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Types and Frequency of Bullying, Victimization, and Defending Behaviors Among Special and Regular Education Students

Ashley Ann Potocki

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Types and Frequency of Bullying, Victimization, and Defending
Behaviors among Special and Regular Education Students

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BY

Ashley Ann Potocki

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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Types and Frequency of Bullying, Victimization, and Defending Behaviors
among Special and Regular Education Students

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Abstract

Bullying and victimization can have a negative impact on all students. This study compared frequency and types of bully, victim, and defending behaviors that occur in general education and special education. The three types of bullying and victimization include verbal, physical, and relational bullying, while the three types of defending include reporting, confronting, and helping. Due to the fact that the majority of research in the past has focused on the general education population of students, little is known about bullying, victimization, and defending behaviors among children in special education. An additional goal of this study was to compare the frequency of bully/victim behaviors between general and special education students. Previous research has discovered that individuals in the special education system displayed these behaviors and may be at an increased risk of becoming bully/victims. The results of this study indicated that students in special education did not report a statistically significant difference in the frequency of bullying experienced or perpetrated over regular education students. Students in special education also did not report any more or less defending behaviors than regular education students.

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Table of Contents

	Page
List of Tables or Figures	6
Introduction	7
Literature Review	9
Prevalence and Types of Bullying.	9
Additional Bullying Roles.	12
Bully/victim	12
Defender	13
Victimization and Bullying in Special Education.	15
Victimization in Special Education	15
Bullying in Special Education	16
Bully/victim in Special Education	17
Defending in Special Education	18
Types and Prevalence of Bullying in Special Education	19
Summary	21
The Current Study	22
Methodology.	25
Participants	25
Procedures	26
Measures	27
Results	30
Exploratory Analyses	32
Discussion	41
Conclusions.	41
References.	53
Tables	61
Appendices	67

List of Tables

Table 1	Sample and School Demographic Information	Page 61
Table 2	Descriptive Information for Schools	Page 62
Table 3	Means and Standard Deviations of Main Study Variables	Page 63
Table 4	Correlations between Main Study Variables for Total Sample	Page 64
Table 5	Correlations of Main Study Variables for Special Education	Page 65
Table 6	Correlations of Main Study Variables for General Education Group	Page 66

Introduction

Bullying and victimization can have a negative impact on all students, particularly those directly involved in the bullying (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Traditionally, bullies and victims have been the target of most research, but more researchers are studying characteristics of students who defend their peers and the impact that defenders can have on bullying in a school. Bullying behaviors can range from teasing and name calling (verbal), to social exclusion (relational), to behaviors such as pushing, kicking, or fighting (physical). Both bullies and victims of bullying have received a substantial frequency of attention in the literature, but less is known about defenders. Research is also starting to find that some children are especially susceptible to being the target of bullying, such as children with physical, learning, cognitive, or developmental disabilities (Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011). Early studies examining rates of bullying and victimization among children with learning disabilities have produced mixed results. For example, some studies report that children with learning disabilities are more likely to engage in bullying, but not more likely to be a victim (Kaukiainen et al., 2002). Other studies have found that children with learning disabilities are at greater risk for both being bullied (Mishna, 2003) and perpetrating bullying (Whitney, Smith, & Thompson, 1994). Defending behaviors of students in special education have not been investigated previously. The purpose of the present study was to gain more information and to compare different types of bully, victim, and defending behaviors between regular education students and special education students.

Approximately 13.1% of all school-age children have been identified with a disability and receive special education services within the U.S. educational system (U.S.

Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The top five eligibility categories are learning disabilities (4.9 % of all students), speech or language impairments (2.9 %), intellectual disability (0.9 %), emotional disturbance (0.8 %), and Autism (0.8 %), (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). There is limited research on bullying and victimization among children with disabilities, and there is even less research focusing on bully/victim and defender behaviors in this population. It is important to have a better understanding of bullying, victimization, and defending among the nearly 6.5 million school-aged children identified as having a disability in the school system. This population may have a higher susceptibility of engaging in bullying behavior or being the victim of bullying (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The purpose of this study was to compare different types of bully, victim, and defending behaviors between regular education and special education students.

Both bullying and victimization can have a negative impact on all students, particularly those directly involved and/or in close proximity to the bullying. Students that observe bullying along with students who are victimized may also experience psychological or behavioral consequences from being immersed in a hostile environment. For example, victims of bullying often experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and a decrease in self-esteem. The effects of bullying on school-aged children has shown to be detrimental into adulthood (Mishna, 2003; Rose et al., 2011). Children who are victimized often do not know how to cope with being bullied and may feel like they are receiving this treatment for a reason (Mishna, 2003). Bullying and victimization can have a negative impact on all students, particularly those directly involved in the bullying (Hawker &

Boulton, 2000).

Literature Review

Prevalence and Types of Bullying. A major reason that bullying research has become popular is that bullying is a prevalent social problem that is associated with short-term and long-term social, emotional, and academic difficulties. A recent study examined frequency of bullying and victimization throughout North America and Europe and found that in the United States, during the 2005/2006 year, 40.3% of boys and 30.7% of girls engaged in occasional bullying (Molcho et al., 2009). Additionally, the same study noted that occasional victimization was reported by 29.9% of boys and 29.2% of girls (Molcho et al., 2009). The study found that 13.2% of boys surveyed were engaging in chronic bullying behaviors and 8% of girls were engaging in these behaviors (Molcho et al., 2009). Reports of chronic victimization occurred in 11.9% of boys and in 10.9% of girls (Molcho et al., 2009).

Bullying is defined by Olweus (1993) as the act of being “exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9). According to Olweus (1993), these negative actions intentionally attempt to cause harm or discomfort to another individual. There are several different kinds of bullying defined in the literature. Bullying includes behaviors ranging from teasing and name calling, to social exclusion, to more physical behaviors such as pushing, kicking, or fighting. These behaviors can be labeled as: verbal, physical, and relational bullying (Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009).

Verbal bullying is the act of perpetrating negative actions against someone through language or speech (Olweus, 1993). Verbal bullying can be done in a variety of ways. For example, verbal taunting is commonly looked at as teasing of another child. It may also be

portrayed as threatening to the victim's well-being (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010). Additionally, name calling can be placed in this category. Verbal bullying may be very general in nature, but it may also attack a victim's individual specific appearance, such as weight or race (Griffiths, Wolke, & Horwood, 2006; Spriggs, Aubrey, Iannotti, Nansel, & Haynie, 2007). According to Olweus's definition of bullying, verbal bullying must be performed repeatedly and over a period of time. The occasional teasing that occurs on the playground would not be deemed verbal bullying. It must be done with the expressed purpose of tearing down the individual through repeated verbal attacks. Verbal bullying can be done by groups as well as by single individuals (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). Verbal bullies may also choose more than one victim at a time, especially when the bullies themselves are in a group. Verbal bullying is perpetrated about 37.4% of the time in bullying situations according to Wang, et al. (2009). In the same study, verbal bullying was shown to be the most often used form of perpetration for female bullies at 34.7% (Wang et al., 2009).

Another common type of bullying behavior is physical bullying. Physical bullying is the repeated negative action of physically harming an individual or group of individuals (Olweus, 1993). Physical contact of the bully to the victim must take place, such as pushing, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, or throwing the victim's possessions after forcefully taking them away from the victim (Olweus, 1993). Physical bullying is more likely to be caught by an adult or other authority figure in the school system because the victim has the possibility of being visibly injured (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Physical bullying typically has a very observable imbalance of perceived power where the bully has power over the victim. The bully is usually larger or stronger, or larger and stronger than

the victim, and is therefore more physically intimidating than the victim. Physical bullies may perpetrate the bullying behavior when the victim does not know that the bullying is about to take place (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). For example, without warning a bully may shove a victim, knocking the victim's belongings out of their hands. The bully may also hit or restrain the victim. Often physical violence toward a weaker individual is a learned behavior as in the instance of abuse in the bully's home life, (Shields & Cicchetti, 2001). Male bullies are about three to four times more likely to physically bully than females (Eron, Huesmann, Dubow, Romanoff, & Yamel, 1987). Approximately, 46% of males and 26% of females have reported being victims in physical fights in the school system (Lauritsen, Owens, Planty, Rand & Truman, 2012).

