant research suggests that there is reason to believe that students’ perceptions of a school’s climate are impactful for promoting help-seeking. Still, much of the research investigating help-seeking in adolescent populations is seldom theoretically driven and often relies on hypothetical vignettes of bullying, rather than actual help-seeking behaviors for direct bullying experiences. Using data from the 2013 School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), this study extends our knowledge of the factors related to help-seeking behaviors by victims of bullying. Guided by theories of collective efficacy, this paper examines whether victims’ perceptions of social cohesion and shared expectations for control impact their decision to notify an adult at school about their bullying victimization. Logistic regression analyses indicate that perceived school social cohesion, particularly student-school official connectedness, increases the likelihood of help-seeking. Overall, findings support the need to increase student comfortability in help-seeking by strengthening levels of collective efficacy in school.
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

With approximately one out of four students admitting to being bullied at school, bullying is clearly a pervasive school experience (Lessne & Yanez, 2016). Definitionally, bullying is a persistent and deliberate type of aggressive behavior characterized by a power imbalance between an aggressor and a less powerful victim (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Sapouna, 2010; Williams & Guerra, 2011). Further, bullying is viewed as encompassing a range of behaviors including, name-calling, hitting, threatening, rumor-spreading, and social exclusion. Despite its pervasive and multifaceted nature, students often fail to seek help when they have been bullied (Oliver & Candappa, 2007). Studies find that only between 10-49% of students who experience bullying in school report the incident to a teacher or other authority figure (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Boulton, 2005; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004).

The reluctance to seek help can have devastating consequences. Indeed, exposure to bullying has been linked to several adverse outcomes, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, school avoidance, academic underachievement, substance use, and in extreme cases, suicide ideation and commission (Essex, 2011; Smokowski & Kopaxs, 2005; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Vidourek, King, & Merianos, 2016).
Also, when school personnel are unaware of such incidents, they are incapable of remedying the situation by taking appropriate action to prevent future victimization. Thus, it is imperative for prevention and intervention purposes to explore the factors that may encourage help-seeking for bullying in school. Despite this need, existing research on bullying help-seeking is scant. Instead, theoretical and empirical efforts have concentrated on predicting bullying victimization and perpetration (e.g., Azeredo, Rinaldi, Moraes, Levy, & Menezes, 2015; Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brien, 2009; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Green, Dunn, Johnson, & Molnar, 2011). Researchers have also tended to focus on the individual characteristics of bullies and victims, including gender, race/ethnicity, self-cognitions (i.e., self-esteem, attitudes), and social skills (i.e., popularity, prosocial engagement) to predict various bullying outcomes (see, e.g., Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Cook et al., 2010; Lai & Kao, 2018).

Since bullying is mainly a school issue, it seems pertinent to explore whether bullied students’ experience of their school environment facilitates help-seeking behavior. Research that has done so has suggested that students are more willing to seek help for bullying in a supportive climate whereby they perceive that school personnel are caring, respectful, and attentive to student needs and interests (Boulton et al., 2013; Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010; Yablon, 2010). Extant research further indicates that schools with authoritative structures characterized by clear and consistently enforced rules and predetermined consequences for bullying signals to students that school personnel have a low tolerance for bullying, which in turn,
encourages reports of such behavior (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014; Slocum, Esbensen, & Taylor, 2017; Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013; Williams & Cornell, 2006). However, none of these studies have theoretically explicated such findings within the collective efficacy framework, which underscores the linkage between social cohesion and informal social control to reduce problem behaviors in a community (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999). In addition, these studies primarily assessed students’ intentions to seek help for bullying using hypothetical vignettes of direct or indirect (peer) bullying victimizations. Largely absent from this research is an explicit focus on bullied victims’ actual help-seeking.

Using data from the 2013 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey, the present study intends to fill this lacuna by examining whether student perceptions of social cohesion and shared expectations for control in school coalesce to promote bullying help-seeking from teachers and other school staff. In analyzing actual help-seeking behaviors, it is anticipated that yielded findings will more distinctly reveal the factors that influence a bullied victim’s decision to seek help. Investigating this issue also has potential implications for strengthening levels of collective efficacy and creating school environments that encourage bullying reporting.
Chapter 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

The conceptual ideas surrounding collective efficacy as postulated by Sampson and colleagues inform the present study (Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999). Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) define collective efficacy as the “cohesion among residents combined with shared expectations for the social control of public space” (p. 603). Otherwise put, collective efficacy is a form of social capital reflecting the degree of trust and solidarity between community residents and the willingness to intervene in troubling situations for the common good (Sampson et al., 1997). Traditionally the concept of collective efficacy has been applied to the field of neighborhood and crime studies (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson et al., 1997). Within this domain, it is posited that neighborhoods with strong social ties among residents have a greater capacity to mobilize resources in order to fulfill collective goals (Morenoff et al., 2001). These neighborhoods are also said to thrive due to the shared expectations between residents, which create an environment that strongly discourages problem behaviors such as criminal activity.

It is not illogical to imagine a similar process occurring in schools. Like neighborhoods, schools are institutions that have their own “independent system of
social controls,” which demarcate the boundaries of acceptable behavior (Gottfredson & Hindelang, 1979, p. 15). Though there is likely variation in the ability to exercise social control, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the collective force schools exert on students’ daily behaviors, perceptions, and activities. This is particularly the case given that youth spend a considerable portion of their daytime hours attending school. For instance, studies have shown that the tendency of students to hold aggressive attitudes and indulge in antisocial behavior is higher in schools characterized by lax discipline, unclear rules and sanctions, and school personnel who seem to be unaware of or indifferent to student problems (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005; Welsh 2000, 2001; Welsh, Jenkins, & Greene, 1997). Victimization risk and actual victimization experience also covary with the perception of an over-permissive school climate (Burrow & Apel, 2008; Gottfredson et al., 2005; Schreck, Miller, & Gibson, 2003; Welsh, 2001; Wynne & Joo, 2011).

Similar to this process in neighborhoods, schools are also social networks characterized by meaningful social relationships between its comprising members. Thus, the relationships that exist between students and school personnel are consequential for upholding a school’s climate, including the collective norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes that percolate through a school’s halls. Applied to the school context, then, collective efficacy can adequately be described as the degree of social cohesion and informal social control in a school. In the case of bullying—a problem behavior that can afflict schools similar to the way crime can potentially afflict neighborhoods—studies have noted a link between perceived collective efficacy and
various bullying outcomes among students. Specifically, perceived collective efficacy in schools has been linked to lower incidents of bullying perpetration (Cook et al., 2010; Olsson, Låftman, & Modin, 2017; Williams & Guerra, 2011) and bullying victimization (Cook et al., 2010; Sapouna, 2010; Springer, Cuevas Jaramillo, Ortiz Gómez, Case, & Wilkinson, 2016).

