



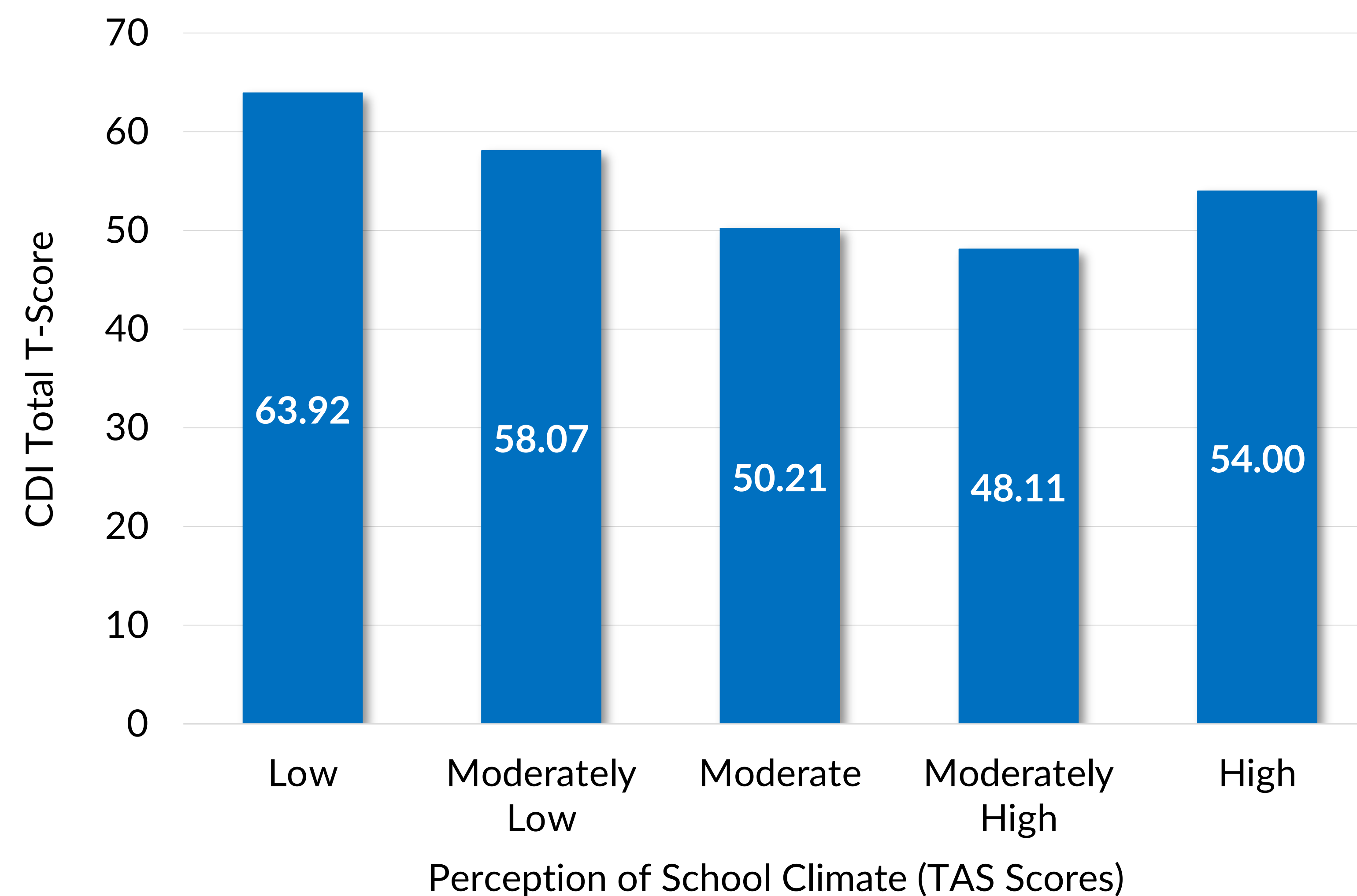
# The Healthy Context Paradox for Targets of Bullying