The final type of bullying is relational bullying. Relational bullying is the act of carrying out a negative action against another person without the use of verbal or physical methods. According to Olweus (1996), this can be defined in terms of ignoring or excluding a student from the group of friends or leaving them out of things on purpose, as well as spreading rumors. This can be done by intentionally excluding a victim from a group, refusing to move out of someone's way when they need to go by, or making inappropriate hand movements or facial expressions (Olweus, 1993). The act of making face or hand gestures that are inappropriate can be seen as another form of mocking behavior, especially when it is specific to the individual. For example, a group of children bullying another child who was overweight may perform facial expressions and hand/body movements to reflect the other child's weight. This type of bullying is often done by groups or by a main bully with an assistant (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). Additionally, research is contradictory in regard to relational bullying as some studies indicate that

relational bullying is more often perpetrated in its pure form by male students (Woods & Wolke, 2003), whereas others say that relational bullying is more often perpetrated by females (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Relational bullying is also often called social bullying because the bully may attack the victim's social status by spreading rumors, making up songs, giggling and laughing at the victim, and telling other students not to be friends with the victim, which is a combination between verbal and relational bullying (Law, Shapka, Hymela, Olsona, & Waterhouse, 2012). This aspect of social bullying may cause additional confusion in terms of research, as social bullying is a combination of both relational bullying and verbal bullying. Regardless, the need for acceptance and friendship is easily manipulated by the bullies when relational bullying is present (Wang et al., 2009).

Additional Bullying Roles

Bully/victim. In addition to the traditional bully and victim roles, students sometimes fall into other categories, such as bully-victims or defenders. The bully/victims are individuals who are both a perpetrator of bullying and a victim of the bullying. They experience all of the abuse of the victim and then in turn exhibit the same behaviors toward others. For most, the act of bullying another student comes after the individual has been bullied. This gives the child a sense of control or power, as if to take control of someone weaker than themselves gives them a boost in order to make sense of why they are being bullied by others (Olweus, 1993). A small group of individuals are bullies first and then victims while in the context of the school system (Olweus, 1993).

The term bully/victim was coined by Olweus (1993), but this group has not been investigated as heavily as bullies and victims separately. According to Craig (1998), bully/victims display aggression (physical and verbal) at similar levels to bullies and

display greater aggressive tendencies than the study comparison children. Likewise, bully/victims tend to have lower levels of “scholastic competence” (e.g., academic and cognitive functioning based on state wide testing), social acceptance (e.g., skills used in social situations), behavior conduct (e.g., disruptive behaviors similar to attention disorders), and lower sense of self-worth (Austin & Joseph, 1996). This gives some insight as to why these students are able to play the role of the bully in certain instances and the victim in other instances. A study done by Haynie et al. (2001), reported that of 301 students who reported frequent bullying of others 159 (53%) said that they were also victimized at a similar rate. Interestingly, of 1,257 frequently victimized students in the sample, 805 (64%) reported never bullying others, which suggests that more research is needed to have a better understanding of the portion of students who both perpetrate and are the target of bullying (Haynie et al., 2001).

Defender. A defender is a student who places themselves on the side of the victim. This can be done by taking sides with the victim, consoling the victim or actively stopping the process of victimization that is occurring (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). Defenders are outside observers of bullying and victimization that become active in either putting an end to bullying or helping the victim during or after the experience. The defender becomes involved in the bullying situation in a positive way (Rock & Baird, 2012). Rock and Baird (2012) indicated three main types of defending behaviors including; confronting the bully, helping the victim, and reporting the incident to the teacher. Rock and Baird (2012) found that the type of bullying perpetrated on the victim had a hand in how children would respond and use defender behaviors. The study found that defenders would use the reporting behavior when

the bullying of another student was physical and that defenders would use helping behaviors when the incident was relational bullying (Rock & Baird, 2012). According to Salmivalli et al. (1996), defenders are more likely to be girls (30.1% of the girl population surveyed, 69.9% of the girls surveyed have other roles) than boys (4.5% of the boy population surveyed, the rest of the boys had other roles). Defenders tend to be more socially accepted among their peers (Salmivalli et al., 1996). According to Gini (2006), defenders are more likely to have greater moral values and more positive social skills. The defender is thought to have more of a compass for what is right and wrong in a situation and would have more of a drive to want to put an end to the bullying they are witnessing (Gini, 2006). Defenders also seem to have a higher level of moral sense than other groups, as well as have a greater sense of reactivity (duty to defend) than that of their peers (Gini & Carli, 2003).

Individuals in the school who have taken on the role of the defender represent roughly 20% of the student population (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The defender population is known for being low in reactivity to aggression (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). Likewise, these individuals are not targets for bullying because they have the ability to deflect harassment of the bullies away from themselves (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoè (2008) found that defenders tend to have high levels of cognitive functioning and are able to understand the cognitive ability and emotional ability of others. One exception to this could be when bullying is done in younger groups of children (4 to 6 year olds) when the bullies and the victims are not clearly identified based on cognitive and social characteristics, which seems to be the case in the choosing of victims in older age groups (Monks, Smith, & Swettenham, 2005). Having a high level

of cognitive functioning and understanding of others does not mean that the student will step up and fulfill the role of the defender. Social and cognitive functioning is not the only predictor of defending behavior. Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) found that bystanders (i.e., students who observe bullying, but do not intervene) and defenders have a very similar conceptualization of right and wrong, and yet the bystander does not become the defender.

Victimization and Bullying in Special Education Populations

Victimization in special education. Some children are especially susceptible to becoming the target of bullying, such as children with physical, learning, cognitive, or developmental disabilities (Rose et al., 2011). Students in special education have been identified with a disability that negatively impacts their social and academic functioning in the school setting. These disabilities include learning disabilities, speech and language disabilities, emotional disabilities, autism, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, and deafness and/or blindness (Rose et al., 2011).

Although research findings vary, some studies claim that the special education population experiences more victimization than their regular education peers, although not enough research has been conducted to be certain. The prevalence rate of victimization for students in special education was 24.5% in elementary school and around 34.1% in middle school (Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok, & Benz, 2012). According to Blake and colleagues (2012) the number of children in special education are one to one and a half times more likely than students without disabilities and not in special education to be victims. Another study (Whitney, Nabuzoka, & Smith, 1992) indicated that victimization occurred in 55% of students with mild learning difficulties, and 78% of

students with moderate learning difficulties were victimized. In the same study, 25% of their matched general education peer group reported being victimized (Whitney et al., 1992).

Carter and Spencer (2006) performed a meta-analysis of 11 studies and found that students with disabilities experienced more victimization than the general population. These students were in general education classrooms, which included students in special education in inclusion classrooms (Carter & Spencer, 2006). The study found that individuals in special education experience more victimization than their regular education peers. Other studies have found that a higher percentage of boys in special education became victims compared to girls in special education (Dawkins, 1996).

Bullying in special education. One study by Rose, Espelage, and Monda-Amaya (2009) compared self-reported bullying and victimization among students in regular education, special education, and self-contained special education classrooms in middle and high school. In the study, researchers used information compiled from a sample of 14,315 students in an American Midwest county from 18 high schools and 7,331 students from 14 middle schools. Self-report scales were given to the students including an aggression scale, a victimization scale, and a general bullying scale. These reports did not include a bully/victimization scale (Rose et al., 2009). According to the data, students in the self-contained classrooms reported more perpetration of bullying than students in regular education and special education (Rose et al., 2009). Additionally, middle and high school children in special education reported more victimization than students in regular education. Other studies have found similar results, implying that students in special education report higher levels of bully perpetration than regular education students

(Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; O'Moore & Hillery, 1989; Whitney, Smith, & Thompson, 1994).

Bully/victims in special education. Over the past ten years more research has focused on bully/victims, or individuals who are both a perpetrator of and a victim of bullying. The bully/victims are only recently starting to be examined in the context of special education. In a recent review of the literature of bullying and victimization in special education, Rose, Monda-Amaya, and Espelage (2010) mentioned that sometimes students with disabilities become bullies themselves, which is referred to as provocative victims. Researchers deduced from previous literature that children with severe cognitive or physical disabilities are victimized more than other students with disabilities (Rose et al., 2010). Similarly, children in self-contained classrooms experience more victimization than children in special education that are in regular education classrooms (Rose et al., 2010). The researchers note that the severity of the child's disability is often a factor in bullying especially because students with more severe disabilities tend to be segregated into different classrooms and are looked at as being "more different" than others in inclusive settings (Rose et al., 2010). This information needs to be further examined.