Still, while the logic of collective efficacy has been fruitfully extended to the school setting and bullying, empirical knowledge on the association between collective efficacy and help-seeking for bullying is limited. Available research suggests that the effects of a supportive and authoritative school climate, in which students believe that school personnel are caring and would take an active role in intervening in bullying incidents, are integral to enhancing help-seeking behavior (see, e.g., Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014; Eliot et al., 2010). Although this research stream does not explicitly draw on the collective efficacy framework, it is a logical extension to examine whether bullied students who perceive higher levels of collective efficacy therein will also be more likely to seek help from authority figures in those schools. While not directly testing the link between collective efficacy and help-seeking in schools, there is related literature that informs the current study, which is examined next.
Chapter 3

PRIOR RESEARCH

Although little empirical work has examined the relative contributions of collective efficacy in schools to help-seeking behaviors among adolescent bullied victims, extant research suggests that there is reason to believe that student perceptions of school climate are impactful for promoting help-seeking. The studies reviewed below have analyzed school climate by focusing on student appraisals of social cohesion and shared expectations for social control in school. Such appraisals were hypothesized in these studies to predict students’ willingness to engage in help-seeking behavior.

School Social Cohesion and Bullying Help-Seeking

School social cohesion, defined as how well teachers treat and support students and the extent to which a school climate is characterized by caring, respectful, and supportive relationships is a key dimension of collective efficacy that is examined in school climate and school context studies (Battistich & Hom, 1997; Eliot et al., 2010; Plank, Bradshaw, & Young, 2009; Sapouna, 2010; Springer et al., 2016; Williams & Guerra, 2011). Often measured using student perceptual measures, school social cohesion is conceptualized at both the contextual and individual levels. According to Springer et al. (2016), school social cohesion at the contextual level pertains to a
general climate of congeniality comprised of quality student-teacher (and student-student) relationships, whereas individual-level social cohesion pertains to school attachment and student-connectedness, i.e., the degree of closeness a student feels towards his peers and teachers at school (p. 38).

Regarding the school context, studies have consistently reported that students are more willing to seek help for bullying and other forms of school violence when they perceive that a school’s climate is positive and supportive (Boulton et al., 2013; Eliot et al., 2010; Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012; Yablon, 2010). Eliot and colleagues (2010), for instance, used the Willingness to Seek Help scale to measure ninth-graders willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence. The scale consisted of eight items asking students whether they would tell teachers or school staff if they encountered said incidents. They found that students were more willing to seek help when they rated school personnel as being respectful, caring, and visibly invested in their education.

Relatedly, studies find that help-seeking is more likely in school environments in which students have a close (e.g., trusting, warm) relationship with their teachers (Eliot et al., 2010; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Yablon, 2010). For example, Yablon (2010) noted the role of perceived quality of student-teacher relationships in increasing students’ willingness to seek help for in-school victimization. With vignettes illustrating four forms of school violence (physical, relational, verbal, and use of weapons), he observed a greater willingness to seek help among the Israeli
students in his sample who indicated a congenial relationship with their homeroom teachers.

While most studies have found evidence that positive student-teacher relationships foster student help-seeking, Cortes and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2014) reported no such correlation. In their study, students rated their degree of willingness to seek help from a teacher if they were bullied, while teachers were instructed to indicate how warm/close their relationships were with students. Although help-seeking was found to be strongly related to positive, supportive classrooms climates in which students felt comfortable approaching their teachers about bullying, a similar effect was not observed for quality student-teacher relationships. This non-significant correlation between quality student-teacher relationships and help-seeking was likely found because the researchers asked teachers to evaluate the quality of their relationships with students, rather than asking the students for their perspectives.

The present study departs from this approach by considering students’ subjective judgments of the quality of their personal relationships with school personnel. Given that the majority of studies reported a positive association between perceived social cohesion in school and help-seeking, it is expected that help-seeking will be more likely when students perceive supportive school climates and simpatico relationships with school personnel.

**Shared Expectations for Control and Bullying Help-Seeking**

As previously mentioned, social control is another key dimension of the collective efficacy theoretical framework. In the school context, it can be defined as
the level of authority exerted in a school— that is, how well school rules are equitably applied and communicated to students and how well school personnel monitor and regulate student misbehavior (Plank et al., 2009; Slocum et al., 2017; William & Guerra, 2011). Similar to a supportive school climate, a climate that exudes a just (and authoritative) ethos is conducive to help-seeking. Indeed, several studies have documented a heightened willingness to seek help among students who attend schools that implement clear, fair, and consistently enforced rules and that demonstrate an overall low tolerance for bullying and other problem behaviors (Slocum et al., 2017; Unnever & Cornell, 2004; Williams & Cornell, 2006). Slocum and colleagues (2017) observed this relationship among a sample of students attending 31 middle schools. Using surveys which asked students to indicate on a Likert-type scale their level of agreement that they would be willing to report school problem behaviors (i.e., bullying, theft, and cheating) to school personnel, the researchers found that students expressed greater willingness to report if they attended schools with democratic authority structures and consistent enforcement of rules. Such a finding likely materializes because an authoritative climate, characterized by strict, but fair discipline, in which rules are systematically and consistently enforced, communicates the message that misconduct is not tolerated and will be dealt with accordingly (Wang et al., 2013). Thus, it is sensible that students would notify a teacher or other school staff member about behaviors that are contrary to these expectations.

Still, the researchers only captured students’ willingness to report for observed problem behaviors (e.g., peer bullying victimization), not those directly experienced
by responding students. Moreover, the study utilized an indirect measure for rule clarity, as school officials were asked to judge the extent to which students are aware of school rules and believe that rules are clear and fair, as opposed to asking the students themselves. Therefore, the question remains whether students’ perceptions of social control, as reflected by quality rule enforcement, shape reporting for personal bullying victimizations.

A willingness to seek help is also predicated on students’ assessment of whether teachers will actively intervene in bullying situations. When children perceive that teachers will respond effectively to bullying (e.g., by separating involved students), studies find that their willingness to seek help increases (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014; Yablon, 2010). On the other hand, when students perceive a school climate that is tolerant of bullying, they are less willing to seek help when bullying occurs (Klein et al., 2012; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). In their surveying of 2,437 middle school students, Unnever and Cornell (2004) discovered that students who perceived bullying to be a pervasive and accepted aspect of their school’s climate were less likely to report being bullied.

