

School Teasing and Bullying after the Presidential Election

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Agenda

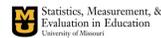
- Introduction and Research Question
- Methods
- Results and Discussion

Bullying among youth is a serious concern

- Affects 5.4 million U.S. students (22% of ages 12 – 18) (Lessne & Cidade, 2015)
- Bullying leads to decreased engagement and achievement, higher dropouts, depression, etc.
- Although some evidence that bullying decreased since 2005 (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017), media reports and teacher surveys claim that racially- and sexually-related bullying has increased since the 2016 presidential election

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Reports of bullying related to the election

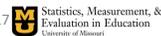
Kids In America
 BuzzFeed News uncovered 54 incidents in which a K–12 student used Trump's name or message to harass a classmate.

The campaign language of the man who would become president sparks hate violence, bullying, before and after the election

Source: https://www.buzzfeed.com/albertsamaha/kids-are-quoting-trump-to-bully-their-classmates?utm_term=.ofemy2vLL#.coXRQ8xPP; <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/post-trump-victory-bullying-harassment-reported-schools/>; <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/trump-effect>

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Widely-cited report



In the first days after the 2016 presidential election, [SPLC] administered an online survey to K–12 educators from across the country. Over 10,000 teachers, counselors, administrators and others ... responded. The survey data indicate that the results of the election are having a profoundly negative impact on schools and students. Ninety percent of educators report that school climate has been negatively affected..... 80 percent describe heightened anxiety and concern on the part of students worried about the impact of the election on themselves and their families. Also on the upswing: verbal harassment, the use of slurs and derogatory language, and disturbing incidents involving swastikas, Nazi salutes and Confederate flags.

<https://www.splcenter.org/20161128/trump-effect-impact-2016-presidential-election-our-nations-schools>

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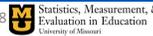
However...

“...The results of this survey are not scientific. The respondents were not selected in a manner to ensure a representative sample; those who responded may have been more likely to perceive problems than those who did not. But it is the largest collection of educator responses that has been collected; the tremendous number of responses as well as the overwhelming confirmation of what has been anecdotally reported in the media cannot be ignored or dismissed.”

<https://www.splcenter.org/20161128/trump-effect-impact-2016-presidential-election-our-nations-schools>

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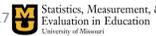
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Are educator perceptions accurate?

- Increased sensitivity to bullying may make it more salient in the absence of increased prevalence
- Social learning model of aggression suggests that children readily model adult aggressive behavior
- Six decades of research have found that exposure of children and adolescents to media violence has an effect on aggressive attitudes and aggressive behavior (Anderson, Bushman, Donnerstein, Hummer, & Warburton, 2015)

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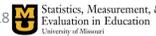
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The Current Study

- Available data from statewide school climate survey administered in spring 2013, 2015, and 2017
- Are differences in student reports of teasing and bullying in 2017 associated with voter preference for the Republican candidate in the school locality?
- Virginia provides wide variation in voter preferences, ranging from 10.6% to 82.3% in support of the Republican presidential candidate
- We hypothesized higher teasing and bullying in 2017 in areas where the Republican candidate won, while controlling for 2015 prevalence rates, socioeconomic status, and the percentage of White student enrollment

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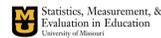
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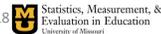
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Data: Virginia statewide school climate survey for grades 7-8

- 2013 (n = 39,364), 2015 (n = 56,508), 2017 (n = 58,908)
- Nearly all eligible middle schools (97%) participated
- Student participations rates > 80%
- Anonymous online survey (~100 items)
- Spring timing of the survey allowed look at changes **before** and **after** the elections

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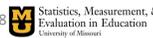
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Outcomes of interest

- **Bullying prevalence** (physical, social, verbal, cyber)
- Presented a definition of bullying
- Response options: *Never, Once or twice, About once per week, More than once per month*
- Students bullied at least once a week in past month considered victims
- Responses aggregated to the school division level representing the proportion of students bullied
- Analyses at school division level (where the data can be linked over time)

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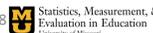
Outcomes of interest: (cont.)

