Exploring the Intersections of Disability, Race, and Gender on Student Outcomes in High School

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Abstract

This study explored the intersections of disability, race, sexual orientation, and gender on peer victimization, suicidal ideation, and school connectedness. Participants were 11,353 high school students aged 14 to 18 years (MD =15.88, SD = 1.20). Of these individuals, 1,640 students self-identified as either having an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or as having a disability. Students completed online self-report measures. Results indicated that having a disability or identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (LGBQ) was associated with higher odds of suicidal ideation, higher levels of peer victimization, and lower levels of school connectedness across several racial categories. Moderation analyses examined the intersection of various identities. Findings indicate that differences exist among the intersection of disability, race, sexual orientation, and gender identities in relation to the outcomes of interest.

Keywords

exceptionalities, multicultural issues, quantitative, research methodology, social skills, diversity

Introduction

American public schools have become increasingly more diverse. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017) show that between 2003 and 2013, the percentage of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools decreased for students who were White (from 59% to 50%) and Black (from 17% to 16%). In contrast, the percentage of students enrolled in public schools increased for students who were Hispanic (from 19% to 25%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (4% to 5%) during this time period. Enrollment of American Indian/Alaska Native students was around 1% from 2003 to 2013 (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). The percentage of students enrolled in public schools who were of two or more races increased between 2008 (the first year for which data are available) and 2013 from 1% to 3% (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017).

It is well-documented that certain students in the United States encounter psychosocial barriers in schools such as incidents of peer victimization and suicidal ideation (Kann et al., 2018), and varying levels of school connectedness that contribute to their overall psychological wellness and academic outcomes (Allen et al., 2016; Glew et al., 2005), but less is known about these factors specifically for disabled[1] students. As the racial diversity of the typical U.S. student demographic has shifted, it is important to explore these factors from an intersectional lens to better understand how the interplay of race and disability and gender affect these outcomes. However, we must first consider the racial diversity of disabled students. To do so, it is imperative to understand how the educational disability statistics are measured and codified.

Disabled students in the United States fit into two measurable categories: those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), who are eligible under both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973), and those with 504 plans, who are eligible under Section 504 only (Zirkel & Weathers, 2015). It is likely there is a third category of disabled students who have a documented disability but do not require any accommodations and are therefore not tracked or included in any estimates. When engaging in research and making claims about students with disabilities, it is imperative to include *all* disabled students, from both of these measurable categories. However, there are numerous

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complexities with establishing accurate estimates of these numbers because different federal data sources track one more consistently than the other or are not required to report. These types of classification issues are complex (Bear et al., 2015). The most recent U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection covers the 2015–2016 school year, and about 17,337 school districts, 96,360 schools, and 50.6 million students reported 14% disabled students nationally (approximately 7.1 million students)—12% served under IDEA and 2% served under Section 504 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Between 2011–2012 and 2017–2018, the number of disabled students served under IDEA increased from 6.4 to 7.0 million. The national average for 504-only students increased from 1.8% in 2013–2014 to 2.3% in 2015–2016.

Specific to race and disability in special education, this is often discussed in terms of overidentification (Artiles et al., 2010; Losen & Orfield, 2002) or underidentification (Morgan et al., 2015, 2017). However, this binary is too simplistic as the issues surrounding identification, eligibility, and service provision are complex, and further complicated by racial inequities which leads to disproportionality (King Thorius & Stephenson, 2012). Collins and colleagues (2016) provide critical commentary that the very process of disability identification is not entirely objective, neutral, or value free, which means that certain racial groups may face barriers advocating for referral for disability testing which could lead to underidentification or overidentification depending on the circumstances. Debates aside, the current snapshot of disability by race of students in the United States is as follows: The percentage of students served under IDEA was highest for American Indian/Alaska Native students (18%), followed by Black students (16%), White students and students of two or more races (14% each), Hispanic students (13%), Pacific Islander students (11%), and Asian students (7%) (McFarland et al., 2018). Zirkel and Weathers (2015) examined racial trends, among other things, in nationally available 504-only students. They found that the percentage of White students who were 504-only was significantly higher than the percentages for their Black or Hispanic counterparts with White students twice as likely (1.26%) to have a 504 plan than their Black (0.57%) or Hispanic (0.50%) classmates (Zirkel & Weathers, 2015). The racial breakdown of students served by IDEA (McFarland et al., 2018) in comparison with disabled students served under Section 504 (Zirkel & Weathers, 2015) indicates there are two different stories being captured in relation to race and numbers of students served based on the type of service the student is receiving, an IEP versus a 504 plan. Thus, when considering research on outcomes affecting disabled students, it is important to have an understanding of who was included.

As such, the purpose of this article was to explore outcomes of *all* disabled students, those served under IDEA or who self-report disability (including those with 504 plans) in relation to the variables of suicidal ideation, peer victimization, and school connectedness through analyses by race, gender, and sexual minority status. Intersectionality is a theoretical lens for exploring the interconnectedness of different statuses in relation to embedded systems of power, privilege, and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality research acknowledges complexities in the social construction of identities and lived experiences as situated in interlocking systems of inequality (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989). Disability is only one of several demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation) examined in relation to the various student outcomes explored in the present study's analysis. The intersectionality lens and analyses allowed for a more textured understanding of disabled students' experience than a single-axis analysis. More specifically, disabled students may be experiencing varying intersectionality of experiences shaped by the interplay between ableism and other systemic forces, including racism, homophobia, transphobia, religious persecution, or any combination thereof. For example, DisCrit theory illuminates intersectionality of experience specific to disability in the sense of how "racism and ableism are normalizing processes that are interconnected and collusive" (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 6).

Intersectionality guided the analysis for this present study in interpreting quantitative results, particularly interaction effects between disability and other variables of social difference outlined earlier (Bowleg & Bauer, 2016). In other words, intersectionality did not guide the study design in terms of sampling and developing survey questions. By interpreting statistical interactions through the lens of intersectionality, we document variation in outcomes of peer victimization, sucidal ideation, and school connectedness across intersections of disability and other categories of social difference. Such variation reveals intersectionality specific to disabled students' experiences shaped by interlocking influences of ableism with racism, sexism, and so on. Extant literature shows associations between peer victimization and suicidal behaviors among gender and sexual minority youth (Fedewa & Ahn, 2011) and ethnic minority youth (Mueller et al., 2015). Rather than reviewing this expansive literature, the next section provides a focused literature overview of disabled students and the outcomes of interest.