Evidence of school disorder tends to increase students’ perceptions that schools have a culture that is supportive of bullying. In the literature, school disorder loosely refers to a broad array of dysfunctional behaviors that occur on school grounds (Welsh, Greene, & Jenkins, 1999; Welsh 2000, 2001). For example, in this research, student perceptual measures of gang presence and the degree of drug availability in school are used as indicators of disorder. Naturally, school disorder is contrary to an
authoritative and favorable school climate. In fact, prior research finds that school disorder is correlated with an increased risk of student victimization (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2009; Burrow & Apel, 2008). Van Dorn (2004) contends that this relationship exists because the presence of gangs and drugs, “slowly erode social order in schools and eventually create a climate that is accepting of factors associated with violent and nonviolent victimization” (p. 314). When students are regularly exposed to troubling behaviors, research suggests that the threshold for student help-seeking rises, so that relatively mundane behaviors such as bullying are overlooked in favor of more serious behaviors such as gang violence (Wilkson & Carr, 2008; Slocum et al., 2017). It likewise seems probable that students would hold cynical attitudes towards school personnel in these climates. If school officials fail to collectively organize for the social control of serious school misconduct, students may question their ability to prioritize and effectively handle bullying victimizations. Thus, the likelihood of help-seeking is expected to decrease when students report an awareness of school disorder and poor attempts at maintaining social control in their respective schools.

To summarize, prior research has stressed the auspicious role of school climate on help-seeking. Specifically, studies have demonstrated associations between bullying help-seeking and school climates in which caring adults regularly interact with students in a supportive manner and set clear and consistent behavioral expectations. Still, these studies have tended to examine aspects of the school climate—such as, the degree of closeness (e.g., warmth) in student-teacher relationships, the quality of rule enforcement, students’ perceptions of school staff’s
ability to help, among others, without explicit reference to the collective efficacy framework (e.g., Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014; Eliot et al., 2010; Unnever & Cornell, 2004; Yablon, 2010). Perhaps this omission is due to the fact that these studies were mainly conducted within the field of educational psychology, and therefore were not analyzed through a criminological or sociological lens. This research stream has also focused on predicting students’ willingness to report using hypothetical scenarios of bullying victimization, rather than examining actual reporting for personal bullying victimization experiences (Boulton et al., 2013; Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014; Eliot et al., 2010; Klein et al., 2012; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Slocum et al., 2017; Yablon, 2010). Unnever and Cornell (2004) were one of the few to assess whether students’ perceptions of school climate was associated with bullying help-seeking. However, the researchers do so without conceptualizing within the collective efficacy framework nor considering the effect of perceived social cohesion.

The present study advances prior research by examining the link between cohesion, shared expectations, and bullying help-seeking in school by framing these relationships within the context of collective efficacy. Stated empirically, this research examines whether student perceptions of social cohesion and shared expectations for social control in school affect the likelihood that students will notify teachers and other adults at school when they are victims of bullying. It is hypothesized that bullied students will be less inclined to seek help for bullying when they perceive that their respective school has low levels of social cohesion and shared expectations of control.
Conversely, students will have a higher likelihood of reporting when they perceive that their school climate is supportive and justly authoritative—i.e., that it is comprised of school personnel who are caring, respectful, and invested in student success as well as clear rules that are consistently enforced to deter misbehavior.
Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

Data and Sample

The potential effects of school-related factors on bullying reporting were examined with data from the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) (see United States Department of Justice, 2013). Administered annually by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the NCVS is an ongoing survey that collects data from a nationally representative sample of households in the United States. Twice each year, approximately 135,000 households are surveyed, in which nearly 225,000 individuals age 12 and older provide information on personal and household victimizations. At present, the NCVS comprises four supplemental surveys, which are meant to gather data on emerging crimes and special populations beyond the core NCVS. The SCS is one such survey. Specifically, the SCS captures school-related victimization, crime, and safety data from students ages 12-18 in participating NCVS households. Co-designed by the BJS and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the SCS has been conducted in 1989, 1995, 1999, and biennially from 1999 to 2015, the most recent dataset.²

In 2013, 5,726 full-time students completed SCS interviews. Respondents who were enrolled in a school leading toward the obtainment of a high school diploma
sometime during the 6 months preceding the interview were eligible to take the SCS. For this research, the cases analyzed are limited to bullied students who were enrolled in 6th through 12th grades during the survey’s targeted 6-month time frame (resulting in 1,083 cases retained).

The 2013 SCS characterizes bullying as aggressive behavior that is physically or emotionally hurtful (United States Department of Justice, 2013). Since bullying is multifaceted, encompassing a wide array of verbal, physical, and relational behaviors, students were presented with a series of possible bullying behaviors they may have experienced throughout the school year. Specifically, they were asked: “if another student had…made fun of them, called them names, or insulted them; spread rumors about them; threatened them with harm; pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on them; tried to make them do something they did not want to do; excluded them from activities on purpose; or destroyed their property on purpose” (United States Department of Education, 2015, pg. G-5). Students who responded “yes” to one or more of these items were classified as students who were “bullied at school.” Unlike the NCVS, which has a unified listing of violent and property crimes, the SCS does not have a comparable list for these various types of bullying. Therefore, a bullying indicator was created, so that questions relating to the predictor variables contain only responses by bully victims.

Since this study broadly considers the effect of in-school characteristics on bullying help-seeking, the data was also restricted to solely include reports of in-school bullying or bullying by traditional means. Thus, situations involving reports of
cyberbullying, which often occur outside the context of school, were excluded. Respondents who were homeschooled or who did not attend school for reasons such as illness or suspension at any time during this six-month period were also excluded. This omission was done to eliminate bias as respondents who were either homeschooled or who were temporarily absent for an extended time would have had dissimilar exposure to bullying than students who had attended school during the entire duration of the six months.