Kaukiainen and researches (2002) looked at singular variables that concern problems related to bullying. This study looked at both learning disabilities in special education students and regular education students to determine if there were any differences among the two groups. The variables used in the study were learning skills, social intelligence and self-concept. Researchers found that individuals with learning disabilities ($n = 28$, 21.4 %) reported more bullying behaviors than students who did not have a learning disability ($n = 111$, 6.3%) (Kaukiainen et al., 2002). Additionally, individuals with learning disabilities (LD) (10.7%) reported more victimization than those

in regular education (6.3%). However, those with LD were more likely to be both victimized and bullies than the other groups, showing the concept of bully/victimization.

Defending in special education. A comparison of defending behaviors in general and special education has not been conducted previously, but is a potentially important area of research. Gini et al. (2008) found that defenders tend to have high levels of cognitive functioning and are able to understand the cognitive ability and emotional ability of others. However, it should be noted that children in special education are more likely to have difficulties with social, emotional, and cognitive functioning when compared to their general education peers (Flynn, 2000). This might suggest that students in special education may be less likely to defend their peers, which is a very important hypothesis to confirm. If this is true, bully prevention and intervention efforts within special education may need to be modified to meet the specific demands of this population's unique needs.

Research on defending has not been conducted in the special education population and the literature seems to suggest that defender research conducted in general education populations cannot be compared or generalized. More research needs to be done to see if the special education population has the ability, either naturally or through training, to take on the role of the defender during a bullying situation. Gini et al. (2008) recommended assertiveness training for students that have the potential to be in the defender role (such as the bystander or the individual with high empathy). This may be an option for students in special education as this is practiced already in terms of training for students to learn coping skills and social skills (Bellini, Peters, Benner, & Hopf, 2007). In a review of the current literature, Rose and colleagues (2011) indicated that there was a lack of literature that has examined the defender role in the special education population. This information

is important for individuals in the schools to be aware of because it may have positive implementations for the special education students to grow in their social skills, as well as stand up for others when they are being bullied and show that they are able to take care of themselves outside of the school building.

Types and prevalence of bullying in special education. Of the studies examining bullying and victimization in special education and regular education populations, very few have examined the frequency of different types of bullying. In fact, in the recent review by Rose et al. (2010), they noted that the prevalence of bullying and victimization among special education population is unclear because the few studies that have reported rates of bullying in special education have widely varying definitions of victimization, with some studies including all types of victimization and other studies including select types. Another highlight of the Rose et al. (2010) study was that information regarding the prevalence of different types of bullying and victimization is nearly nonexistent in the current literature.

However, types of bullying in special education can be examined in a similar way as bullying among regular education students. The concept of relational (i.e., indirect which encompasses relational, social and emotional), verbal, and physical bullying can be observed among all students, regardless of educational status. According to a study done by Monks, Smith, and Swettenham (2005), younger children tend to be more physical in their aggression and become less physical as they grow older and move up in the school system. Additionally, children in a study done by Björkqvist, Österman, and Kaukiainen (1992), displayed more of the different types of bullying (verbal, physical, and relational) after different phases in their development, physically, emotionally, and socially. The

stages of development reflect skills that are learned throughout the individual's experiences and are not taught or developed at the same time for many children in special education at the same rate as children in regular education (Björkqvist et al., 1992). This can be of concern for children in the special education population because these children are not making the same gains developmentally as children in regular education classes. The variety of bullying types that have the possibility to occur in the special education population varies greatly because not all students make the same developmental gains at the same time.

Most research on bullying in special education has focused on verbal and physical bullying, so research is lacking in the area of relational bullying in this population (Rose et al., 2011). Children involved in the special education system are more likely to have social and cognitive difficulties compared to the regular education population as mentioned previously, so it is unclear as to the scope of relational bullying in special education as it has not been investigated thoroughly. To further complicate the situation, information on relational bullying is a combination of relational, social, and emotional bullying and does not focus solely on relational bullying or the manipulation, rumor spreading, or purposely leaving out/active avoidance of a student (Rose et al., 2011).

There has been conflict among researchers as to the prevalence of bullying in the special education system. As stated before, there seems to be a relatively similar rate of occurrence compared to that of the regular education population. However, if each type of bullying does not receive equal attention in this literature, then a portion of the population may be missed. For example, in a study done by Little (2002), the author found that of the disability group population that was sampled, 94% of the individuals reported being

victimized in some way. More information should be researched to know in what way these individuals are being victimized so that this can be prevented in the future. It is also possible that other studies in the past did not give the students the option to report aspects of relational bullying which may have an effect on the correlation between the special education population and the regular education population.

There is not a consensus as to whether students in special education are bullied more or less than their general education peers. Research suggests that individuals with disabilities most often report verbal bullying (Dawkins, 1996). This may be related to the fact that the students in special education tend to have less well-developed social skills and may not know how to appropriately respond to being bullied, or may misread social cues and react inappropriately to social situations (Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993). Students in self-contained special education classrooms spend a limited frequency of time with their general education peers, but during this time they might consistently be the target of bullying. When being the victim, they may respond by bullying others in return, which is what they have observed their peers doing. This phenomenon, where a bullied individual becomes a bully themselves, is called becoming a provocative victim. A provocative victim displays behaviors that elicit negative responses from those around them, such as anger, irritation, and exasperation (either intentional or not; Guerin & Hennessy, 2002). These provocative victims are often categorized as bully/victims. Rose and researchers (2010) found that special education students reported statistically significant greater bully/victim behaviors than the comparison regular education group.

Summary. The overall lack of research on bullying, victimization, and defending within the special education population is problematic, because students in the special

education system continue to make strides to compete in society as they leave public schools. All students in the public education system should be entitled and ensured that they have a safe and conducive environment to learn, which is difficult to achieve if the child is worried about bullying or victimization in the schools. An additional difficulty with this area of the literature is the use of widely varying definitions of bullying and victimization. Many researchers use the Olweus definition as the gold standard of definitions for bullying. However, not all research is done using this operational definition. Special education populations may also be represented in different ways across the nation, state or school district. With more information about exact definitions for bullying (and the different types) as well as special education population requirements researchers may be able to make a case utilize this group as an area to study further. This is often difficult because it is a protected group with separate regulations, in order to make sure research does not take advantage of these students. Research that only compares special education and regular education in regards to bullying is missing out on information that may be used to help these children. Regular education bully research has looked in detail about the various types of bullying and victimization. It has also looked into defender behaviors in more detail as well as the bully/victim.

The current study. It seems that there is continued controversy over whether bullying is more prevalent in the general education setting or in the special education setting (Blake et al., 2012; Kaukiainen et al., 2002; Little, 2002). Additional research is needed to further assess this controversy. The main goal of this study was to investigate differences between general education and special education students in regards to the frequency and types of bullying, victimization, and defending behaviors.

In order to meet this goal, four primary research questions were proposed. The first research question was: Is there a significant difference in the frequency of different types of victimization (verbal, relational, physical) that occurs among regular education students and special education students? It was predicted that that students in special education may experience more victimization than students in regular education. Of the three types of bullying, verbal victimization may occur most often, followed by relational bullying and then physical bullying. However, this prediction was based on a study that consisted of preschool age children, thus it was not known if these results would be generalized to older age groups (Son, Parish, & Peterson, 2012).

The second research question was: Is there a significant difference in the frequency of different types of bully perpetration behaviors (verbal, relational, physical) among regular education students and special education students? Of the three types of bullying behaviors, it is difficult to predict a specific type of bullying that may occur most often in special education as research has not covered this in the past. However, it may be possible to predict that students in special education may report more bullying behaviors than regular education students (Kaukiainen et al., 2002).

The third research question asked: Is there a significant difference in the frequency of different types of bully/victim behaviors between regular education students and special education students? Research seemed to suggest that students who are in special education have a higher likelihood to become bully/victims (Kaukiainen et al., 2002). However, there was no prediction made regarding differences in types of bully/victim behaviors because previous research had not examined various types of bullying and victimization in special education populations.