Suicidal Ideation

In relation to suicidal ideation, King and colleagues (2018) found that disabled students as defined by IDEA definitions and students identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (LGBQ) exhibit higher levels of suicidality and peer victimization and less school connectedness in comparison with their peers. In fact, students with the highest levels of

suicidal ideation were those who identified as disabled and LGBQ (King et al., 2018). On the contrary, other research has showed that suicidality was viewed as more socially acceptable in relation to disability, meaning that the presence of disability was viewed as an appropriate reason to commit suicide, when adult participants were presented with vignettes discussing suicidal ideation and comparisons were made between the disability and no-disability conditions (Lund et al., 2016). Other work in this area has focused on specific disability diagnoses (Daniel et al., 2006; Dodd et al., 2016; Jones & Lollar, 2008; Shtayermman, 2007; Svetaz et al., 2000).

Peer Victimization

It is well-documented that disabled students are victimized at higher levels in comparison with non-disabled peers over time (Rose, Monda-Amaya & Espelage, 2011; Rose & Gage, 2017). Other studies have found victimization to occur for disability-specific diagnoses (Rose & Espelage, 2012; Hebron & Humphrey, 2014; Shtayermman, 2007). However, the majority of the studies exploring peer victimization and disability exclude disabled students who are on 504 plans. Though, a thoughtful analysis was completed by Byrd and Andrews (2016) who included students with 504 plans and found that individuals who experienced multiple forms of discrimination had the most negative outcomes—including lowest levels of engagement, perceptions of school climate, and relationships with teachers. A legal case analysis (Dieterich et al., 2015) of federal and circuit court cases (between 1996 and 2014) related to disability, bullying, and victimization revealed trends. Earlier cases were more likely to bring about claims under IDEA, whereas recent years show more claims are made under 504 (Dieterich et al., 2015). This growth indicates the importance of including all disabled students in bullying and victimization research.

School Connectedness

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2000) defines school connectedness as a student's belief that other students and staff care about a student's academic achievement and personal well-being. With higher levels of school connectedness, students tend to report higher levels of engagement, emotional control, and motivation and are, therefore, more likely to succeed academically (King et al., 2018; Furrer & Skinner, 2003). The data on school connectedness and disability are widely variable. Some studies indicate that disabled students have lower levels of school connectedness than their non-disabled peers (Murray & Greenberg, 2001), whereas others show comparable levels of school connectedness in comparison with non-disabled peers (Svetaz et al., 2000). Still others have found this to be diagnosis-specific (Cumming et al.,

2017; La Salle et al., 2018). As noted with the other variables of interest, it was more common to see research studies use IEP or IDEA definitions of disability in the explorations of school connectedness.

Collectively, these studies provide us with helpful information about disabled students; however, they are missing an intersectional analysis of disability by race, gender, and sexual minority status. Furthermore, the majority of these studies defined disability only by IEP, not inclusive of all disabled students. We sought to better understand the characteristics of disabled students that place them at the greatest risk for adverse outcomes.

Method

Participants

The current study included participants from the 2015 Youth Survey comprised of 11,353 high school students aged 14 to 18 years (MD =15.88, SD = 1.20) across 23 school districts in a large suburban Midwest county. Our overall sample included 9,090 White students (79.7%) which was fewer White students than the 86% of Whites reported in the 2014 census data for the participating county. However, our sample followed a similar pattern to the 5.6%, 5.4%, and 6.2% of Asian, Black, and Hispanic individuals in the census data, respectively; the specific racial breakdown of our sample can be seen in Table 1. Of the sample, 1,640 students self-identified as either having an IEP or having a disability, representing 14.4% of the total sample. If students identified as both, they were only counted once in this number. Of the sample, 280 students self-identified as LGBQ and with a disability representing 17.1% of the disabled students. Only 39 students self-identified as disabled and transgender representing 2.4% of the disabled students in the sample making further intersectional analyses of this subset by race and gender not possible. With regard to sexual orientation, 93% identified as straight, 1.1% as gay/lesbian, 3.2% as bisexual, and 2.2% as questioning. A binary variable was created for sexual orientation, with 93% as straight and 7% as LGBQ. With regard to sex assignment at birth, 49.6% of the sample identified as female and 50.4% identified as male.

Procedures

Information was obtained from the Dane County Youth Survey (DCYS; Dane County Youth Commission, 2015), a 100-item self-report assessment routinely administered by the county's Youth Commission to capture youth's perceptions, behaviors, attitudes, and experiences on a range of topics including individual characteristics, exercise and nutrition, family dynamics, peer relations, drug use, aggression, and victimization, as well as school connectedness (Koenig et al.,

Table 1. Means (or *n*) and Standard Deviations (or %) of Independent and Dependent Variables.

Variables	Total (N = 11,353)	Black (n = 405)	Latino/a (n = 541)	Asian (n = 485)	Mixed (n = 657)	White (n = 9,060)	Other (n = 205)
Female	5,626 (50.38%)	177 (43.81%)	261 (48.51%)	228 (47.30%)	326 (49.70%)	4,532 (50.11%)	101 (49.51%)
Male	5,712 (49.62%)	227 (56.19%)	277 (51.49%)	254 (52.70%)	330 (50.30%)	4,512 (49.89%)	103 (50.49%)
LGBQ	934 (8.25%)	33 (8.19%)	46 (8.52%)	49 (10.23%)	84 (12.79%)	694 (7.69%)	28 (13.73%)
Not LGBQ	10, 383 (91.75%)	370 (91.81%)	494 (91.48%)	430 (89.77%)	573 (87.21%)	8,330 (92.31%)	176 (86.27%)
Disability	1,640 (14.8%)	79 (21.41%)	77 (15.10%)	65 (13.74%)	135 (21.26%)	1,239 (13.93%)	43 (21.83%)
No disability	9,450 (85.20%)	290 (78.59%)	433 (84.90%)	408 (86.26%)	500 (78.74%)	7,656 (86.07%)	154 (78.17%)
Age	15.88 (1.20)	15.79 (1.17)	15.79 (1.19)	15.73 (1.24)	15.67 (1.19)	15.92 (1.20)	15.77 (1.16)
Suicidal ideation	0.24 (0.58)	0.25 (0.62)	0.28 (0.62)	0.24 (0.58)	0.30 (0.67)	0.23 (0.57)	0.30 (0.69)
Peer victimization	0.30 (0.53)	0.26 (0.54)	0.25 (0.46)	0.22 (0.45)	0.33 (0.57)	0.30 (0.54)	0.29 (0.48)
School connectedness	2.10 (0.57)	1.98 (0.59)	2.00 (0.62)	2.09 (0.53)	1.99 (0.60)	2.09 (0.56)	1.95 (0.64)

2005). The factor structures of the various items/measures in the DCYS have been confirmed by past researchers through factor analyses (see Koenig et al., 2005; Dane County Youth Commission, 2015, for more information).