Eligible respondents were presented with questions pertaining to a variety of school-related topics, including aspects of the school environment, such as student-teacher relations; alcohol and drug availability; fighting, bullying, and hate behaviors; fear and avoidance behaviors; gang presence; and students’ perception of school rules and their enforcement. This breadth allows for the inclusion of an array of variables that are associated with bullying help-seeking and students’ perceptions of collective efficacy.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable examined in this research is a binary outcome that differentiates bullying incidents that were reported to school personnel from incidents that were not reported to these authorities (bullying reported). In the NCVS, bullied students were asked, “was a teacher or other adult at school notified about this bullying?” The bullying reporting variable for this study is coded 1 for all incidents that were notified to school personnel and 0 otherwise.
Table 1  Descriptive Statistics (NCVS-SCS 2013)

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<th>SD</th>
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<td>.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Other Victimization</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 1, descriptive statistics show that in 39% of these instances, bullying victimizations were reported to a school official.

**Independent Variables**

Several predictor variables were used in this research. These variables can be regarded as belonging to two main categories: (a) school-related variables and (b) individual-related variables.\(^3\) It is worth noting that while the former group represents school-level processes, data is collected at the individual student level to operationalize these school-level characteristics.
School-Related Variables

The key predictor variables of interest include two composite measures, which were created to capture the social cohesion component of the collective efficacy thesis. Social cohesion is a complex construct that is used to characterize the level of support and connectedness between students and adults at school as well as the quality of interactions between both parties (Sapouna, 2010). Normally, it is measured using student perceptions of how well students get along with and are treated by school personnel (Eliot et al., 2010; Plank et al., 2009; Sapouna, 2010; Springer et al., 2016; Takakura et al., 2018; Williams & Guerra, 2011). Based on these prior studies, social cohesion was measured using sixth- through twelfth-grade student perceptions that teachers (and other school staff) treat students respectfully, are caring and attentive, and believe in their scholarly potential. While the two measures of social cohesion used in this study may not entirely encompass the level of social cohesion at a student’s respective school, they include aspects that are frequently used in school climate studies.

The first measure was constructed from statements pertaining to students’ perceptions of the quality of student-teacher relationships at school (supportive teachers). These statements indicate students’ level of agreement that (a) teachers treat students with respect, (b) teachers care about students, and (c) teachers do or say things that make students feel bad about themselves. The response categories were measured on a four-point scale: strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), and strongly disagree (4). To ease interpretation, responses to the first two statements were
reverse coded (i.e., 1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree), while responses to the latter statement retained the original metric units. The index (Cronbach’s α=.7029) was created by computing the sum of these three variables, with higher values indicating that student-teacher relationships were perceived as more favorable by students.

The second indicator of collective efficacy focuses on students’ direct experiences with school personnel. This index was composed of six summed items in which students indicated the extent to which they agreed that their personal experiences with adults at school, including teachers, were caring and supportive (supportive school staff). These items consist of the following statements about a student’s perceived connectedness with an adult at his or her school: (a) there is an adult at school who really cares about you, (b) who notices when you are not there, (c) who listens to you when you have something to say, (d) who tells you when you do a good job, (e) who always wants you to do your best, and (f) who believes that you will be a success. Each item was measured on the same four-point scale and reverse coded (i.e., 1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree), so that higher scores represent higher levels of agreement that a student has a positive relationship with at least one adult at school. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure is .8921.4

Other school-related predictors that were analyzed aligned with three latent constructs: rule clarity, school disorder, and school avoidance. Rule clarity is an index (α=.7004) composed of five summed items that measure student agreement that everyone knows what school rules are, the rules are fairly and strictly enforced, and
that punishment for rule-breaking is known and equitably applied in a consistent manner. Responses were arranged according to a 4-point Likert scale and reverse coded (1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree) with higher scores indicating that students perceive school rules as being clear and fair. Prior evidence has shown that this index is highly reliable and effective for measuring a single construct (see, e.g., DeVoe, 2007; Watkins & Maume, 2011). This index can also be conceptualized as an indication of a school’s capacity for social control. For example, Plank and colleagues (2009) used similarly stated items to gauge middle school students’ perceptions of the shared expectations for social control in their school. One item in their index, for instance, was “my school has clear rules about student behavior” (Plank et al., 2009, p. 236). Thus, it seems plausible that the perceived quality of rule implementation by school staff may suggest to bullied students how competent these authorities are to intervene in problem behaviors.

*School disorder* represents the level of violence and disruption at a school, which is expected to decrease students’ estimates of social control and therefore also decrease the likelihood of bullying help-seeking. Three indicators were used to measure this construct. The first, *gang presence*, is a dichotomous variable that asks students to report if there are gangs present at their school (yes=1, no=0). Approximately, 22% of respondents indicated the existence of gangs in school. The second and third indicators refer to the availability of drugs and alcohol at the respondent’s school. *School soft drugs* is a four-item summed index (α=.8420) that was created to capture students’ perceptions of the relative ease of obtaining four
drugs at school: alcohol, marijuana, prescription medication, and downers (e.g., GHB, sleeping pills). These four drugs were selected because they are more commonly used by teenagers attending schools in the United States, relative to “harder” drugs like cocaine and heroin (Johnston, O’Malley, Miech, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2014). Indeed, these drugs had the highest percentages of respondents who confirmed that these drugs were accessible at their schools (between 21%-46%). Principal component factor analyses also revealed that these drugs statistically converged on one factor.

*School hard drugs* is a six-item summed index ($\alpha=.8615$) of students’ perceptions of the relative ease of obtaining the following six drugs at school: crack, cocaine, stimulants (e.g., crystal meth, ecstasy), heroin, LSD, and PCP. The drugs in this scale were conceptualized as being more addictive, injectable, and less socially acceptable than drugs included in the soft drugs categorical index as indicated by their lower confirmatory percentages (between 5%-21%). Responses for both indices were dummy coded (*yes*=1, *no*=0) with higher scores indicating a more serious drug problem in the student’s school.

*School avoidance* is a seven-item summed index ($\alpha=.7642$) reflecting whether students reported engaging in behaviors intended to avoid various locations (e.g., hallways, the cafeteria, restrooms) at school due to fear of being harmed or attacked there. For each specified location, responses were coded 1 if a student reported having engaged in avoidant behavior, while responses were coded 0 if a student reported no such behavior. Higher scores represented higher levels of school avoidance. While school avoidance is often an included measure in school climate and school context
studies (DeVoe, 2007; Mayer, 2010; Watkins & Maume, 2011; Williams, Schneider, Wornell, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2018; Wynne & Joo, 2011), the directional association between school avoidance and help-seeking is uncertain. It would seem that students who persistently feared being victimized at school would be more inclined to take preventive measures (Lab, 1990). One such option might be to inform school personnel so that these authorities could resolve peer conflict on the afflicted student’s behalf. This line of thinking would suggest a positive association between avoidant behavior and help-seeking. However, the converse is also possible, such that bullied students may believe that school personnel have already demonstrated their failure to protect them and view asking for help as a futile effort. So when students elect to engage in avoidant behaviors by staying away from certain places at school (e.g., the cafeteria), they may choose such action to protect themselves because they perceive that relying on school authorities is counterproductive (DeVoe, 2007).