The final research question was: Is there a significant difference in the frequency of different types of defending (confronting, reporting, helping) between regular education students and special education students? No predictions were made for this research question as prior research has not explored this area as of yet. This information would be useful in helping to provide intervention for bullying prevention.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were students in third through eighth grade and in both general education and special education classes at four different schools in Illinois. The population utilized in this study was comparable to that of the United States population regarding poverty amongst students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the year 2011-2012, 49.6% of public school students were from low income house households and eligible for free and reduced lunch (2013). The total population utilized in this study identified more students in special education than the 13.1% identified nationally in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Students who are identified as receiving special education supports receive more adult interaction than their regular education peers (Rose et al., 2010). Additionally, the school population may be more aware of the special education population in the school and have greater tolerance. All of the schools utilized in the study had a greater proportion of students who identified as white.

School A contained a total of 339 students with 49% of these students being from low income households. In School A, 13.6% of the students were had a special education eligibility. School A included a population of 95.6% White, .3% Black, .3% Hispanic, .3% Asian, and 3.5% Multi Ethnic students. School B had a student population of 436 students, with 60% of these students coming from low income households. At School B there were 20.6% of students with a special education eligibility. School B include a population of 96.8% White, .2% Black, 1.1% Asian, and 1.8% Multi Ethnic students. School C contained 434 students with 43% of the students coming from low income households.

School C had 18.9% of their student population with a special education eligibility. School C included a population of 97.9% White, .9% Hispanic, .7% Asian, and .5% Multi Ethnic students. School D had a student population of 868 students with 30% of the students from low income households. School D had 13.3% of their student population with a special education eligibility School D included a population of 84.1% White, 3.3% Black, 5.8% Hispanic, 2.2% Asian, .5% Indian, and 3.6% Multi Ethnic students (See Table 1 and Table 2). Students were differentiated by late elementary school students (third grade to fifth grade, a total of 76 students) and middle school students (sixth grade to eighth grade, a total of 218 students). The four schools were located in rural and suburban school districts. This study included 187 male students and 108 female students.

Procedures

Data for this project was obtained by accessing existing data sets. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained for permission to use bullying evaluation data for research purposes. In accordance with school policy at the four schools, a passive consent procedure, where parents/guardians would need to decline participation for their child was used at the time of the bullying evaluation. A letter was sent home with students' informing their parent or guardian of the evaluation that was to be distributed in the school. Parents/guardians were notified that their children would be completing the bullying survey and were asked to notify the principal if they wished that their child not participate. According to records, none of the student's parents/guardians denied their child participate in the bullying survey. Once data was collected, a random sample was generated from the four schools to create matched samples. Matched samples were needed because the general education population outnumbered the special education population in

the total population and would skew measure results. The representative sample for special education was collected. This data was then broken down into school and sex. The general education population was broken down into school and sex, so that a representative sample was taken from each group. The random sample option was then used on SPSS Statistics (Version 22) to create a matched sample. Additional analysis was run to discover if changes in random groups effected data results. Analysis indicated that random samples were not statistically significantly different.

Measures

To measure Bully, Victim, and Defender behaviors, bullying, victimization, and defending items from the Bully Participant Roles Survey (BPRS; Summers & Demaray, 2008) were used (Appendix A). The BPRS is a rating scale used to assess children and adolescents' participation in five different participant roles: Bully, Victim, Defender of the Victim, Assistant to the Bully, and Outsider. The BPRS utilized the Olweus definition for bullying and victimization (1993). Only the Bully, Victim, and Defender of the Victim subscales were used in the current study. Each subscale contained 10 items.

The Victim subscale assessed the individual's frequency to experience victimization by another individual, such as, "I've been made fun of.", "I've been called mean names", and "I've been ignored." The Bully subscale assess the frequency of participation in behaviors that would be considered bullying, such as, "I called another student bad names.", "I made fun of another student", and "I told lies about another student." The Defender subscale assessed the frequency of participation in behaviors related to defending or supporting victims from bullying behaviors, such as "I defended someone who was being pushed, punched, or slapped.", "When I saw someone being

physically harmed, I told an adult”, and “I encouraged someone to tell an adult after they were picked on” (BPRS; Summers & Demaray, 2008). Students rated the frequency they engaged in the specific behaviors (bullying, victimization, and defending) in the last 30 days on a 5-point scale (0 = *Never*, 1 = *1 to 2 times*, 2 = *3 to 4 times*, 3 = *5 to 6 times*, 4 = *7 or more times*).

The BPRS was created using previous literature about bystanders of bullying (Salmivalli, et al., 1996; Salmivalli, Huttunen, & Lagerspetz, 1997; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Later, the BPRS was refined and evidence of validity and reliability were collected in a sample of 800 middle school students (Demaray, Summers, Jenkins, & Becker, 2014). Evidence of validity was found by correlating subscales of the BPRS to subscales of a social-emotional rating scale, the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004) and significant small to medium correlations were found to be an expected pattern (Demaray et al., 2014). According to Demaray and colleagues (2014), the BPRS Bully Score correlated to the BASC-2 subscales of Attitude to School, Attitude to Teachers, Anxiety, Attention Problems, and Hyperactivity. Each of the subscales had a positive relationship between the BPRS and the BASC-2 with correlations ranging from $r = .12$ to $r = .38$ (Demaray et al., 2014). Similarly, when looking at the BPRS Bully Score and the BASC-2 Interpersonal Relations, Relations with Parents, and Self-Esteem subscales the correlation indicated a significantly negative relationships with scores ranging from $r = -.10$, $r = -.29$, and $r = -.14$ (Demaray et al., 2014). The BPRS Victim Score and BASC-2 Attitude to School, Attitude to Teachers, Anxiety, Attention Problems, and Hyperactivity subscales, showed positive correlations that were significant and ranged from $r = .25$ to $r = .34$ (Demaray et al., 2014). As with the previous subscales, there were similar negative

correlations that were significant in regards to the subscales of Interpersonal Relations, Relations with Parents, and Self-Esteem which were $r = -.58$, $r = -.29$, and $r = -.37$ (Demaray et al., 2014). There were significantly positive correlations between the BPRS Defender Score and BASC-2 Attitude Toward Teachers, Anxiety, Attention Problems, and Hyperactivity subscales that ranged from $r = .08$ to $r = .21$ (Demaray et al., 2014). These had negative correlations to BASC-2 Interpersonal Relations and Self-Esteem subscales that were significant at $r = -.20$ and $r = -.17$ (Demaray et al., 2014).

According to Demaray et al., internal consistency alpha coefficient for the bully scale was .877. Item to subscale correlations were .506 to .803. The internal consistency alpha coefficient for the victim subscale was .935. Item to subscale correlations for the Victim subscale was .729 to .837. The internal consistency alpha coefficient for the defender scale was .938. Item to subscale correlations ranged from .761 to .847 for the Defender subscale (Demaray et al., 2013). The BPRS did not have an explicit scale for the bully/victim variable. In order to obtain a score for the bully/victimization variable, each participant's bullying score was added to the respective victimization score to produce a bully/victimization score. Then, each participant score for physical victimization was added to the score for physical bullying to create a physical bully/victimization score. Scores for relational bully/victimization and verbal bully/victimization were created using the same procedure. By adding the two scores for each bully and victim subscale together, the overall scale total for the bully/victimization scale was larger than that of the individual bully, victim, and defender scales.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Means and standard deviations for main study variables for the total sample and by group can be found in Table 3. Correlations among main study variables for the total sample and by groups can be found in Tables 4-6.

Research Question 1

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education Status (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable and Total Victimization as the dependent variable. There was a not a significant effect of Education Status on Total Victimization at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1) = .073, p = .788$]. The Special Education Group ($M = 8.66, SD = 9.47$) reported more Total Victimization than the Regular Education Group ($M = 8.34, SD = 10.56$), but there was not a statistically significant difference between these means, which indicates that students in General Education and Special Education reported similar levels of Total Victimization.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education Status (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable and Type of Victimization (Verbal, Physical, and Relational) as the dependent variable. There was not a statistically significant difference in Type of Victimization between the Groups [$F(3, 291) = .036, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 1$, partial $\eta^2 = .99$].

Research Question 2

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education Status (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable

and Total Bullying as the dependent variable. There was a not a significant effect of Groups on Total Bullying at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1) = .94, p = .33$]. The Special Education Group ($M = 3.51, SD = 5.14$) reported more Total Bullying than the Regular Education Group ($M = 2.98, SD = 4.24$), but there was not a statistically significant difference between these means, which indicates that students in Regular Education and Special Education reported similar levels of Total Bullying.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable and Type of Bullying (Verbal, Physical, and Relational) as the dependent variable. There was not a statistically significant difference in Type of Bullying between the Groups [$F(3, 291) = .81, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .99$, partial $\eta^2 = .008$].