After receiving Institutional Review Board's approval, a formal letter explaining the study and a waiver of active parental consent allowing parents to withdraw their child from the study were sent home. High school students, whose parents did not withdraw them from the study, were at school the day of administration, and who provided written assent, independently completed anonymous questionnaires via Survey Monkey. The response rate ranged from 90% to 95%.

Measures

Suicidal ideation. Students were asked to rate an item addressing suicidal ideation. This item asked, "During the past 12 months, have you thought seriously about killing yourself?" Participants were given a 4-point scale response set: "No" (0), "Yes, but rarely" (1), "Yes, some of the time" (2), or "Yes, almost all of the time" (3). Higher self-reported scores indicate more suicidal ideation.

Disability. A combined variable was created based on student responses to: "Do you have a learning, emotional or physical disability that limits you from doing certain educational or physical activities?" and "Do you currently receive special education support or have an IEP?" There was not a specific 504-question in the existing data; however, individuals could have selected "yes" to the question if they had a 504-plan or an IEP as both constitute receiving special education support. To include individuals who have a disability but who may not receive any type of support, this is captured in the second wording of the question. That said, the combination of responses to these questions captures a more accurate representation of all disabled students from this sample which includes students with an IEP or 504-plan and students who self-report having a disability with no plan in place. Response options included "yes" (1), "no" (0), or "don't know" (0). If a

student responded "yes" to one of the questions and "no" or "don't know" to the other, they were still counted as a "yes." If a student answered "yes" to both, they were only included once in the created disability combined variable. We considered the responses of students who reported "not sure" to be in the "no disability" subpopulation.

Sexual orientation. Students were asked to provide their sexual orientation by selecting all that apply: straight/heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, or questioning. Response options included "yes" (1) and "no" (0).

Peer victimization. The four-item *University of Illinois Victimization Scale* was used to assess peer victimization (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Students were asked how often the following happened to them in the past 30 days: "Other students called me names"; "Other students made fun of me"; "Other students picked on me"; and "I got hit and pushed by other students." Response options were "Never" (0), "1 or 2 times" (1), "3 or 4 times," (2), or "5 or more times"(3). Items were summed and higher self-reported scores indicate more victimization. This scale is reported to have good construct validity as well as internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .85 (Espelage & Holt, 2001). The construct validity of this scale has been supported by exploratory and confirmatory analyses (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Scores have converged with peer nominations of victimization (Espelage & Holt, 2001).

School connectedness. Students completed a six-item scale of school connectedness (Koenig, et al., 2005). Students were asked to show strongly they agree or disagree with the following: "The rules and expectations are clearly explained"; "I feel close to people in my school"; "I feel safe at my school"; "Teachers and other adults treat students fairly"; "There are adults I can talk to at school if I have a problem"; and "I feel like I belong at this school." Response options were as follows: "Strongly disagree" (0), "Disagree," (1), "Agree," (2) or "Strongly agree" (3). Items were summed and showed good internal consistency, with

Table 2. Odds Ratios of Independent Variables Predicting Suicidal Ideation by Race.

Parameters	Black	Latino/a	Asian	Mixed	White	Other
Intercept	10.56***	9.51***	12.58***	11.69***	11.38***	25.61***
Age	1.04	1.00	1.01	1.04	1.05	1.30
Sex	2.00*	2.37***	2.69***	2.10**	1.73***	4.58**
LGBQ	2.17	6.81***	4.84***	4.47***	4.64***	2.26
Disability	2.05	5.84***	4.88***	4.37***	2.63***	2.26
Sex × disability	1.72	0.55	0.45	0.87	1.69***	0.58
LGBQ × disability	2.35	0.34	0.09*	0.54	0.72	2.84

Note. Sex (reference = male); disability (reference = no disability); LGBQ (reference = not LGBQ). Age is centered at grand mean.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .86. Higher scores indicated more school connectedness.

Demographics. Students were asked to provide information regarding their gender (male is the reference group), grade level, race, and age.

Analysis Plan

To examine suicidal ideation, peer victimization, and school climate by race, we fit three separate regression models using the groups analysis command in Mplus 7.4. This approach allowed us to examine each of the predictors on the three outcomes by racial category all in a model-based approach without the need to run each model in separate analyses by race. We examined the interaction between disability and sex, and disability and LGBQ status, to understand the extent to which disability status moderated the association between sex and LGBQ status on suicidal ideation, peer victimization, and school climate. We used Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) to address the minimal missing data. All models were run using the robust maximum likelihood estimator to adjust for any non-normality in the data.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 for each race. Of the total sample ($N = 11,353$), the majority of participants were White ($n = 9,060$), followed by Mixed Race ($n = 657$), Latino/a ($n = 541$), Asian ($n = 485$), Black ($n = 405$), and Other ($n = 205$). Sex was distributed evenly across all races except for Black which had slightly more males (56%) than females (44%). LGBQ status for the entire sample was 8.25%; however, within race categories, the percent ranged from 7.69% for White students to 12.79% for Mixed Race students. Disability status for the entire sample was 14.8%; however, within race categories, it was lowest for White (13.93%), Asian (13.74%), and

Latino/a (15.10%) students, and higher for Black (21.41%), Mixed (21.26%), and Other (21.83%) students. The average age for the sample was 15.88 years and ranged from 15.67 to 15.92 years across race categories; 17% of the sample reported experiencing suicidal ideation compared with 83% that indicated no suicidal ideation. Similarly, the average peer victimization for the sample was 0.30 and ranged from 0.22 to 0.33, and average school connectedness was 2.10 and ranged from 1.95 to 2.09.

Suicidal Ideation

Odds ratios for each independent variable predicting suicidal ideation by race category are presented in Table 2.

Black. For Black students, age ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .768$), LGBQ status ($b = 0.78$, $SE = 0.50$, $p = .123$), and disability status ($b = 0.72$, $SE = 0.46$, $p = .119$) were not significant predictors of suicidal ideation. However, sex ($b = 0.69$, $SE = 0.36$, $p = .057$) was significantly associated with suicidal ideation such that Black females had 2 times the odds of reporting suicidal ideation compared with their male counterparts. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = 0.054$, $SE = 0.66$, $p = .415$) and LGBQ ($b = 0.85$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .768$) status on suicidal ideation were not significant. The model explained approximately 13% ($R^2 = .128$) of variance in suicidal ideation.