*Type of school* represents the final school-related characteristic. Students attending a public school were coded 1, while those attending a private school were coded 0. The majority of students, roughly 92%, attended public schools.

**Individual-Related Variables**

The individual-related variables include various demographic descriptors including students’ gender, race, and age as well as other variables representing the respondent’s grade level and any non-bullying-related victimization experiences. The variable representing the respondent’s *gender* is a binary indicator coded 1 for students who identify as male and 0 for females. Approximately 47% of the
respondents in the study were male. For student’s race/ethnicity, the original NCVS race categories were collapsed into four dichotomous categories: (a) White, non-Hispanic; (b) Black, non-Hispanic; (c) Hispanic, any race; and (d) Other. Students belonging to the particular racial/ethnic combination were coded 1, while those who did not were coded 0. In the multivariate model, White serves as the excluded reference category. Approximately 60% of bullied students were White, 13% were Black, 21% were Hispanic, and 6% were of another race.

Students’ grade level is a continuous variable with values ranging from sixth grade to twelfth grade with a mean of 8.75. Past research suggests that female students are more likely to report than male students, and White students are more likely to report than racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014; Eliot et al., 2010; Lai & Kao, 2018; Sapouna, 2010; Slocum et al., 2017). There is also evidence that younger students/students in lower grades are more likely to seek help than older students/students in higher grades (Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Newman, Murray, & Lussier, 2001; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Smith, Shu, & Madsen, 2001; Unnever & Cornell, 2004; Yablon, 2010).

Finally, prior research on in-school victimization has noted the importance of controlling for non-school victimizations (see, e.g., Burrow & Apel, 2008; Mayer, 2010; Wynne & Joo, 2011). Since this study solely examines bullying behavior, however, a variable was created to control for any other type of victimization, net of being bullied, that may impact the likelihood that students will report their bullying victimization to school personnel (other victimization). Victimization that were not
bullying-related, but occurred on school grounds (e.g., physical assaults, property thefts) as well as out-of-school victimizations were controlled for using a binary outcome (*yes*=1, *no*=0). Approximately 12% of the sample reported experiencing other victimizations.  

**Analytic Strategy**  
While a considerable number of studies have employed multilevel modeling to assess the relationship between school-related characteristics and bullying outcomes (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2009; Green et al., 2011; Olsson et al., 2017; Sapouna, 2010), NCVS-SCS data lacks structural-level information (e.g., a school identifier), which precludes the use of multilevel modeling techniques. Thus, this study mimics prior research using this dataset that has utilized logistic regression analyses (e.g., Burrow & Apel, 2008; Watkins & Maume, 2011; Wynne & Joo, 2011). The dichotomous nature of the dependent variable requires logistic regression analyses to estimate the effects of the key independent variables on the probability of help-seeking. Using Stata version 13.1, analyses of the data were conducted at the bivariate and multivariate level.  

First, bivariate comparisons of the categorical variables were executed through cross-tabulations to estimate the effects that each school- and individual-related characteristic had on help-seeking of bullying victimizations to school personnel. Tests of significance based on Pearson’s chi-square statistic were derived to evaluate the statistical significance of differences in the percentage distribution table. Also, using a series of simple logistic regression analyses, the bivariate relationships among
the continuous variables were estimated to identify the school constructs that best predict bullying help-seeking. Next, multivariate binomial logistic regression was conducted to examine whether these bivariate relationships remained after controlling for the effects of each additional variable. This multivariate model was needed to determine the probability that a youth notified a teacher (or other school staff member) of bullying victimization net of the effects of the other predictor variables. Both types of analyses were executed with “survey” Stata commands, which adjust for the complex (clustered) sample design used by the NCVS.10

Since logistic regression is sensitive to multicollinearity and missing values, additional refinements of the data were made. In order to check for multicollinearity, a linear probability model was estimated to obtain variance inflation scores (VIFs). Given that the VIFs were well under the standard threshold of 4.0 (VIFs=1.30), it was determined that multicollinearity was not a serious concern. Data missingness was also examined, with the following variables containing missing data: supportive teachers (0.2%), supportive school staff (0.6%), rule clarity (1.2%), gang presence (13.3%), school soft drugs (32.3%), school hard drugs (41.8%), school avoidance (0.1%), and grade level (1.4%). To avoid potential bias from missing data, values of missing cases were imputed—a total of 20 imputations—using multiple imputation with chained equations (also known as Ice or Mice). This technique is beneficial for upholding the full properties of the dataset (see Graham, 2009; Royston & White, 2011). However, one drawback with imputing the missing values is that traditional
goodness-of-fit diagnostics are rendered obsolete. Thus, the model fit statistics reported are based on regressions conducted with the STATA logit procedure.\textsuperscript{11}
Chapter 5

RESULTS

Tables 2 and 3 present the bivariate relationships between bullying help-seeking and the key predictor variables. First, Table 2 describes the percentage distributions for bullying victimizations that were notified to a school official by school- and individual-related characteristics.
Table 2  Percentage of Bullying Victimization Notified to School Personnel by School- and Individual-Related Characteristics (NCVS-SCS 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Percent Notified to School Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-Related Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Presence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs Present</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Gangs Present</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual-Related Characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>41.2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>58.3***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Victimization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Other Victimization</td>
<td>52.4**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Other Victimization Experienced</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001. The differences among respondents' individual grade levels are significant.
Among the 1,083 students who indicated that they had been bullied, only 39% notified an adult at school about the incident(s) (see Table 1). Among the dichotomous variables, results indicate a statistically significant association between bullying help-seeking and the following predictors: race/ethnicity, grade level, and other victimization experiences. White students have slightly higher percentages of reporting than students of color, with students in the “other race” category having the lowest percentages. In fact, White students were nearly twice as likely to seek help for bullying than “other race” students (41% vs. 22%).

In examining the differences in reporting across grade level, it is clear that help-seeking generally decreases as students move up in grade levels. That is, students in lower grades (e.g., grades 6 and 7) tended to seek help for bullying more than students in higher grades (e.g., grades 11 and 12).