Research Question 3

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education Status (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable and Total Bullying/Victimization as the dependent variable. There was a not a significant effect of Groups on Total Bullying/Victimization at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1) = .35, p = .55$]. The Special Education Group ($M = 12.18, SD = 11.72$) reported more Total Bullying/Victimization than the Regular Education Group ($M = 11.32, SD = 12.61$) but there was not a statistically significant difference between these means, which indicates that students in Regular Education and Special Education reported similar levels of Total Bullying/Victimization.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education Status (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable and Type of

Bullying/Victimization (Verbal, Physical, and Relational) as the dependent variable. There was not a statistically significant difference in Type of Bullying/Victimization between the Groups [$F(3, 291) = .27, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .99$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$].

Research Question 4

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education Status (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable and Total Defending as the dependent variable. There was not a significant effect of Groups on Total Defending at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1) = .01, p = .92$]. The Special Education Group ($M = 10.53, SD = 10.67$) reported similar Total Defending results as the Regular Education Group ($M = 10.41, SD = 10.64$). There was not a statistically significant difference between means, which indicated that students in Regular Education and Special Education reported similar levels of Total Defending.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Education Status (Regular Education and Special Education) as the independent variable and Type of Defending (Confronting, Helping, and Reporting) as the dependent variable. There was not a statistically significant difference in Type of Defending between the groups [$F(3, 291) = .02, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 1$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$].

Exploratory Analyses

The following exploratory analyses were conducted to test for potential Sex (Boy and Girl) and Grade Level (Elementary School and Middle School) differences for students in Regular Education and Special Education groups on scores for Victimization, Bullying, Bullying/Victimization behaviors, and Defending.

Gender and education status. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was

conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Total Victimization. There were not significant differences in Total Victimization between Boys and Girls, $F(1) = 2.20, p = .14$. The Boy Group ($M = 7.94, SD = 9.06$) reported less Total Victimization than the Girl Group ($M = 9.45, SD = 11.51$), but there was not a statistically significant difference between these means, which indicates that the Boy and Girl Groups report similar levels of Total Victimization. There were not significant differences in Total Victimization between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .74, p = .39$. The interaction for Sex and Education Status was not significant, $F(1) = 1.54, p = .22$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Special Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Type of Victimization (Verbal, Physical, and Relational). There was a statistically significant difference in Type of Victimization between the Boys and Girls, $F(3, 289) = 2.78, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .97$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Post-hoc tests revealed that Girls ($M = 3.15, SD = 3.84$) were significantly more likely to experience Relational Bullying than Boys ($M = 2.33, SD = 2.97$), $F(1) = 5.22, p = .023$. There was not a significant difference in Type of Victimization between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .49, p = .69$. There was not a significant interaction between Sex and Education Status on Total Victimization $F(1) = 1.54, p = .22$.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Total Bullying. There was a significant effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) on Total Bullying at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions $F(1) = 8.78, p = .003$. The Boy Group ($M = 3.86,$

$SD = 5.28$) reported more Total Bullying than the Girl Group ($M = 2.16, SD = 3.28$) which indicated that Boys perpetrated more bullying behaviors than Girls. There were not significant differences in Total Bullying between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .04, p = .84$. The interaction for Sex and Education Status was not significant, $F(1) = .40, p = .53$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Special Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Type of Bullying (Verbal, Physical, and Relational). There was a statistically significant difference in significant difference on Type of Bullying between the Groups, $F(3, 289) = .66, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .94$, partial $\eta^2 = .64$. Further testing indicated that Boys ($M = .88, SD = 1.67$) were more likely to participate in Physical Bullying than Girls ($M = .31, SD = .99$), $F(1) = 10.04, p = .002$. Boys ($M = .173, SD = 2.26$) were also more likely to participate in more Verbal Bullying than Girls ($M = .87, SD = 1.33$), $F(1) = 12.92, p = .00$. There was not a significant difference There was not a significant difference in Type of Bullying between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .62, p = .61$. There was not a significant interaction between Sex and Education Status on Total Bullying $F(1) = .49, p = .69$.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Total Bully/Victimization. There was not a significant effect of Sex on Total Bullying/Victimization at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions $F(1) = .008, p = .93$. The Boy Group ($M = 11.80, SD = 11.94$) reported more Total Bullying/Victimization behaviors than the Girl Group ($M = 11.61, SD = 12.63$) however, it was not significant.

There were not significant differences in Total Bully/Victimization between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .62, p = .43$. The interaction for Sex and Education Status was not significant, $F(1) = .61, p = .44$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Special Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on overall Type of Bully/Victimization (Verbal, Physical, and Relational). The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in overall Type of Bully/Victimization (Verbal, Physical, and Relational) between Sex (Boys and Girls), [$F(3, 289) = 3.65, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .96$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$]. There was not a significant differences in Type of Bully/Victimization between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .62, p = .44$. There was not a significant interaction between Sex and Education Status on Total Bully/Victimization $F(1) = .61, p = .44$.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Total Defending. There was not a significant effect of Sex on Total Defending at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions $F(1) = 1.94, p = .17$. The Boy Group ($M = 9.84, SD = 9.63$) reported less Total Defending than the Girl Group ($M = 11.57, SD = 12.15$) which indicated that Girls defended more than Boys. There were not significant differences in Total Defending between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .15, p = .70$. The interaction for Sex and Education Status was not significant, $F(1) = .02, p = .88$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Sex (Boy and Girl) and Special Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Type of

Defending (Confronting, Helping, and Reporting). There was not a statistically significant difference on Type of Defending between the Groups, $F(3, 289) = 1.92, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .98$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. There was not a significant difference in Type of Defending between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .02, p = .88$. There was not a significant interaction between Sex and Education Status on Total Defending $F(1) = .95, p = .42$.

Grade level. Additional exploratory analysis analyzed effect of Grade Level (Late Elementary and Middle School) and Special Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education). A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Grade Level (Late Elementary and Middle School) and Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Total Victimization. There was not a significant difference in Total Victimization between Late Elementary and Middle School, $F(1) = .25, p = .62$. The Late Elementary Group ($M = 9.07, SD = 11.51$) reported more Total Victimization than the Middle School Group ($M = 8.30, SD = 9.49$), but there was not a statistically significant difference between these means, which indicates that the Late Elementary and Middle School Groups report similar levels of Total Victimization. There was not a significant difference in Total Victimization between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .16, p = .67$. The interaction for Grade Level and Education status was not significant, $F(1) = 1.81, p = .18$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Grade Level (Late Elementary and Middle School) and Special Education Status (Special Education and Regular Education) on Type of Victimization (Verbal, Physical, and Relational). There was not a statistically significant difference on Type of Victimization between the Late

Elementary and Middle School Students, $p = .42$, [$F(3, 295) = .95$, $p = .42$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .99$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$]. There was not a significant difference in Type of Victimization between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .17$, $p = .95$. There was also not a significant interaction between Grade Level and Special Education Status on Total Victimization [$F(1) = .81$, $p = .49$].

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Group Grade Level (Late Elementary and Middle School) as the independent variable and Total Bullying as the dependent variable. There was a significant effect of Groups on Total Bullying at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1) = 9.11$, $p = .003$]. The Middle School Group ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.92$) reported more Total Bullying than the Late Elementary Group ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 4.11$) which indicated that Middle School students perpetrated more bullying behaviors than Late Elementary School Students. There was not a significant differences in Total Bullying between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .29$, $p = .83$. The interaction for Group Grade level and Education Status was not significant, $F(1) = 2.02$, $p = .09$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Grade Level Group (Late Elementary and Middle School) and Special Education Status Group (Special Education and Regular Education) as the independent variable and Type of Bullying (Verbal, Physical, and Relational) as the dependent variable. There was a statistically significant difference in significant difference on Type of Bullying between the Groups, [$F(3, 295) = 4.71$, $p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .39$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$]. Further testing indicated that Middle School ($M = .77$, $SD = 1.50$) students were more likely to participate in Physical Bullying than Late Elementary ($M = .38$, $SD = .1.19$), [$F(1) = 4.71$, $p = .03$]. Middle

School ($M = 1.64, SD = 2.13$) students were also more likely to participate in more Verbal Bullying than Late Elementary School ($M = .76, SD = 1.45$), [$F(1) = 11.85, p = .001$] students. Middle School ($M = .128, SD = 1.96$) students were also more likely to participate in Relational bullying than Late Elementary students ($M = .78, SD = 1.85$), [$F(1) = 4.36, p = .04$]. There was not a significant difference in Type of Bullying between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .62, p = .61$. There was not a significant interaction between Sex and Education Status on Total Bullying [$F(1) = .19, p = .66$].