Latino/a. For Latino/a students, sex ($b = 0.86$, $SE = 0.28$, $p = .002$), LGBQ status ($b = 1.92$, $SE = 0.42$, $p < .001$), and disability status ($b = 1.77$, $SE = 0.44$, $p < .001$) were all significant predictors of suicidal ideation. More specifically, females had 2.37 times the odds, LGBQ identified youth had 6.81 times the odds, and individuals with a disability had 5.84 times the odds of suicidal ideation compared with their counterparts. Age ($b = -0.05$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .641$) was not a significant predictor of suicidal ideation. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association between sex ($b = -0.61$, $SE = 0.57$, $p = .286$) and LGBQ status ($b = -1.08$, $SE =$
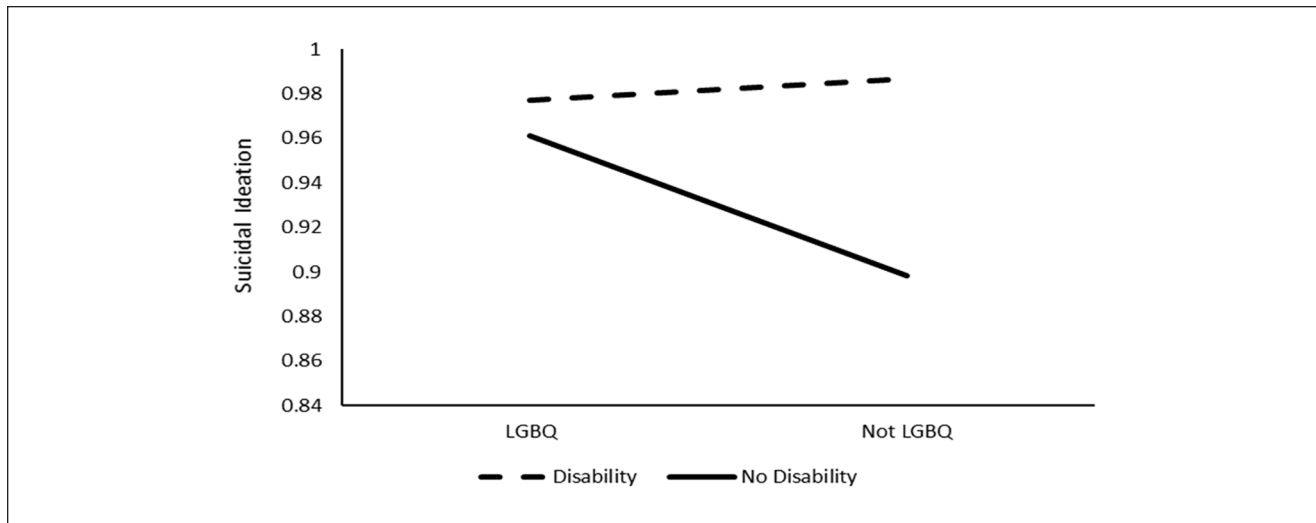
Figure 1. Probability of disability and LGBQ on suicidal ideation for Asian students.
Note. Simple slopes for disability ($b = -1.10$, $SE = 1.08$, $p = .307$) was not significant; however, no-disability was significant ($b = 0.50$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$). SE = standard error.

0.71, $p = .127$) on suicidal ideation were not significant. The model explained approximately 17% ($R^2 = .165$) of variance in suicidal ideation.

Asian. For Asian students, sex ($b = 0.99$, $SE = 0.30$, $p < .001$), LGBQ status ($b = 1.58$, $SE = 0.35$, $p < .001$), and disability status ($b = 1.59$, $SE = 0.46$, $p < .001$) were all significant predictors of suicidal ideation. More specifically, females had 2.69 times the odds, LGBQ identified youth had 4.84 times the odds, and individuals with a disability had 4.88 times the odds of suicidal ideation compared with their counterparts. Age ($b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .904$) was not a significant predictor of suicidal ideation. The interaction that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association between sex ($b = -0.81$, $SE = 0.64$, $p = .210$) on suicidal ideation was not significant; however, the interaction between LGBQ status and disability ($b = -2.43$, $SE = 1.22$, $p = .046$) was significant. Figure 1 shows individuals with disabilities have higher rates of suicidal ideation whether they identify as LGBQ or not. Individuals who do not have a disability but identify as LGBQ have similar rates of suicidal ideation, and individuals without a disability and who do not identify as LGBQ have the lowest probabilities of suicidal ideation. Tests of simple slopes showed that disability ($b = 1.10$, $SE = 1.08$, $p = .307$) was not significant, but no disability ($b = 0.50$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$) was significant. The model explained approximately 15% ($R^2 = .149$) of variance in suicidal ideation.

Mixed race. For Mixed Race students, sex ($b = 0.74$, $SE = 0.27$, $p = .006$), LGBQ status ($b = 1.50$, $SE = 0.32$, $p < .001$), and disability status ($b = 1.47$, $SE = 0.37$, $p < .001$)

were all significant predictors of suicidal ideation. More specifically, females had 2.10 times the odds, LGBQ identified youth had 4.47 times the odds, and individuals with a disability had 4.37 times the odds of suicidal ideation compared with their counterparts. Age ($b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .707$) was not a significant predictor of suicidal ideation. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association between sex ($b = -0.14$, $SE = 0.47$, $p = .774$) and LGBQ status ($b = -0.62$, $SE = 0.54$, $p = .247$) on suicidal ideation were not significant. The model explained approximately 16% ($R^2 = .159$) of variance in suicidal ideation.

White. For White students, sex ($b = 0.55$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$), LGBQ status ($b = 1.54$, $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$), and disability status ($b = 0.97$, $SE = 0.12$, $p < .001$) were all significant predictors of suicidal ideation. Specifically, females had 1.73 times the odds, LGBQ identified youth had 4.64 times the odds, and individuals with a disability had 2.63 times the odds of suicidal ideation compared with their counterparts. Age ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .076$) was not a significant predictor of suicidal ideation. The interaction that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association between LGBQ status ($b = -0.33$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = .086$) on suicidal ideation was not significant; however, the interaction between sex and disability ($b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .001$) was significant. (More details are in Supplemental Figure 1.) The model explained approximately 14% ($R^2 = .136$) of variance in suicidal ideation.