Lastly, students who were bullied who had also experienced other forms of victimization were much more likely to report being bullied to school authorities (52%) compared to students who reported no additional victimization experiences (38%). This finding indicates that students who were “doubly” victimized were generally more likely to seek help for bullying than students who solely experienced bullying victimizations.

To examine the bivariate effects of the continuous school-level variables, logistic regression models were examined for each independent and dependent variable combination (Table 3). All but one of these contextual variables was significant in the hypothesized direction. Unexpectedly, the indicator for shared
expectations of social control—rule clarity—is not significantly related to help-seeking, although it is marginally significant (P=.058) in the predicted direction. Students who perceived higher levels of social cohesion at both the contextual and individual levels were significantly more likely to engage in help-seeking behavior. More specifically, youth who perceive higher levels of social cohesion in school as indicated by caring, respectful, and supportive teachers and congenial personal connections with school staff have an increased likelihood of reporting bullying to these authorities. Also confirming predictions is a significant finding for drug availability. Students who attend schools with more signs of disorder as indicated by their perception of the relative ease of obtaining both “soft” and “hard” drugs are less inclined to seek help for bullying. Additionally, contrary to expectation, a significant association was found between school avoidance and help-seeking. Students who engage in more avoidant behaviors have 22% higher odds of reporting bullying than those who do not engage in such behaviors.
Table 3  Simple Logistic Regression Predicting Bivariate Relationships Between Bullying Reporting and Each Continuous Predictor Variable (NCVS-SCS 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Bullying Reported to School Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Social Cohesion I (Supportive Teachers)</td>
<td>1.118** 0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Social Cohesion II (Supportive School Staff)</td>
<td>1.090*** 0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule Clarity</td>
<td>1.053 0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Soft Drugs</td>
<td>0.744*** 0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Hard Drugs</td>
<td>0.847* 0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Avoidance</td>
<td>1.217** 0.093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*<p.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

In sum, bivariate results indicate that race/ethnicity, grade level, other victimization experience, perceived social cohesion, drug availability, and school avoidance are factors that are significantly linked to the likelihood that students will report being bullied to school personnel. The multivariate binomial logistic regression results in Table 4 address whether these effects remain after controlling for the other explanatory variables.
Corresponding with the bivariate findings, the social cohesion variable measured at the individual level is positively associated with bullying help-seeking. Holding the other variables constant, students who perceive higher levels of congeniality within their personal relationships with school personnel have significantly greater odds (8%) of seeking help for bullying. Conversely, when the perceived availability of various “soft” drugs at a student’s school increases by one type (e.g., from only alcohol to alcohol and marijuana being accessible), students are approximately 20% less inclined to aware school personnel of a bullying incident. For
school avoidance, the results again mirror the bivariate findings; students who indicate staying away from 1 or more locations in school (e.g., the cafeteria, restrooms) have 27% greater odds of reporting bullying.

In examining the demographic characteristics, it appears that students in the “other race” category and students in higher grades are less inclined to seek help for bullying. Otherwise put, compared with White students, students categorized as “other race” (i.e., Asian, American Indian, and mixed-race students) have significantly lower odds (61%) of reporting a bullying victimization to school personnel. Moreover, with each 1-year increase in grade level, the odds of seeking help for bullying significantly decrease by approximately 19%. The reverse effect occurs for students who report experiencing other victimizations. That is, bullied students who indicate experiencing a violent or property crime victimization either within or outside the school context have nearly 82% higher odds of reporting bullying to school personnel, relative to those who report having not experienced such victimizations.
Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

Although extant research has examined the association between school climate perceptions and bullying-related outcomes, few studies have assessed this association vis-à-vis bullying help-seeking. Even fewer studies have addressed the influence of school climate on actual help-seeking for direct experiences with bullying (although see Unnever & Cornell, 2004), and I am unaware of any study that has conceptualized this relationship within the collective efficacy framework. Therefore, due to the paucity of research in this area, this study was dedicated to understanding the relative importance of school context and student perceptions of collective efficacy on students’ help-seeking behaviors.

With data from the School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), this research found a positive relationship between perceived school social cohesion and help-seeking. Students were more inclined to notify a teacher (or other school staff) of bullying when they perceived that teachers generally treated students in a caring and respectful manner and that their personal connections with school personnel were congenial and supportive. However, this factor was significant only at the bivariate level. At the multivariate level, only personal student-school personnel relationships were significantly related to help-
seeking after controlling for the other contextual and individual factors. Specifically, the odds of help-seeking increased when students perceived that an adult at school was caring, attentive, and invested in their scholastic success.

A logical explanation for this association is that bullied students’ assessments of their connections with faculty are more meaningful for help-seeking than their assessments of relationships between students and faculty more generally. Indeed, it seems plausible that when a student has forged an attachment to a specific faculty member, he or she is more likely to view that individual as a trusting ear for sharing concerns about peer conflict issues in school (Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Eliot et al., 2010). Following the collective efficacy thesis, strong social ties are indicative of a capacity to mobilize to combat problem behaviors (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson et al., 1997). In the school context, strong student-faculty connections may facilitate student notification of bullying because the bullied student may anticipate that bullying will be disapproved of and responded to adequately by school personnel to prevent further harms (Yablon, 2010).

Other school-related factors that emerged as significant predictors for help-seeking were the perceptual availability of soft drugs in school and school avoidance. Unsurprisingly, when students perceived that it is relatively easy to acquire soft drugs in school (e.g., marijuana, alcohol), the odds of reporting decreased. Again, prior research has noted that drug presence tends to co-occur with student victimization (e.g., Astor et al., 2002; Bradshaw et al., 2009; Burrow & Apel, 2008; Sapouna, 2010). Such disorder may signal to students that their school environment is not only
unfavorable but also suggests that their school lacks social order (Van Dorn, 2004) as well as school authorities who have the conjoint ability to combat student misconduct (see Morenoff et al., 2001). All these potential reasons coalesce to explain why students may be less likely to seek help when they have been bullied. On the other hand, a significant finding for school avoidance was also found. However, its effect on help-seeking is positive, contrary to what might be expected. One possible explanation for this counterintuitive finding is that students who regularly fear being attacked at school may figure that the only recourse to feel safe at school is to ask an adult to confront their aggressors on their behalf (Lab, 1990; Watkins & Maume, 2011). The students who are most concerned for their safety, then, may decide to evoke such services to assuage their fears of victimization. Another possibility is that students who practice avoidant behaviors may come to realize that such actions are counterproductive. As Lab and Whitehead (1994) aptly note, schools are structured environments that function on the routine behaviors of students. School avoidance naturally conflicts with this type of context, as it is challenging to manage schoolwork when one is also trying to regularly avoid bully harassment by avoiding school or select places at school. Thus, students may feel inclined to seek help because avoiding may only be effective in the short term, and not serve as a permanent solution to their problem (Watkins & Maume, 2011).