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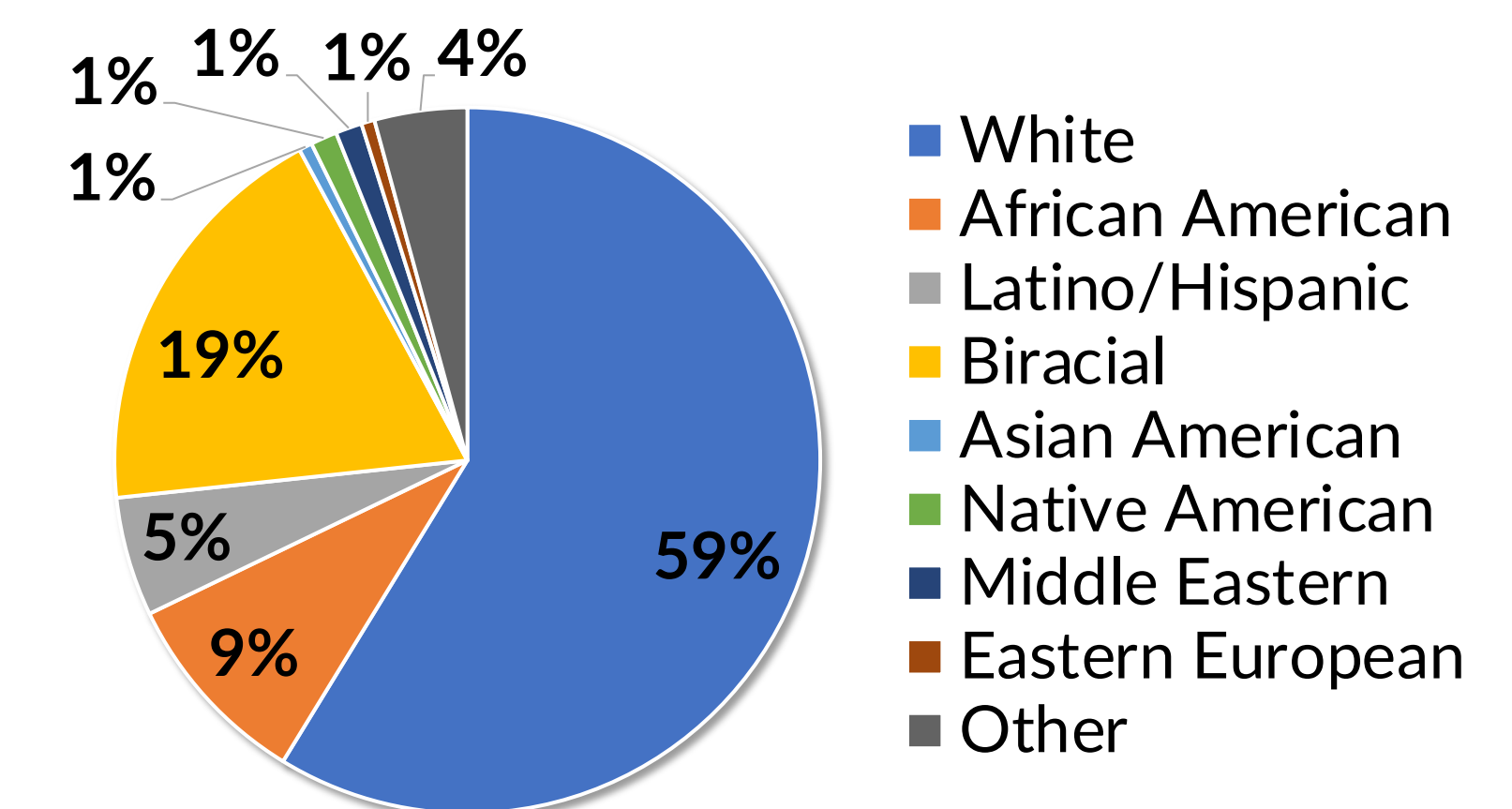
## MAIN FINDINGS

Students who had **low** perceptions of their school climate reported the **highest level of depressive symptomology**.

Depressive symptoms decreased as school climate increased; however, **students who had the highest perception of their school climate reported similar levels of depressive symptoms compared to those with the lowest perception of school climate**.



**Figure 1.** Total T-scores on the CDI differed across levels of school climate,  $H(4) = 18.98, p = .001$ . Students who had a low perception of school climate had higher mean T-scores on the CDI ( $M = 63.92, SD = 13.53$ ) compared to students who had moderate ( $M = 50.21, SD = 9.17$ ) or moderately high ( $M = 48.11, SD = 13.95$ ) perceptions of school climate ( $p = .006, p = .015$ , respectively). There was no difference in mean CDI T-scores between students who endorsed low ( $M = 63.92, SD = 13.53$ ) and high ( $M = 54.00, SD = 2.83$ ) perceptions of school climate,  $p > .05$ .



**Figure 2.** Self-reported race of participants.

## INTRODUCTION

- Targets of bullying are at an increased risk for experiencing adverse psychosocial outcomes (i.e., internalizing problems).
- Positive school climate has been associated with better outcomes for targets of bullying.
- Healthy context paradox: students who experience victimization despite positive school environments may experience more adverse psychosocial outcomes (Garandean et al., 2016; Huitsing et al., 2019).
- Current study: How are perceptions of school climate related to depressive symptomology for targets of bullying?

## METHODS

- Participants were referred to a Tier-III cognitive-behavioral intervention for bullying involvement between 2005 and 2019.
- Those who experienced bullying victimization were included in analyses ( $n = 154$ ;  $M_{age} = 11.44$ ; 56.9% male).
- School climate: *Thoughts About School* questionnaire (TAS; Song & Swearer, 1999;  $\alpha = .76$ ).
- Depression symptoms: *Children's Depression Inventory* (CDI; Kovacs, 1992;  $\alpha = .86$ ).

## RESULTS

- As perceptions of school climate increased, depressive symptoms decreased,  $r(152) = -.33, p < .001$ .
- Total T-scores on the CDI differed across levels of school climate,  $H(4) = 18.98, p = .001$  (see Figure 1).

- A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine depressive symptoms across levels of school climate perceptions. Levene's test was significant,  $F(4, 149) = 3.26, p = .013$ ; therefore, a Kruskal-Wallis analysis was conducted.

## DISCUSSION

- These findings are consistent with the healthy context paradox (Huitsing et al., 2019).
- Students who experience victimization in schools with positive climates may experience more detrimental effects due to dissonance between their personal experiences contrasted with their school environment.
- These findings highlight the importance of understanding the interaction between individual and environmental factors when addressing bullying.
- They also underscore the need for continued support and intervention for youth who experience bullying victimization, even in schools with positive and supportive climates.