Other race. For students with Other races, age ($b = 0.26$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .124$), LGBQ status ($b = 0.82$, $SE = 0.69$,

Table 3. Estimates and Standard Errors of Independent Variables Predicting Peer Victimization by Race.

Parameters	Black	Latino/a	Asian	Mixed	White	Other
Intercept	0.31*** (.06)	0.24*** (.04)	0.28*** (.04)	0.41*** (.05)	0.34*** (.01)	0.23*** (.08)
Age	−0.03 (.02)	−0.02 (.02)	−0.03* (.02)	−0.07*** (.02)	−0.02*** (.01)	0.00 (.03)
Sex	−0.61 (.07)	0.02 (.04)	−0.09* (.04)	−0.05 (.05)	−0.07*** (.01)	0.02 (.08)
LGBQ	0.12 (.12)	0.05 (.09)	0.16* (.07)	0.21** (.08)	0.14*** (.03)	0.16 (.14)
Disability	0.03 (.09)	0.37*** (.09)	0.06 (.08)	0.18* (.08)	0.13*** (.03)	0.25 (.14)
Sex × disability	0.24 (.15)	−0.19 (.12)	0.15 (.12)	0.02 (.12)	0.13*** (.03)	−0.29 (.17)
LGBQ × disability	−0.08 (.26)	0.05 (.16)	0.52** (.19)	−0.01 (.15)	0.10* (.05)	−0.03 (.21)

Note. Sex (reference = male); disability (reference = no disability); LGBQ (reference = not LGBQ). Age is centered at grand mean.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

p = .237), and disability status (b = 0.82, SE = 0.69, p = .374) were not significant predictors of suicidal ideation. However, sex (b = 1.52, SE = 0.55, p = .005) was significantly associated with suicidal ideation such that females had 4.58 times the odds of reporting suicidal ideation compared with their male counterparts. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female (b = −0.54, SE = 0.98, p = .579) and LGBQ (b = 1.04, SE = 1.04, p = .317) status on suicidal ideation were not significant. The model explained approximately 20% (R^2 = .203) of variance in suicidal ideation.

Peer Victimization

Estimates for each independent variable predicting peer victimization by race category are presented in Table 3.

Black. For Black students, age (b = 0.03, SE = 0.24, p = .220), sex (b = −0.06, SE = 0.07, p = .710), LGBQ status (b = 0.12, SE = 0.12, p = .326), and disability status (b = 0.03, SE = 0.09, p = .710) were not significant predictors of peer victimization. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female (b = 0.24, SE = 0.15, p = .103) and LGBQ status (b = −0.08, SE = 0.26, p = .758) on peer victimization were not significant. The model explained approximately 2% (R^2 = .020) of variance in peer victimization.

Latino/a. For Latino/a students, age (b = −0.02, SE = 0.02, p = .324), sex (b = 0.02, SE = 0.04, p = .600), and LGBQ status (b = 0.05, SE = 0.09, p = .621) were not significant predictors of peer victimization. However, disability status (b = 0.37, SE = 0.09, p < .001) was a significant predictor of peer victimization. That is, individuals with a disability on average reported 0.37 times higher rates of peer victimization than individuals without a disability. This corresponded to a standardized effect of .28. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female (b = −0.19, SE = 0.12, p = .114) and LGBQ (b = 0.05, SE = 0.16, p = .771) status on peer victimization were not significant. The model explained

approximately 5% (R^2 = .052) of variance in peer victimization.

Asian. For Asian students, age (b = −0.03, SE = 0.02, p = .043), sex (b = −0.09, SE = 0.04, p = .040), and LGBQ status (b = 0.16, SE = 0.07, p = .025) were significant predictors of peer victimization. More specifically, a 1-year increase in age was associated with a 0.09 standard deviation decrease in peer victimization. Females reported a 0.10 standard deviation decrease in peer victimization compared with males, and LGBQ identified youth reported 0.10 standard deviation increase in peer victimization compared with non-LGBQ identified youth. Disability status (b = 0.06, SE = 0.08, p = .461) was not a significant predictor of peer victimization. The interaction that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association between sex (b = 0.15, SE = 0.12, p = .203) on peer victimization was not significant; however, the interaction between LGBQ status and disability (b = 0.52, SE = 0.19, p = .006) was significant. Figure 2 depicts the predicted rates of peer victimization; individuals who identify as LGBQ have higher rates of peer victimization. However, when you consider the effects of disability, individuals who identify as LGBQ and have a disability have the highest rates of peer victimization. Interestingly, individuals who do not identify as LGBQ and do not have a disability have similar levels of peer victimization to individuals who do not identify as LGBQ but have a disability. Tests of simple slopes showed that disability (b = 0.63, SE = 0.19, p < .001) and no disability (b = 0.11, SE = 0.01, p < .001) status were both significant. The model explained approximately 9% (R^2 = .094) of variance in peer victimization.

Mixed race. For Mixed Race students, age (b = −0.07, SE = 0.02, p < .001), disability (b = 0.18, SE = 0.08, p = .032), and LGBQ status (b = 0.21, SE = 0.08, p = .014) were significant predictors of peer victimization. More specifically, a 1-year increase in age was associated with a 0.15 standard deviation decrease in peer victimization. Individuals with a disability reported a 0.11 standard deviation increase in peer victimization compared with males, and
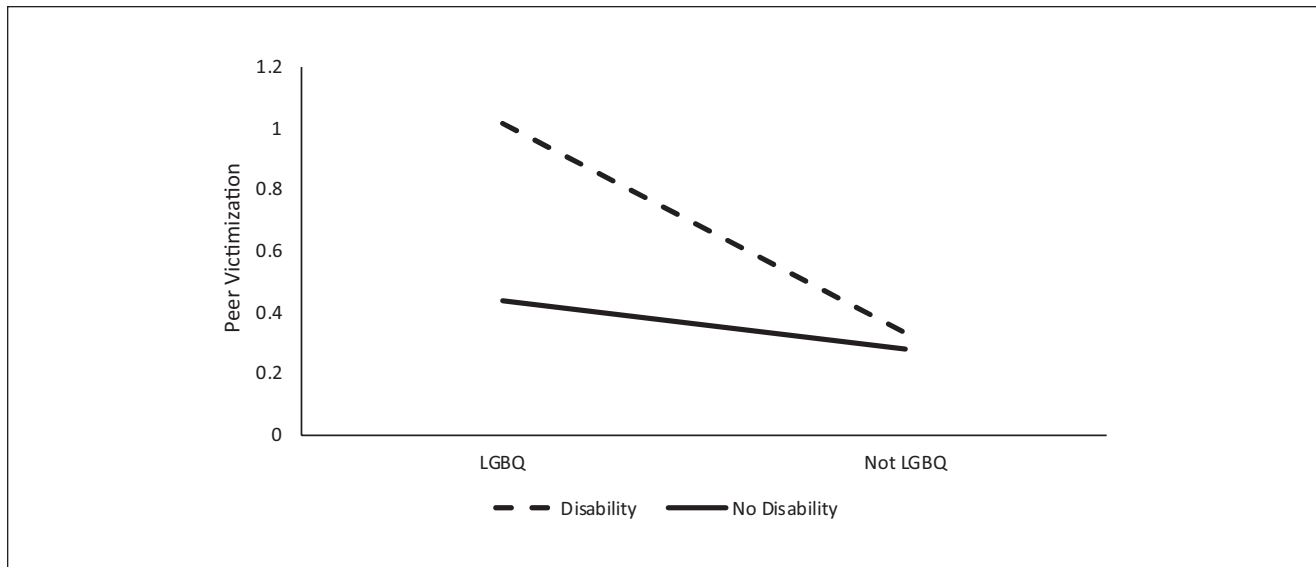
Figure 2. Effect of disability and LGBQ on peer victimization for Asian students.
Note. Simple slopes for disability ($b = 0.63$, $SE = 0.19$, $p < .001$) and no disability ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$) were both significant. SE = standard error.