Prevalence of teasing and bullying

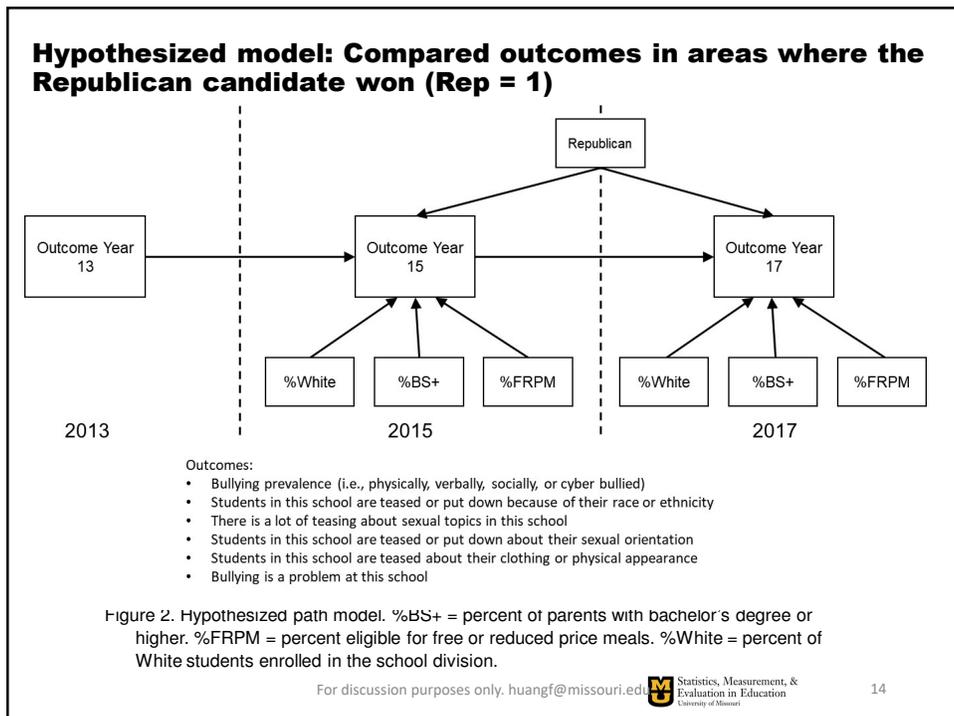
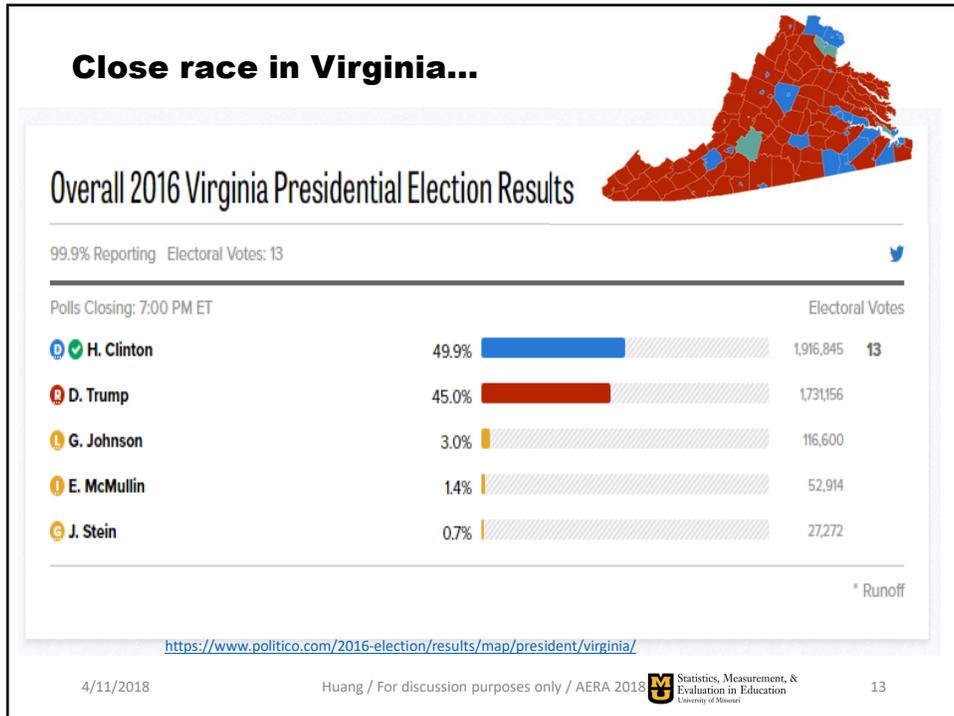
- “Students in this school are teased about their clothing or physical appearance”;
- “Bullying is a problem at this school”;
- “Students in this school are teased or put down because of their race or ethnicity”;
- “There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics in this school”;
- “Students in this school are teased or put down about their sexual orientation”
- (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree)
- Student responses aggregated to school division level to represent the percent of students who agreed or strongly agreed with each item