In terms of individual-related characteristics, significant associations were found between bullying help-seeking and grade level, race, and other victimization experiences. Consistent with past research (Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Newman, Murray,
& Lussier, 2001; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Smith et al., 2001; Unnever & Cornell, 2004; Yablon, 2010), students in lower grades (i.e., sixth graders; also younger students) had a higher likelihood of seeking help than students in higher grades (i.e., twelfth graders; also older students). This decrease in reporting to school personnel is often explained by the developmental capability and maturity that older students/students in higher grades are likely (and expected) to have to deal with peer conflict independently (Newman, 2000; Paris & Cunningham, 1996) as well as the social norms that encourage younger students/students in lower grades to seek help from an adult if in trouble (Newman et al., 2001). Interestingly, students from the “other race” category were less inclined than Whites to seek help for bullying. However, the composite nature of this category, which comprises Asians, American Indians, and mixed-race individuals, precludes an understanding of this finding’s implications for school climate and collective efficacy. Future research that dissects this fused category may uncover different results.

Finally, a positive relationship was revealed between help-seeking and prior experience with other non-bullying-related victimization; students who experienced such victimization either within or outside the school context had a higher likelihood of reporting bullying to school personnel. This trend can perhaps be explained by the notion that students who are repeatedly victimized have presumably had some experience in enlisting authorities to intervene in problem situations (Watkins & Maume, 2011). If such experiences produced a positive resolution than students may
be convinced that a similar result would occur if they sought help for bullying. However, future research is needed to confirm the validity of this finding.

**Strengths and Limitations**

This study was based on data that contained information on students’ direct experiences with bullying and their corresponding help-seeking behaviors. It also contained perceptual measures of the school climate, making it ideal for examining the relationship between help-seeking and subjective judgments of various aspects of the school environment such as student-teacher relations, rule clarity, and school disorder. Finally, this research uniquely used the theoretical concept of collective efficacy as a lens for understanding the process by which the school context influences bullying help-seeking, thereby departing from typical school climate studies, which are seldom theoretically driven (for some exceptions, see Olsson et al., 2017; Plank et al., 2009; Sapouna, 2010; Takakura et al., 2018; Tillyer, Wilcox, & Fissel, 2018; Williams & Guerra, 2011). However, this study is not without some limitations.

Due to the constraints of the SCS dataset, the help-seeking behaviors of students in fifth grade or under could not be assessed. Moreover, as SCS data lacks school identifiers, actual school-level processes could not be examined. This is an obvious flaw since individual-level predictors of bullying reporting may, in part, be contingent on the setting in which an individual goes to school. An additional limitation is this study’s focus on students’ subjective judgments of collective efficacy and the school climate. In relying solely on perceptual measures, I was unable to match the survey data with school staff’s actual efforts to increase school efficacy.
and/or a favorable, authoritative school climate. Also, this study could have benefitted from variables which better captured social cohesion and social control in the school context as well as additional variables that might mediate the relationship between perceived collective efficacy and help-seeking. For example, the nonsignificant-finding for shared expectations of social control may be the result of issues related to how shared expectations for social control was measured. The measure of social control used assessed student perceptions of whether school rules were fairly, consistently, and equitably enforced by school personnel. Though the literature assessing the effect of social control on bullying help-seeking is practically non-existent, related work does suggest that students perceive social control when they believe that school staff and the school context, in general, exude a willingness to disrupt or intervene in student misbehavior (Plank et al., 2009; Sapouna, 2010; Takakura et al., 2018; Williams & Guerra, 2011). Unfortunately, the NCVS-SCS data lack measures that better assess perceived capacity for intervention in bullying situations. Having such measures may have yielded a more significant association between shared expectations for social control and bullying help-seeking. Thus, future research should include measures that might further specify the relationship such as students’ perceptions of school personnel’s abilities to help, student trust in teachers, and students’ willingness to intervene in vicarious bullying incidents. Future studies could also improve upon this research by incorporating qualitative and longitudinal data to provide a descriptive elucidation of the impact students’ perceptions of collective efficacy has on help-seeking over the school year or multiple school years.
Still, while the current study’s measures of collective efficacy may depart in subtle ways from prior research, the resultant findings nevertheless suggest that school social cohesion is an essential predictor for help-seeking behaviors among bullied students. Thus, this research supplements the growing body of knowledge regarding the beneficial effect of school climate on bullying-related outcomes.

**Implications**

Regardless of the limitations discussed above, the current study addressed the timely and pertinent issue of what may impact students’ decisions to notify school personnel of bullying victimization. Consequently, results from this study have several important implications for improving the school environment and enhancing student-school staff connectedness. An obvious recommendation for school practice is to strengthen levels of collective efficacy. When collective efficacy is high, it is expected that students will not only feel comfortable approaching faculty when bullying occurs but will also be reassured that such incidents will be handled promptly and effectively. One way that collective efficacy can be strengthened is by creating positive school climates. As Battistich and Hom (1997) point out, students need to sense that their school is a community. When students experience their school as a community, that is, when schools are organized as caring and supportive environments in which students feel emotionally connected to each other and school personnel, not only is student misconduct likely to be reduced but when it does occur, students should feel safe disclosing insecurities and interpersonal problems.
Another solution for boosting school collective efficacy is for school staff to establish an authoritative climate that is equitable and has clear rules and expectations for misbehavior. An environment characterized by norms that clearly disapprove of bullying will likely convey to students that reports of bullying will be taken seriously with direct intervention from school staff. Schools also might want to consider implementing programs that focus on reducing bullying, and student misbehavior as a whole since signs of disorder in school (e.g., drug availability) also condition whether a student chooses to seek help. Lastly, school staff should strive to be aware of other forces that may affect students’ help-seeking decisions such as prior victimization experiences, racial minority status, age, and avoidance behavior. Ultimately, by being attuned to students and their school environment, school staff may not only increase the likelihood that students will confide in them about bullying but also may dissuade incidents of bullying from happening in the first place.
ENDNOTES

1 Although not predicting bullying help-seeking, the following studies examine school-related issues (e.g., bullying victimization, bullying perpetration, adolescent substance use) using collective efficacy theories: Olsson, Låftman, & Modin, 2017; Plank, Bradshaw, & Young, 2009; Sapouna, 2010; Takakura et al., 2018; Tillyer, Wilcox, & Fissel, 2018; Williams & Guerra, 2011.