LGBQ identified youth reported 0.10 standard deviation increase in peer victimization compared with non-LGBQ identified youth. Sex ($b = -0.05$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .283$) was not a significant predictor of peer victimization. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .891$) and LGBQ ($b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .949$) status on peer victimization were not significant. The model explained approximately 5% ($R^2 = .046$) of variance in peer victimization.

White. For White students, age ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$), sex ($b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$), LGBQ status ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$), and disability status ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$) were all significant predictors of peer victimization. More specifically, a 1-year increase in age was associated with a 0.05 standard deviation decrease in peer victimization. Females reported a 0.06 standard deviation decrease in peer victimization compared with males, LGBQ identified youth reported 0.07 standard deviation increase in peer victimization compared with non-LGBQ identified youth, and individuals with a disability reported 0.08 standard deviation increase in peer victimization compared with individuals without a disability. The model explained approximately 4% ($R^2 = .036$) of variance in peer victimization. (Refer to Supplemental Figures 2 and 3 for more details about these predicted rates of peer interaction.)

Other race. For students of Other races, age ($b = 0.00$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .901$), sex ($b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .785$),

LGBQ status ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .251$), and disability status ($b = 0.25$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .061$) were not significant predictors of peer victimization. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = -0.29$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .092$) and LGBQ ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = .902$) status on peer victimization were not significant. The model explained approximately 3% ($R^2 = .030$) of variance.
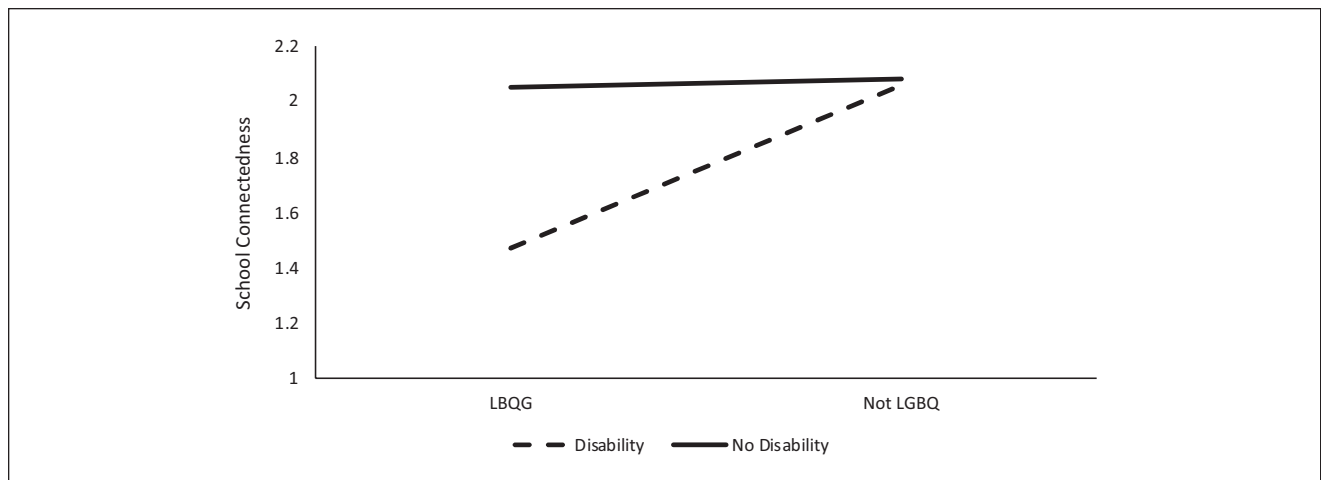
School Connectedness

Estimates for each independent variable predicting school connectedness by race category are presented in Table 4.

Black. For Black students, age ($b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .274$), LGBQ status ($b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = .935$), and disability status ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .720$) were not significant predictors of school connectedness. Sex ($b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$) was a significant predictor of school connectedness. That is, females reported a 0.24 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness compared with their male counterparts. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = -0.08$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .598$) and LGBQ status ($b = -0.24$, $SE = 0.28$, $p = .376$) on school connectedness were not significant. The model explained approximately 7% ($R^2 = .073$) of variance in school connectedness.

Latino/a. For Latino/a students, age ($b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .328$), LGBQ status ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .776$),

Figure 3. Effect of disability and LGBQ on school connectedness for Latino/a students.
Note. Simple slopes for disability ($b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.21$, $p < .01$) and no disability ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$) were both significant. SE = standard error.

Table 4. Estimates and Standard Errors of Independent Variables Predicting School Climate by Race.

Parameters	Black	Latino/a	Asian	Mixed	White	Other
Intercept	2.08*** (.06)	2.08*** (.06)	2.21*** (.05)	2.11*** (.05)	2.19*** (.01)	2.02*** (.10)
Age	0.03 (.03)	0.02 (.02)	−0.01 (.02)	0.03 (.02)	−0.00 (.01)	0.00 (.04)
Sex	−0.28*** (.07)	−0.19** (.06)	−0.11* (.05)	−0.13** (.05)	−0.12*** (.01)	−0.11 (.11)
LGBQ	−0.01 (.13)	−0.03 (.12)	−0.23** (.09)	−0.31*** (.09)	−0.23*** (.03)	−0.19 (.18)
Disability	−0.03 (.09)	−0.03 (.12)	−0.12 (.09)	−0.40*** (.08)	−0.03 (.03)	−0.02 (.18)
Sex × disability	−0.08 (.16)	−0.03 (.16)	−0.01 (.14)	0.04 (.12)	−0.19*** (.04)	0.19 (.23)
LGBQ × disability	−0.24 (.28)	−0.55** (.21)	−0.17 (.22)	0.33* (.15)	0.10* (.05)	−0.15 (.28)

*Note.* Sex (reference = male); disability (reference = no disability); LGBQ (reference = not LGBQ). Age is centered at grand mean.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

and disability status ($b = −0.03$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .829$) were not significant predictors of school connectedness. Sex ($b = −0.19$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .002$) was a significant predictor of school connectedness. That is, females reported a 0.15 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness compared with their male counterparts. The interaction that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = −0.03$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .858$) on school connectedness was not significant. However, the interaction between disability and LGBQ status ($b = −0.55$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = .008$) was significant. Figure 3 depicts the effect of disability and LGBQ on school connectedness for Latino/a students. The plotted interaction shows that individuals without a disability had the highest levels of school connectedness regardless of whether they identify as LGBQ or not. However, individuals who identify as LGBQ and have a disability had the lowest rates of school connectedness. Interestingly, individuals who have a disability but do not identify as LGBQ had similar rates of school connectedness as individuals without a disability. Tests of simple slopes indicated that disability ($b = 0.47$, $SE = 0.21$, $p <$ .01) and no disability ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$) were both significant. The model explained approximately 6% ($R^2 = .057$) of variance.

Asian. For Asian students, age ($b = −0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .600$) and disability status ($b = −0.16$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .219$) were not significant predictors of school connectedness. However, sex ($b = −0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .029$) and LGBQ status ($b = −0.23$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .006$) were both significant predictors of school connectedness. That is, females reported a 0.11 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness compared with their male counterparts. Similarly, individuals who identified as LGBQ reported a 0.12 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness compared with non LGBQ identified youth. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = −0.01$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .952$) and LGBQ status ($b = −0.17$, $SE = 0.22$, $p = .439$) on school connectedness were not significant. The model explained approximately 5% ($R^2 = .049$) of variance in school connectedness.
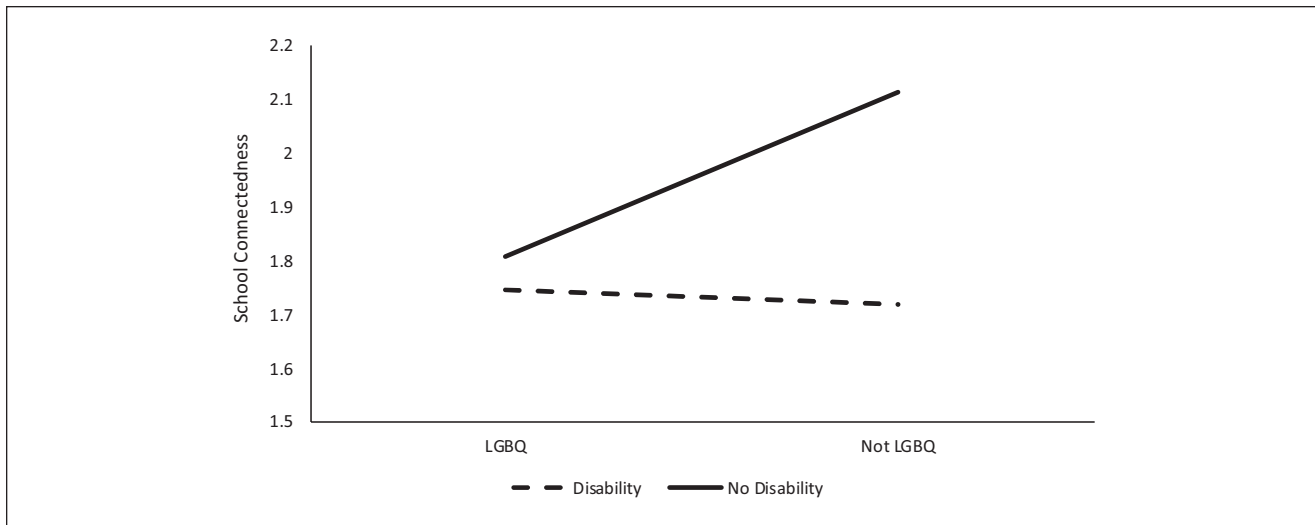
Figure 4. Effect of disability and LGBQ on school connectedness for Mixed Race students.
Note. Simple slopes for disability ($b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .01$) and no disability ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$) were both significant. SE = standard error.

Mixed race. For Mixed Race students, sex ($b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .010$), LGBQ status ($b = -0.31$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < .001$), and disability status ($b = -0.40$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < .001$) were all significant predictors of school connectedness. That is, females reported a 0.11 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness compared with their male counterparts. Similarly, individuals who identified as LGBQ reported a 0.14 standard deviation decrease, and individuals with a disability reported a 0.24 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness. Age ($b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .183$) was not a significant predictor of school connectedness. The interaction that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .761$) on school connectedness was not significant. The interaction between disability and LGBQ status ($b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = .030$) was significant. Figure 4 shows the effect of disability and LGBQ on school connectedness for Mixed Race students; individuals without a disability and who do not identify as LGBQ had the highest levels of school connectedness. Individuals with a disability had the lowest rates of school connectedness than individuals who identify as LGBQ and those who do not identify as LGBQ. Interestingly, individuals who identify as LGBQ but do not have a disability had similar rates of school connectedness as individuals with a disability. Test of simple slopes indicated that disability ($b = 0.45$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .01$) and no disability ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$) were significant. The model explained approximately 7% ($R^2 = .074$) of variance in school connectedness.

White. For White students, sex ($b = -0.12$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$) and LGBQ status ($b = -0.23$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$) were both significant predictors of school connectedness. That is, females reported a 0.10 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness compared with their male counterparts. Similarly, individuals who identified as LGBQ reported a 0.11 standard deviation decrease in school connectedness compared with non LGBQ identified youth. Age ($b = -0.00$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .693$) and disability status ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .245$) were both not significant predictors of school connectedness. The interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = -0.19$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$) and LGBQ status ($b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .042$) on school connectedness were significant. Males had the highest rates of school connectedness regardless of ability status. Females without a disability show slightly lower rates of school connectedness; however, females with a disability showed the lowest rates of school connectedness. Interestingly, males with a disability showed no difference in school connectedness compared with males without a disability. Tests of simple slopes indicated that disability ($b = 0.41$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .01$) and no disability ($b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .05$) were both significant. The model explained approximately 4% ($R^2 = .040$) of variance in school connectedness.

Other race. For students of Other races, age ($b = 0.00$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .961$), sex ($b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = .316$), LGBQ status ($b = -0.19$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .296$), and disability status ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .924$) were not significant predictors of school connectedness. Interactions that examined the extent to which disability exacerbated the association of female ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .398$) and LGBQ status ($b = -0.15$, $SE = 0.28$, $p = .602$) on school

connectedness were not significant. The model explained approximately 2% (R^2 = .019) of variance in school connectedness.

Discussion

To analyze from an intersectional lens, the role of power structures, social inequalities, and/or privilege are paramount. The discussion that follows begins to do this, but as Bowleg and Bauer (2016) indicate, the quantitative intersectional results should also inform the direction of future research from a qualitative and/or mixed-methods paradigm. Findings from this study indicate that race matters. However, the more minoritized statuses one has do not automatically indicate worse outcomes of suicidal ideation and peer victimization, and do not necessarily explain low levels of school connectedness. Though, there are some critical combinations of minoritized statuses. More specifically, Black females in comparison with Black males were twice as likely to report suicidal ideation. However, this did not hold true when disability was considered; meaning, there were no gender-disability differences when considering Black students with and without disability in terms of suicidal ideation. This raises more questions and avenues for future research—what are the protective factors that Black, disabled students have? For example, what about disabled, Black culture (Moore, 2020) is most salient to high schoolers? Also, in alignment with our theoretical framework, when exploring the effects of being Black, disabled, female, and LGBQ, as well as being Mixed Race, disabled, and female, there were no significant associations with suicidal ideation; meaning, we cannot assume that because an individual comes from a multiply marginalized background that they will automatically be worse off. Bowleg and Bauer (2016) advocate for mixed-methods research to further interrogate these nuances.

However, Latino, Asian, and Mixed Race students all had higher degrees of suicidal ideation in comparison with White students, and sex, LGBQ status, and disability were all critical factors. Disabled students who are most at risk for suicidal ideation are those who are (a) Latino, Asian, or Mixed Race; (b) Female (across all races); or (c) LGBQ and Asian. This suggests the importance of ensuring that disabled, LGBQ Asian students' needs are being met by schools. Further research is needed based on this information to gain a deeper understanding about the narratives experienced by students from these groups to understand more about the contextual factors and interlocking aspects of identity that may be contributing. Furthermore, it is important for these students to be on the radar particularly for school counselors and special educators as they appear to be more at risk for suicidal ideation. Likewise, ensuring that Latino, Asian, and Mixed Race disabled students' needs are being met and that concerns raised are taken seriously.

Future research could explore interventions and their efficacy specifically for suicidal ideation and these subsets of students shown to be most at risk. Worth noting, students who are Mixed Race may struggle to develop a strong sense of identity because of being "not enough" of one race or "too much" of another and getting caught in between (Talbot, 2008). Furthermore, it is possible that adults interacting with Mixed Race students ascribe a particular identity for or impose on youth the identity they perceive to be most salient. If there is a misalignment between what that adult, a person in power, in relation to the student feels is most salient, this could cause turmoil for the Mixed Race student. To that end, it is recommended to ensure that there is a concrete safety plan in place for these multiply marginalized disabled students in the event of suicidal ideation being reported.

In relation to peer victimization, disabled students who are LGBQ were at the highest risk which shows alignment with King and colleagues (2018), followed by disabled students who are Asian, Mixed Race, or Latino/a. In particular, disabled Asian girls were at risk for victimization. It is possible that disabled Asian girls are less apt to report victimization outwardly, but more apt to share on the self-report survey. This power dynamic of concern of public shame or loss of face to the adolescents' family may be a contributing factor (Castillo & Phoummarath, 2006; Zhou et al., 2009). There may also be an interplay of the "minority myth model" (Castillo & Phoummarath, 2006), where the adults with whom the students interact with make the assumption that these students are fine and less likely to intervene. This provides information for school counselors and special educators to include steps related to prevention of victimization in students' IEP and/or 504-plan, which is required in numerous states. For example, a student may have a language goal in their IEP to increase self-advocacy skills to be able to say, "stop that" to a bully or to learn social pragmatic skills on when and how to inform an adult when incidents of bullying or victimization are occurring. While many states require goals to address this (Rose, 2018) and a plan in place for the student to report incidents of victimization, these findings highlight the importance of safety plans with clear objectives and action steps for students, parents, and school personnel.

In relation to school connectedness: race matters. More specifically, Black, Asian, Latino, and Mixed Race females had lower levels of school connectedness; however, this was not exacerbated by disability. However, the lowest levels of school connectedness was found among disabled students who also identify as LGBQ, regardless of race. This corroborates findings from King and colleagues (2018). It is also worth noting that LGBQ mixed race and disabled mixed race students had lower levels of school connectedness in comparison with their peers. This implies that providing disabled mixed race students with opportunities to

develop bonds within school such as participation in extra-curricular activities or clubs would be worthwhile.

Limitations

Future research is still needed to further interrogate the effects of specific disability type. One limitation of this study is that we were constrained by the existing wording of the disability-related questions. As noted earlier, it would be beneficial for future research to have a specific 504-question. In addition, the sample was from one county representing 23 districts and therefore may not be generalizable to other high school students in other parts of the country. Furthermore, while the sample size was quite robust for an empirical study of disabled students, this research would be strengthened by a larger and geographically diverse sample of disabled students which could lead to greater generalizability.

Conclusion

The needs of *all* disabled students must be continually considered and measured in studies on student outcomes. For general educators, special educators, and school administrators, the findings suggest that we should be intentional about the needs of disabled students, most specifically those who also identify as LGBQ and those who are Asian, Latino, or Mixed Race students in relation to suicidal ideation and peer victimization.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Note

1. The authors have chosen to use identity-first language (Dunn & Andrews, 2015) to reflect shifts in language use, led by the members of the disability culture who prefer to refer to themselves as disabled. This convention is acceptable via the American Psychological Association (2019) manual.

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