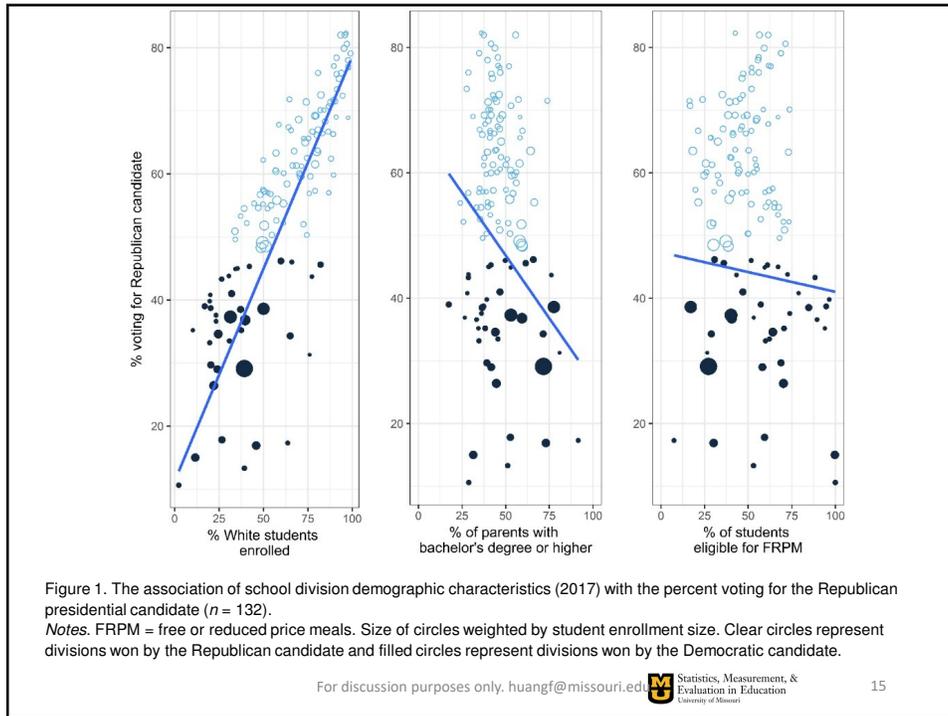
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Descriptives ($n = 132$ School Divisions)