2 Though it would have been ideal to utilize the School Crime Supplement (SCS) data from 2015, the most recent available data, the analyses in the present study were conducted using the 2013 SCS dataset. This decision was made because the 2015 SCS administration incorporated an embedded, randomized split-half experiment to evaluate the effect of various updated questions on bullying estimates. Specifically, two distinct operationalizations of bullying and accompanying follow-up questions were administered to a split-half sample to examine whether there were differences in student reports of bullying at school. To have a full sample, in which respondents were presented with an identical questionnaire, the 2013 SCS survey version was selected.

3 For comparison purposes, factor loads of all indices reported were rotated using both varimax and oblique oblimin rotation techniques. According to Conway and Huffcutt (2003), oblique rotations produce clearer patterns between multiple factors, which result in simpler, interpretable solutions than the Stata default (i.e., varimax rotation).

4 Initially, efforts were made to create a single index from the two indicators of social cohesion. However, principal component factor analyses consistently revealed that the variables loaded onto two factors, which suggested that indices needed to be created out of each cluster of variables. Therefore, variables pertaining to students’ perceptions of student-teacher relationships and variables pertaining to a student’s personal evaluation of his or her interaction with an adult figure at school were constructed into separate indices. This separation was likely needed because while the first cluster of variables assess students judgments of student-teacher interactions in their respective school (social cohesion at the contextual level), the second cluster assess a student’s evaluation of his personal connections with school personnel (school cohesion at the individual level or student-school connectedness) (see Springer et al., 2016). All items for both indices loaded highly onto one factor. In order of items presented, the factor loadings for the supportive teachers index were .8617, .8373, and .6947. The entire factor accounted for 64% of the variance. In order of items presented, the factor loadings for the supportive school personnel index were .7520, .7524, .8367, .8242, .8409, and .8415. The entire factor accounted for 65% of the variance.
The five items included as part of the rule clarity index equated to a number of statements about school rules with which the student expressed his or her level of agreement: (a) *everyone knows what the school rules are*, (b) *the school rules are fair*, (c) *the punishment for breaking school rules is the same no matter who you are*, (d) *the school rules are strictly enforced*, and (e) *if a school rule is broken, students know what kind of punishment will follow*. In order of items presented, the rotated factor loadings were .6386, .6351, .7062, .7110, and .6834. These items loaded onto one factor, which accounted for approximately 46% of the variance.

To gauge the extent of drug availability at a respondent’s school, respondents were asked whether each of 10 specific drugs (e.g., alcohol, marijuana, crack, heroin, PCP) could be obtained at their school. The original coding for these variables was *yes*=1, *no*=2. These variables were recoded into dummy variables so that *yes*=1 and *no*=0. Principal component factor analysis, followed by varimax and oblique rotations, yielded two factors. The rotated factor loadings suggested that four drugs (alcohol, marijuana, prescription medication, and downers) defined one factor, while six drugs (crack, cocaine, stimulants, heroin, LSD, and PCP) defined the other. Thus, two indices measuring drug availability at school were created by computing the sum of each cluster of variables. In order of presented, the rotated factor loadings for *school soft drugs* were .8254, .8304, .8256, and .8440. This first extracted factor explained 69% of the variance. The values of the resulting variable ranged from 0 (*respondent indicated that none of the specified drugs could be obtained at school*) to 4 (*respondent indicated that all four specified drugs could be obtained at school*). For *school hard drugs*, the rotated factor loadings were, in order of presented, .8293, .8544, .7802, .8157, .7739, and .7682. This second extracted factor explained approximately 65% of the variance. The values of the resulting variable ranged from 0 (*respondent indicated that none of the specified drugs could be obtained at school*) to 6 (*respondent indicated that all six specified drugs could be obtained at school*).

The original questions of the school avoidance index were the following: *During this school year, did you ever stay away from any of the following places because you thought someone might attack or harm you there?* SCS locations included in the study were (a) the entrance into the school, (b) any hallways or stairs at school, (c) parts of the school cafeteria, (d) any school restrooms, (e) other places inside the school building, (f) parking lot, and (g) other places on school grounds. In order of presented, the rotated factor loadings were .5770, .6483, .7406, .6568, .5558, .6556, and .6755. Together, these items loaded onto one factor, which accounted for approximately 42% of the variance. One location was excluded from this index, which was the shortest route to school. This item was excluded because the route to school is technically outside the locus of school jurisdiction and control. A youth could easily have been bullied by someone in his neighborhood and not someone attending his school.
Therefore, if he or she decided to seek help, it may not have been from a school staff member.

8 An analysis of the correlation matrix (not shown but available upon request) between the study’s variables revealed that respondents’ age and grade level were highly correlated (i.e., \( r = .921 \)). This is a logical finding since the two variables essentially replicate the same measurement. Thus, to resolve this issue of multicollinearity, the variable representing respondent age was omitted from the analyses, while grade level was retained.

9 No explicit question in the NCVS-SCS asks respondents about prior victimization experiences. Following Wynne and Joo’s (2011) example, the *other victimization* variable was created by screening the NCVS location code, which asks respondents to report where a victimization incident occurred (e.g., on school property, at home). For every victimization occurrence reported by the respondent that was *not* a bullying victimization, whether occurring on the school property or at another location, these responses were coded as a unitary variable using the location code. This constructed variable was then dummy coded, with respondents who indicated a victimization that was not bullying-related coded as 1, and those who indicated no such victimization coded as 0.

10 Incident weights accompanying the NCVS are available to adjust for unit nonresponse of households and household members. These weights, however, do not account for differential participation on the SCS. Therefore, the reported estimates in this article are unweighted. However, to ascertain whether the aforementioned analyses were sensitive to weighting, I conducted weighted and unweighted analyses (as recommended by Lohr & Liu, 1994), and found that the statistical significance of my results reflected little change.

11 The Pearson goodness-of-fit test and linktest were employed prior to running the analyses mentioned above. With “bullying reported” as the dependent variable, the Pearson \( X^2 \) value was .3535, indicating a reasonably good fit. The linktest further indicated that the model was correctly specified, as the prediction squared lacked explanatory power.
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