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Group Grade Level (Late Elementary and Middle School) as the independent variable and Total Bullying/Victimization as the dependent variable. There was not a significant effect of Grade Level Groups on Total Bullying/Victimization at the $p < .05$ level for the two conditions [$F(1) = 2.15, p = .47$]. The Middle School Group ($M = 11.99, SD = 11.80$) reported more Total Bullying/Victimization behaviors than the Late Elementary Group ($M = 10.99, SD = 13.25$) however, it was not significant. There were not significant differences in Total Bullying/Victimization between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .25, p = .62$. The interaction for Group Grade Level and Education Status was not significant, $F(1) = .54, p = .47$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Grade Level Group (Late Elementary and Middle School) and Special Education Status Group (Special Education and Regular Education) as the independent variable and Type of Bullying/Victimization (Verbal, Physical, and Relational) as the dependent variable. There was not a statistically significant difference in significant difference on Type of

Bullying/Victimization between the Grade Level Groups, [$F(3, 295) = 2.15, p > .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .98$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$]. There was not a significant interaction between Special Education Status and Grade Level on the Type of Bully/Victimization [$F(1) = 1.73, p = .16$].

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Group Grade Level (Late Elementary and Middle School) on Total Defending. There was a significant effect of Grade Level Groups on Total Defending at the $p < .05$ level [$F(1) = 23.33, p = .00$]. The Late Elementary Group ($M = 15.45, SD = 14.50$) reported more Total Defending than the Middle School Group ($M = 8.75, SD = 9.34$) which indicated that Middle School Group defended less than the Late Elementary Group. There were not significant differences in Total Defending between students in Special Education and Regular Education, $F(1) = .15, p = .69$. The interaction for Group Grade Level and Education Status was not significant, $F(1) = 1.56, p = .21$.

A 2x3 MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of Grade Level Group (Late Elementary and Middle School) and Special Education Status Group (Special Education and Regular Education) as the independent variable and Type of Defending (Confronting, Helping, and Reporting) as the dependent variable. There was a statistically significant difference in significant difference on Type of Defending between the Grade Level Groups, [$F(3, 295) = 10.93, p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .90$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$]. Late Elementary Group ($M = 5.51, SD = 5.41$) was more likely to Comfort than the Middle School Group ($M = 3.30, SD = 3.89$), [$F(1) = 14.09, p = .00$]. Late Elementary Group ($M = 6.86, SD = 5.24$) was more likely to Help than the Middle School Group ($M = 3.71, SD = 3.94$), [$F(1) = 29.51, p = .00$]. Additionally, Late Elementary Group ($M = 3.07, SD$

= 2.63) was more likely to Report than the Middle School Group ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 1.99$), [$F(1) = 19.91$, $p = .00$]. There was not a significant difference in Type of Defending between students in Special Education and Regular Education, [$F(1) = 63$, $p = .60$]. There was not a significant interaction between Sex and Education Status on Total Defending [$F(1) = 1.56$, $p = .21$].

Discussion

Conclusions

The results of the current study suggest that students in special education and students in regular education experienced similar levels of victimization, and engaged in similar levels of bullying, bully/victimization, and defending. This result can be considered an optimistic finding because while some studies have no or little differences between students in special and general education (Kaukiainen et al., 2002; Rose et al., 2011) dependent of disability, others have found that children in special education are more likely to engage in bullying and experience victimization (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; O'Moore & Hillery, 1989). These results suggest that students who are different (i.e., special education population) in the education system experience or engage in similar levels of bullying as their regular education peers. This suggests that having a diagnosed disability in the school system is not necessarily related to a child experiencing more victimization than other students. It also seems that students in special education do not necessarily perpetrate bullying more often than their regular education peers. This study also found that students in general and special education engaged in similar levels of defending. No previous studies have examined differences in defending between general and special education, but this initial investigation suggests that there is not a difference in defending among these groups.

Based on the findings from the present study, several questions were answered that found information dissimilar to other research. The first research question was, Is there a significant difference in the frequency of different types of victimization (verbal, relational, physical) that occurs among regular education students and special education

students? According to the present study, regular education and special education students experienced victimization at the same rate. Students in special education reported experiencing more victimization on average, but the difference was not statistically significant. Other studies have found students in special education report more victimization (Blake et al., 2012; Carter & Spencer, 2006; Whitney et al., 1992). However, Kaukiainen and researchers (2002) reported that specific groups of students in special education did not report they were victimized more often than other general education students.

Given the varying findings in studies examining bullying among special education students, it is difficult to understand the current study's results in light of the existing literature. However, there are a number of variables that may explain the varied findings by researchers thus far, including differences in definitions and measurement. Although many measures utilize the Olweus definition of bullying and victimization, others do not. These subtle differences in how victimization is defined may affect the overall sensitivity of the measures and be related to differences in the reported frequency of victimization. The measures may also assess different types of bullying, leading to differences in findings.

Literature (e.g., Blake et al., 2012 & Rose et al., 2011) also suggests that most studies that examine bully victimization are small in sample size. Rose and colleagues (2011) indicated that of the 32 studies reviewed in meta-analysis, 24 of the studies had fewer than 100 participants. The current study utilized a total of 295 participants. This granted the present study statistical power that other studies did not have due to less individuals in the previous samples. The overall convenience of samples used in these

types of studies has been shown to cause difficulties in determining prevalence rates. This would imply that the exact percentage of students who are bullied in special education is not entirely complete or consistent in research at this time due to range population size used in studies over time (Blake et al., 2012). The implications of the current study are that although students in special education do report a greater degree of victimization it is not significantly different than those in regular education. Despite the studies reporting differences, students in special education may actually be victimized at a similar rate as their peers in a general education setting. Another explanation could be that students in special education receive more supports provided by staff than general education students. Special education students have consistent staff support throughout their educational careers. These students have case managers who follow them in each grade they move to and check in on them, regular education students do not have this support. Thus, special education students may be more aware of other supports in the school, like social workers, teaching assistants, school psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and resource teachers. The special education students have a greater opportunity to make a connection with an adult who they feel comfortable with. These personnel can guide or assist them at the onset of victimization and can dispel the problem more quickly than a student who is in regular education. The regular education students may not know the supports available to them and may choose to keep victimization to themselves, especially if the school is not seen as having a supportive climate (Elliott et al., 2010).

The second research question was, Is there a significant difference in the frequency of the different types of bully perpetration behaviors (verbal, relational,

physical) among regular education students and special education students? The present study found that students in special education and regular education reported similar frequency of bullying perpetration. Students in special education reported more bullying perpetration in total and types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational); however, it was not a statistically significant difference. Previous research indicated that students in special education reported more bullying behaviors than students in regular education (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; O'Moore & Hillery, 1989; Whiteney et al., 1994). These findings may be convoluted since it is documented that many students in special education are not at the same developmental level as their general education peers (Flynn, 2000). This could imply that students in special education may report greater levels of bullying behaviors due to a lack of understanding of the definitions and rating scales utilized.

The developmental differences that the students in special education have can cause them to perceive bullying behavior in themselves as more defining than the regular education students due to a dependency on rules (Flynn, 2000). An example of this type of rigidity could be found in children within the special education category of Autism (Bellini et al., 2007). Overall social awareness and lack of understanding as to social interaction may play a role in perception of bullying in special education and regular education. Many of the studies included in the Rose and colleagues (2011) meta-analysis utilized the perceived "gold standard" for estimating bullying and victimization prevalence rates, peer nomination. This process allows the students to choose other students who may fit in the bully category. Understandably, the peer nomination method would not be truly appropriate for students who were in the special education population

(Rose, Swearer, & Espelage, 2012).

Restrictions on perception of the student body and the lack of understanding of these children's social awareness by others may place the special education students in a category that considers them to be more prone to bullying behaviors than their regular education peers (Rose et al., 2012). In addition, some students may not be involved in the ranking due to placement outside of the regular education classroom (Blake et al., 2012). The current study utilized a self-assessment rating scale which removed the social interaction piece (peer nomination) that produces the best data for regular education students, but may not appropriate for special education students.