	2013		2015		2017	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Prevalence rates						
Bullied in school this year	.181	.033	.162	.038	.167	.036
PTB items						
Teased about clothing/appearance	.682	.111	.684	.108	.685	.102
Teasing about sexual topics	.522	.068	.506	.071	.564	.058
Teased or put down about sexual orientation	.381	.083	.347	.087	.365	.085
Teased or put down because of race/ethnicity	.366	.065	.353	.066	.357	.060
Bullying is a problem	.499	.101	.464	.119	.450	.124
% voting for Republican candidate ¹					.450	.158
% White students enrolled	.529	.206	.513	.206	.497	.203
% of parents with bachelor's degree or higher	.540	.142	.540	.138	.553	.134
% of students eligible for FRPM	.399	.158	.417	.172	.418	.186

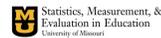
Notes. PTB = prevalence of teasing and bullying scale. FRPM = free or reduced price meals. Weighted by school enrollment size per school division. ¹Using our reported weights, the percentage is exactly what was reported in the overall 2016 Virginia presidential election results (see <http://www.politico.com/2016-election/results/map/president/virginia/>).

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Prior to interpreting results, we inspected model fit indices. All fit statistics were acceptable

Path Model Fit Statistics

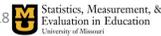
Outcome	$\chi^2(df = 7)$	p	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Teased about clothing/ physical appearance	10.30	.17	.99	.97	.06
Bullying is a problem	10.86	.14	.99	.96	.07
Teasing about sexual topics	12.23	.09	.97	.92	.08
Teased or put down about sexual orientation	11.68	.11	.97	.93	.07
Teased or put down because of race/ethnicity	13.17	.07	.97	.92	.08
Bullied in school this year	7.99	.33	.99	.99	.03

Notes. CFI = comparative fit index. TLI = Tucker Lewis index. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

*Good fitting models: $p > .05$, CFI & TLI $\geq .90$, RMSEA $\leq .08$

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No differences in 2015 (pre election)

Results from Path Analyses using 2017 and 2015 Outcomes ($n = 132$ school divisions)

Variable	2015 outcomes (pre-election)					
	Teased about clothing/physical appearance	Bullying is a problem	Teasing about sexual topics	Teased about sexual orientation	Teased because of race/ethnicity	Bullied in school this year
Republican (1 = won)	0.008 (0.017)	0.011 (0.018)	0.001 (0.015)	0.031 (0.018)	-0.012 (0.017)	0.011 (0.008)
Prior measure (2013)	0.742*** (0.072)	0.621*** (0.085)	0.516*** (0.082)	0.413*** (0.088)	0.343*** (0.080)	0.201 (0.110)
% with BS+	-0.117 (0.066)	-0.124 (0.108)	-0.125 (0.086)	-0.094 (0.099)	-0.088 (0.081)	-0.056 (0.063)
% FRPM	0.026 (0.055)	0.213* (0.095)	0.043 (0.068)	0.159* (0.073)	0.068 (0.067)	0.070 (0.053)
% White	-0.009 (0.041)	0.025 (0.041)	0.012 (0.037)	-0.015 (0.043)	-0.063 (0.040)	0.006 (0.019)
R ²	.85	.81	.49	.63	.45	.39

Notes. Republican indicates if the Republican candidate won (1) or lost (0) in the school division. All variables unstandardized. FRPM = free or reduced price meals. BS+ = percent of parents with bachelor's degree or higher. % White = percent of White students enrolled in the school division. Analyses weighted by school division student enrollment size. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

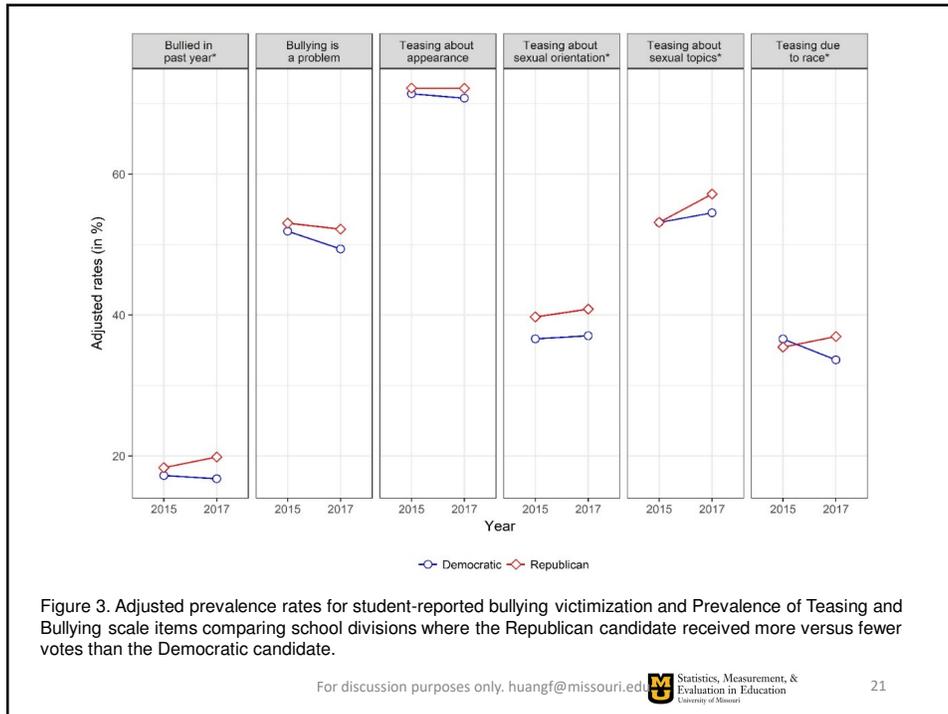
Some differences in 2017 (post election)

Results from Path Analyses using 2017 and 2015 Outcomes ($n = 132$ school divisions)

Variable	2017 outcomes (post-election)					
	Teased about clothing/physical appearance	Bullying is a problem	Teasing about sexual topics	Teased about sexual orientation	Teased because of race/ethnicity	Bullied in school this year
Republican (1 = won)	0.014 (0.015)	0.028 (0.020)	0.027* (0.012)	0.038* (0.016)	0.033** (0.011)	0.031*** (0.009)
Prior measure (2015)	0.712*** (0.070)	0.687*** (0.088)	0.498*** (0.067)	0.613*** (0.066)	0.263*** (0.080)	0.232* (0.106)
% with BS+	-0.128 (0.067)	-0.075 (0.073)	0.050 (0.074)	-0.021 (0.086)	-0.111 (0.058)	-0.016 (0.066)
% FRPM	-0.018 (0.043)	0.115 (0.061)	0.022 (0.052)	0.068 (0.054)	0.022 (0.043)	0.089* (0.040)
% White	-0.039 (0.032)	-0.027 (0.041)	-0.088** (0.031)	-0.020 (0.033)	-0.146*** (0.031)	0.007 (0.020)
R ²						.48

Notes. Republican indicates if the Republican candidate won (1) or lost (0) in the school division. All variables unstandardized. FRPM = free or reduced price meals. BS+ = percent of parents with bachelor's degree or higher. % White = percent of White students enrolled in the school division. Analyses weighted by school division student enrollment size. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.



Limitations

- Cannot demonstrate a causal link to the election
- Possible that rates of teasing and bullying may have been relatively unchanged, but has become a more salient issue
- Bullies may have just switched from former taunts to new taunts shaped by election-related rhetoric

Conclusion

- Correlational evidence from a statewide sample of 7th and 8th grade students that, in 2017, some forms of teasing and bullying were higher in school localities that supported the Republican presidential candidate
- Differences in adjusted prevalence rates were present in 2017 but not in 2015 (prior to the election)
- Differences were observed in school localities where voters favored the Republican candidate, whose public statements have been criticized as modeling bullying with harsh and derogatory attitudes toward some minority groups
- Further research needed to determine whether there is a causal link between presidential behavior and student peer aggression, and what intervening variables may help explain the mechanism of this effect