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KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education, Health and Human Services

Doctoral Dissertation Defense for

Leah A. Abel

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Major: School Psychology

June 24, 2020

2:00pm – 4:00pm

DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF  
VICTIMIZATION ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING  
DURING THE TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL: THE  
ROLE OF SCHOOL-BASED FACTORS

Leah A. Abel

B.A., The Ohio State University, 2012

M.Ed., Kent State University, 2013

Leah Abel is a licensed school psychologist in central Ohio. Leah earned her Bachelor of the Arts (B.A.) degree from Ohio State in 2012 and her Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree from Kent State University in 2013. Following the completion of her M.Ed. in School Psychology, Leah began pursuing her doctoral degree.

Leah completed her doctoral internship with Akron Public Schools and served as a psychology assistant at Northeast Ohio Behavioral Health, Ltd. Leah also assisted with a stress, anxiety, and worry group for children at KidsLink Neurobehavioral Center. She completed her coursework, advanced practicum experience, and doctoral internship in July of 2017. Leah began her career as a school psychologist in August of 2017, serving Dublin City Schools. Her role as a school psychologist includes working with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other stake holders to support the evaluation for and provision of specially designed instruction. Her role also includes provision of tiered intervention support for social-emotional and behavioral needs.

Leah's personal school experiences, undergraduate work with the Buckeye Campaign Against Suicide, and opportunities to work with at-risk youth and youth with disabilities in the school and clinical settings all served as inspiration and motivation for addressing bullying victimization.

## Development and Maintenance of Victimization Associated with Bullying During the Transition to Middle School: The Role of School-Based Factors

The purpose of this study was to examine the trajectory of bullying victimization from third through sixth grade; as well as the role that school-based factors play in predicting victimization in grade six. This study utilized data collected as a part of The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD). A generalized linear mixed model was run to determine if grade could be considered a predictor for victimization. Further, a non-parametric test (McNemar's test) was completed to compare the proportion of victimization in grades five and six. Results suggest that the role of victim was not stable over time (i.e., from grade three to grade six); and that there was not a significant increase in victimization in the transition to sixth grade as predicted.

A binary logistic regression examined the predictive role of school-based factors on victimization during sixth grade. Results suggest the importance of teacher-focused factors in predicting victimization in sixth grade. Findings suggest that student-teacher relationships serve as a protective factor against bullying victimization in grade six. Further, the protective relationship is enhanced when also considering increased teacher self-efficacy related to creating a positive climate. Findings have significant implications for future research and for the implementation of strategies to improve student-teacher relationships and school climate.