The third research question was, is there a significant difference in frequency of the different types of bully/victim behaviors between regular education students and special education students? Based on the data collected in this study, students in special education and regular education reported similar levels of bully/victim behaviors (physical, verbal, relational). Previous research indicates that students who were bully/victims were often students with a special education classification (Kaukiainen et al., 2002). Kaukiainen and researchers (2002) indicated that students with learning disabilities, the category with the greatest population in special education, were more likely to be both bullies and victims. Given that there were not significant differences in bullying and victimization between students in general and special education, it is understandable that there were not differences in the overall scale for bully/victimization because of combining bully and victim scores. Previous studies have used classification systems to create bully, victim, and bully/victim groups then compared the number of general and special education students within the groups (Kaukiainen et al., 2002 & Rose

et al., 2010). For these classification systems, researchers used teacher surveys and peer nomination to place students in groups as bully, victim, or bully/victim (Rose et al., 2010). The current study did not create groups, but looked at self-reported frequency of the different types of bullying and victimization behaviors. Differences in measurement may account for different findings between this and other studies because different systems are used across studies. If researches utilized the same measurement system to look at bullying, victimization, and the bully/victim, then these differences would be accounted for. For students in special education it would be more appropriate to continue to use a scale that combines both bully and victim scores because it takes out the element of social skills awareness (Rose et al., 2012).

Finally, the fourth research question was, Is there a significant difference in the frequency of different types of defending (confronting, reporting, helping) between regular education students and special education students? The current study found that both students in special education and regular education exhibited similar frequency of defender behaviors. This is the first study to compare rates of defending between general and special education students, so more information needs to be gathered on defender behaviors amongst students in both special education and regular education in totality, as well as in the types of defending (comforting, helping, and reporting). These findings may indicate a few commonalities in the general student population at large. Students in special education and regular education are exposed to similar environments while in the school setting. Although some students in special education are in resource classrooms or self-contained classrooms, the school environment and school climate are usually found across the school setting (Whitney et al., 1992). For example, school rules and mission

statements apply to all students (with exceptions made for specific disabilities under their IEP) as well as social discussions both in and out of the classrooms. This environment may foster defender behaviors in both special education and regular education students. Due to the fact that this is a new area of study no prediction was made. Additional exploratory analyses were conducted post-hoc to examine gender and grade level differences in bullying, victimization, bully/victims, and defending among special education and regular education. An interesting finding from the current study showed that students in the Late Elementary Group were more likely to be defenders than the Middle School Group. It is speculated that many elementary schools often have specific programs to teach social skills and interaction in the classroom (Woods & Wolke, 2003). Most middle school students do not have this explicit instruction. Students in elementary school tend to stay with the same class and teacher throughout their school day. This could develop a more open environment for students to voice their feelings in the classroom in regard to treatment of other classmates or themselves. The middle school students move about the school to different classrooms during the day and are often given personal space where teachers and staff are not in constant observation of their interactions. This may create an atmosphere where the student may not be as comfortable to be a defender or may not see the bully and victim interaction take place. Elementary students are developmentally focused on rules and may not have additional perceptions of peer pressure on providing help, comforting, or reporting that students in the middle school population may have (Buzzelli, 1992). Middle school students experience self-esteem changes during the transition from elementary school to middle school (Wingfield & Eccles, 1994). The finding that students in elementary school are more apt to display

defender behaviors is consistent with what is known about development and the changes in peer relationships as children grow older and gain more self-perception and autonomy.

Limitations of Current Study

There were several limitations of the current study that can be addressed in future studies. First, the sample included only students from public schools in suburban and rural Illinois. This sample may not be representative of students across the United States in terms of demographic variables (gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity). In order to make the group of general education and special education groups equal in size, random sampling was used to create a smaller general education group. The division of gender between all groups (special education, regular education, and school) may not have been representative of the student population in the United States. Caution was taken during random sampling of the schools and education eligibility classification group, to correct for this type of limitation. However, the possibility of error may still exist. The socioeconomic status among the students in the sample may not be comparable to the student population in the United States. The percentage of students considered to be low income in the sample schools ranges from 30% to 60% of the student population, as documented by the number of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The variance amongst the total population of the United States may not be represented by that sample.

The demographic data concerning ethnicity of the student population in this study is, also, not representative of the overall population in the United States. The study contains more students who identified themselves as predominately “white” (84.1-97.9%) than current U.S. Census (modified in 2014) data (62.6%). The sample is not representative of the Hispanic/Latino (17.1%), Black or African American (13.2%), Asian

(5.3%), or other race classifications of students that are currently attending the schools (U.S. Census, 2014). A representative sample was not available due to the location of the schools used in the study.

A limitation that could have affected the overall study could be the group classification and differences between the groups (general education and special education) themselves that were created. Some students who are in special education are mainstreamed into all regular education classes, some are in resource level classes, others are in self-contained classes, and a group of students attend both regular and resource level classes. Students also may receive either pull out (the special education student is taken to another room for services) or push in (specialist team members enter the general education classroom) specialist services while attending school. It cannot be determined, in this study, if this differentiation in services causes any changes in the occurrence of bullying, victimization, or defending. Future studies should be more sensitive to time spent in general education classrooms to determine if the frequency of instructional time in special education is related to bullying and victimization.

An additional limitation could be that due to differences in measures across studies (as stated previously), there is not a clear way to see how much bullying, victimization, bully/victim, or defender behaviors students are experiencing in total. Through the previous studies mentioned above it is known that students are experiencing more than other groups, but these experiences are not able to be compared to a larger population or multiple studies due to the differences of definitions used and multiple types of data collection. If studies were to use the same measure a more accurate discovery of the frequency of bullying would be able to be discovered.

Future Directions

Currently, best practice dictates that response to intervention is to be used by school districts for determination of special education status. With this change in service delivery, special education students who may have been pulled out of the mainstream classroom or not in a regular education classroom are now with regular education students on a more consistent basis. Students who do not receive special education services, but do receive tiered intervention in classroom groups, provide these students who receive special education services a less socially obvious way to not be seen differently by their peers (Salmivalli et al., 2004). This is because many students are receiving additional support throughout the day. It is common for students in the classroom to see many adults during their day. These students do not necessarily see the assistance of these adults as unusual, because students are pulled for all kinds of reasons in the school day. The reasons vary from: tiered intervention, special education, accelerated programming, or study/social groups. Pulling out students or pushing in adult support may no longer be seen as an attractant of bullying behaviors (Whitney et al., 1992). Thus, future studies can explore the impact of these instructional variables.

Similarly, response to intervention has created an increased knowledge of social and emotional education in the schools. This has increased with the implementation of positive behavioral strategies in the classrooms and school wide. By teaching students about differences amongst individuals and how to interact with one another in accepting ways, students may have a better understanding of individual diversity in many aspects, including education status. By teaching students from a young age that individuals are not the same and that they have the ability to stand up for others, schools are showing children

the dangers of bullying and how to be defenders (Sugai, & Horner, 2002). These programs and teachings may occur in special education settings and can demonstrate to special education students that they have the ability to be defenders themselves. The implementation of such programs can correlate to a reduction in the number of bully/victims in the special education setting as well. Additional research can be done to look at possible effects of these type of programs, before and after implementation, to see what type of change occurs over time in both special education and regular education settings. This can further be broken down in the future to compare mainstreamed, resource level, and self-contained special education students. Furthermore, awareness of what bullying, victimization, and defending entails has increased in society. This may be stemming from advocacy by educators in various forms. Additional research should be completed on what students know about bullying, victimization, bully/victims, and defending as another level of the study in the future. Gaining additional research within the area of defender behaviors in the scope of special education is greatly needed, as it has previously been nonexistent beyond this study. Due to this, only theory was able to dictate possible hypotheses for the data collected. With the increase of data in the area of defending behaviors programs can be created to assist more students with learning defender behaviors and putting them into action.

Summary

In review, it has been documented that bullying and victimization can have a negative impact on students. The purpose of the present study was to compare the frequency and types of bully, victim, and defending behaviors that occur in general education and special education student populations. In the past, research has focused on

the general education population students and less on special education students, but the existing research on bullying and victimization among special education students was incongruent. Some studies found that students in special education were more likely to be bullies and victims (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; O'Moore & Hillery, 1989), while other found differences in some levels of special education and no differences in others (Kuhuaunen et. al., 2002; Rose et al., 2011). The results of this study indicated that students in special education did not report a statistically significant difference in the frequency of bullying experienced or perpetrated over regular education students. Students in special education also did not report any more or less defending behaviors than regular education students. Similarity in frequency of bullying, victimization, and defending among general and special education may suggest that schools are addressing previous concerns that students in special education were more at risk to perpetrate and be victim to bullying. Bullying and victimization of all students may be seen as a more serious subject in schools in both the special education and regular education populations. Additional research will need to be done to see if the findings are based on the population used in this study or can be generalized more broadly for other areas of the country.

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Table 1.

Sample and School Demographic Information

	<i>Total Sample</i>		Special Education		Regular Education	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Gender						
Male	187	63.4	104	72.7	83	54.6
Female	108	36.6	39	27.3	69	45.4
Grade						
Third	36	12.2	17	11.9	19	12.5
Fourth	16	5.4	7	4.9	9	5.9
Fifth	24	8.1	11	7.7	13	8.6
Sixth	77	26.1	38	26.8	39	25.7
Seventh	84	28.5	42	29.6	42	27.6
Eighth	57	19.3	27	19	30	19.7
School						
School A	78	26.4	47	32.9	31	20.4
School B	49	16.6	21	14.7	28	18.4
School C	27	9.2	14	9.8	13	8.6
School D	141	47.8	61	42.7	80	52.6

Table 2.

Descriptive Information for Schools

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Total Students	339	436	434	868
% Low Income	49	60	43	30
% Students with Disabilities	13.6	20.6	18.9	13.6
% Ethnicity				
White	95.6	96.8	97.9	84.1
Black	.3	.2	0	3.3
Hispanic	.3	0	.9	5.8
Asian	.3	1.1	.7	2.2
American Indian	0	0	0	.5
Multi-Ethnic	3.5	1.8	.5	3.6

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations of Main Study Variables

	Total		Special Ed		General Ed		Range
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Total Victimization	8.49	10.3	8.66	9.47	8.34	10.57	0-40
Verbal Victimization	3.24	3.64	3.29	3.67	3.20	3.00	0-12
Physical Victimization	2.62	3.84	2.67	3.67	2.57	4.00	0-16
Relational Victimization	2.63	3.33	2.69	3.31	2.57	3.37	0-12
Total Bullying	3.24	4.70	3.51	5.14	2.89	4.24	0-28
Verbal Bullying	1.41	2.01	1.45	2.14	1.38	1.90	0-11
Physical Bullying	.67	1.44	.78	1.54	.57	1.33	0-9
Relational Bullying	1.15	1.94	1.27	2.10	1.04	1.78	0-13
Total Bully/Victimization	11.73	12.17	12.17	11.72	11.32	12.61	0-56
Verbal Bully/Victimization	4.66	4.56	4.74	4.40	4.58	4.68	0-20
Physical Bully/Victimization	3.29	4.48	3.45	4.28	3.14	4.67	0-22
Relational Bully/Victimization	3.78	4.18	3.97	4.27	3.61	4.11	0-13
Total Defending	10.47	10.64	10.54	10.67	10.41	10.64	0-40
Confronting	3.87	4.43	3.91	4.41	3.33	4.46	0-16
Helping	4.52	4.52	4.53	4.63	4.52	4.42	0-16
Reporting	2.08	2.25	2.10	2.20	2.07	2.92	0-8

Table 4.

Correlations between Main Study Variables for Total Sample

	Victim	Bully	Bully/Victimization	Defending
1. Victim Score	–			
2. Bully Score	.270**	–		
3. Bully/Victimization Score	.928**	.609**	–	
4. Defending Score	.507**	-.048	.399**	–

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the $<.01$ level (2-tailed).

Table 5.

Correlations of Main Study Variables for Special Education Group

	Victim	Bully	Bully/Victimization	Defending
1. Victim Score	–			
2. Bully Score	.219**	–		
3. Bully/Victimization Score	.904**	.616**	–	
4. Defending Score	.393**	-.068	.288**	–

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the $<.01$ level (2-tailed).

Table 6.

Correlations of Main Study Variables for General Education Group

	Victim	Bully	Bully/Victimization	Defending
1. Victim Score	–			
2. Bully Score	.328**	–		
3. Bullying/Victimization Score	.948**	.611**	–	
4. Defending Score	.604**	-.026	.498**	–

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the <.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix A

Bully Participant Role Survey (Summers & Demaray, 2008)

	Have you done any of the following in the past 30 days? Put an "X" for how often.	Never	1-2 Times	3 -4 Times	5-6 Times	7 or More Times
1.	I have called another student bad names					
2.	I have made fun of another student					
3.	I have purposely left out another student					
4.	I have pushed, punched or slapped another student					
5.	I have told lies about another student.					
6.	I have tried to make people dislike another student.					
7.	I have stolen things from another student.					
8.	I have thrown things at another student					
9.	I have said bad things about another student					
10.	I have talked about someone behind their back					
	Have you joined in any of the following in the past 30 days? Put an "X" for how often.	Never	1-2 Times	3 -4 Times	5-6 Times	7 or More Times
11.	When someone was making fun of another student, I joined in.					
12.	When someone was verbally threatening another student, I joined in.					
13.	When someone bumped into another person, I joined in.					
14.	I have made fun of someone when they were pushed, punched, or slapped					
15.	I have made fun of someone who was being called mean names.					
16.	When someone else broke something that belonged to another student, I stopped to watch.					
17.	When someone else tripped another student on purpose, I laughed					
18.	When someone else knocked books out of another student's hands on purpose, I laughed.					
19.	When someone else pinched or poked another student, I joined in.					
20.	When someone else threw something at another student, I joined in.					
	Has any of the following happened to you in the past 30 days? Put an "X" for how often.	Never	1-2 Times	3 -4 Times	5-6 Times	7 or More Times
21.	I have been called mean names					
22.	I have been made fun of					

23.	I have been purposely left out of something					
24.	I have been ignored					
25.	I have been pushed around, punched or slapped					
26.	I have been pushed or shoved					
27.	People have told lies about me					
28.	People have tried to make others dislike me					
29.	I have been threatened by others					
30.	I have had things taken from me					
	Have you done any of the following in the past 30 days? Put an "X" for how often.	Never	1-2 Times	3-4 Times	5-6 Times	7 or More Times
31.	I tried to become friends with someone after they were picked on					
32.	I encouraged someone to tell an adult after they were picked on.					
33.	I defended someone who was being pushed, punched, or slapped.					
34.	I defended someone who had things purposely taken from them.					
35.	I defended someone who was being called mean names.					
36.	I tried to include someone if they were being purposely left out.					
37.	I helped someone who had their books knocked out of their hands on purpose.					
38.	I helped someone who was purposely tripped.					
39.	When I saw someone being physically harmed, I told an adult.					
40.	I defended someone who I thought was being tricked on purpose.					
	Has any of the following happened to you in the past 30 days? Put an "X" for how often.	Never	1-2 Times	3-4 Times	5-6 Times	7 or More Times
41.	I pretended not to notice when things were taken or stolen from another student					
42.	I pretended not to notice when rumors were being spread about other students					
43.	I ignored it when I saw someone making fun of another student					
44.	I pretended not to notice a situation that purposely left someone out					
45.	I ignored it when I saw someone breaking or damaging another student's things.					
46.	I pretended not to notice when someone else tripped another student on purpose					
47.	I ignored it when someone else pinched or poked another student					
48.	I ignored it when someone else threw something at another student					

49.	I ignored it when someone else tricked another student					
50.	I pretended not to notice when someone was destroying another student's property.					

Appendix B

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, “Bully Roles, Social Skills, Executive Functioning and Academic Enablers” for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has approved this research protocol following an expedited review procedure. IRB review has determined that the protocol involves no more than minimal risk to subjects and satisfies all of the criteria for approval of research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number 13-177. You may proceed with this study from 11/15/2013 to 11/14/2014. You must submit Form E, Continuation Request, to the IRB by 10/14/2014 if you wish to continue the project beyond the approval expiration date.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board

c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Telephone: 581-8576

Fax: 217-581-7181

Email: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu