Adolescents’ Interpretations of Bullying

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Abstract

Incidents of bullying have been making news headlines recently, from teenagers committing suicide because of cyberbullying to twelve-year-olds harassing their bus monitor. Bullying has been the focus of much attention in middle schools and high schools. There have been many bullying prevention programs implemented nationwide in the past twenty years. Many models have been produced following the first, which was implemented in Norway in 1983 (Ttofi & Farrington, 2010). However, due to the fact that cyberbullying did not exist 20 years ago, many of these prevention programs have not evolved to combat current problems. This research project sought to understand the prevalence and perception of bullying events in middle and high school students. This study is a between-subjects design. Students were asked to rate the severity of various bullying scenarios (featuring verbal, physical, cyberbullying, or no bullying). Results indicate that physical bullying is interpreted as the most severe form of bullying. The results also suggest education does not have an effect on participants’ incidences of reporting being a bully or a victim. Further, the results did not suggest that the sex of the bully or victim has an affect on participants’ interpretations of severity.
Adolescents’ Interpretations of Bullying

Bullying has become a major issue in the fields of education, psychology, and sociology, and researchers are becoming interested in what causes adolescent bullies to act in harmful ways. Bullying is defined as the repeated use of negative acts of aggression toward one’s peers (Pelligrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999). Acts of bullying can come in multiple forms, including physical, verbal, and cyber. Traditional bullying is defined as repeated physically or verbally aggressive acts. Cyberbullying, also known as electronic bullying, is a form of bullying transmitted through email, instant messaging, and social media websites. Studies show that nearly 97% of adolescents use the internet on a regular basis, which has contributed to the rising numbers of cyberbullies and victims (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Cyberbullies have ample opportunities to engage in harmful activities, as technology and the internet are large parts of adolescents’ daily lives, and students often use technology for social and entertainment purposes rather than educational (Gualdo et al., 2014). Thus, it is expected that cyberbullying will continue to be an avenue by which adolescents are bullied, and there are no clear mechanisms by which cyberbullying may be curbed. It is important to understand the risk factors, the perception, and the prevalence of all forms of bullying in order to design and implement effective preventative and intervention mechanisms.

There are many factors that likely contribute to adolescent bullying. For example, Bibou-Nakou, Tsiantis, Assimopoulos, Chatzilambou, & Giannakopoulou (2012) found that students who were involved in bullying situations generally felt more comfortable at home than in the school environment. These same students had trouble communicating with their peers in the school environment. Bibou-Nakou et al. (2012) found that this type of social insecurity both
contributed to the adolescents’ roles as the school bullies, who partook in social exclusion and traditional bullying, as well as the roles of the victims. Suffering from bullying led to depression and anxiety in some students. Further, new forms of bullying, such as cyberbullying, have made it more difficult for victims to escape their tormentors, even when they escape to their home environment (Erentaite, Bergman, & Zukauskiene, 2012).

Another factor contributing to the prevalence of bullying is whether or not victims received help. If a student does not receive help from bystanders or from teachers in a bullying situation, it can escalate the negative feelings and sense of alienation. One study had 682 adolescents ($M_{\text{age}} = 13.02$) watch videos of various bullying situations (Tamm & Tulviste, 2015). The participants were then asked to report whether or not they would help the victim in each video simulation. Ten percent of these participants reported that they would not help the victim. Other findings suggest that, though most participants were willing to help, they did not know the proper ways to intervene (Tamm & Tulviste, 2015). Furthermore, the psychological phenomenon of Bystander Apathy suggests that even if people report they would help, in the moment of an opportunity to do so, many people will fail to intervene.

Previous studies suggest that adolescents’ willingness to intervene depends on the social situation (Tamm & Tulviste, 2015). In a series of video vignettes, the researchers presented a phenomenon that is surprisingly common in bullying situations—a non-reactive adult bystander. Often, adults do not intervene in bullying situations, though participants report expecting adults to intervene more often than other students. The video showed a common situation in the participants’ environment: two boys bullied another boy, with a female teacher standing by talking on the phone and not intervening. There was a gender difference in the reported willingness to help; female participants were 2.89 times more likely to report willingness to help.
the victim than male participants. The participants reported their own tendencies to help, rather than mimicking the actions of the adult in the video. The young women were more likely to intervene even when the adult in the video failed to model intervention behavior. The inability of the adults to act adds to the inability of adolescents to pinpoint the next step in intervention, as they often look to adults to set an example (Tamm & Tulviste, 2015). When students do intervene, however, they tend to use more pro-social interceptions toward the bully than aggressive. An example of a pro-social intervention would be opening a dialogue or finding some common ground with the bully.

Two important reasons that cyberbullying distinguishes itself from traditional forms are because cyberbullying is more difficult to escape and there are fewer opportunities for bystander intervention. The most common forms of electronic bullying are email, instant messaging, or chat rooms. In a study with 3,767 middle school participants, 11% of those who took a questionnaire about bullying were victims of cyberbullying, 7% were bully-victims, and 4% were bullies. Over half of the victims of cyberbullying did not know who harassed them (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Because cyberbullies often remain anonymous, it is difficult for school administrators or parents to identify the bully and put an end to the situation, leaving the victim without help.

Another study, in which Lithuanian adolescents filled out questionnaires about their experiences with bullying, found that victims of traditional bullying were more likely to become victims of cyberbullying (Erentaite et al., 2012). The most widespread form of cyberbullying among these participants was short electronic messages. Although this study revealed a lot about victims of bullying, it did not measure rates of bullying or bully-victims in the sample (Erentaite et al., 2012). In contrast, Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib, & Notter (2011) found that traditional bullying
was more prevalent in schools than cyberbullying. Results from the study, which examined 1,774 adolescent participants from New Zealand, suggested that adolescents were more likely to remain victims of traditional bullying than cyberbullying. This study also found that victims of traditional bullying were more likely to become bullies themselves compared to victims of cyberbullying (Jose et al., 2011). Similarly, a study conducted by Gualdo, Hunter, Durkin, Arnaiz, and Maquilon (2014) also found that traditional bullying was more prevalent than cyberbullying in a group of 1,353 Spanish adolescents—12% compared to the 8% that were victims of cyberbullying. The questionnaire that the participants received inquired about their use of technology, involvement in both traditional and cyberbullying, and emotional reactions to their experiences with bullying.

The Gualdo et al. (2014) study mentioned above is especially interesting because, unlike the other studies, the researchers questioned bullies about the impact that the bullies believed their actions had on their victims. The bullies reported believing that their victims experienced more negative consequences than the victims reported experiencing. Likewise, the types of negative emotions associated with cyberbullying victims differed from the bullies’ guesses. While bullies guessed emotions such as “scared” and “offended,” the victims reported feeling “rejected” and “sad.” Participants who were girl victims reported feeling “sad” more than the boy victims (Gualdo et al., 2014). This study speaks to the wider social implications that occur when one is involved in a bullying situation. Victims often do not have strong social support, so rather than feeling afraid, they feel isolated and hurt. This also relates to the conclusions drawn from Bibou-Nakou et al. (2012): those involved in bullying situations are often socially uncomfortable in the school environment.
One current theme prevalent in the research is that cyberbullies have the opportunity to remain anonymous. This contributes to the fact that most students do not view cyberbullying as severe as traditional forms of bullying; with cyberbullying, there is no immediate feedback for the bullies. The anonymity also contributes to the difficulty of escaping cyberbullies, and therefore the research has shown that cyberbullies are difficult to identify and stop (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Another factor that influences reports of cyberbullying is the age at which students experience and/or engage in cyberbullying compared to physical bullying. Reports of engaging in bullying activity have higher frequencies in the middle school population than in high school population (Malecki, Damaray, Coyle, Goesling, Rueger, & Becker, 2014). When students are younger, they do not know how to verbalize their anger or how to use language to hurt others. Because of this, younger students engage in physical violence rather than verbal or cyber aggression (Bartlett & Coyne, 2014). A study by Bartlett and Coyne (2014) analyzed various research publications dealing with traditional and electronic bullying. From their meta-analysis, the researchers found that boys are more likely to engage in and experience cyberbullying in late adolescence to early adulthood, whereas girls were more likely to engage in cyberbullying at a younger age, during early adolescence. This could be due to societal influences that socialize boys to engage in more physical violence to assert masculinity and girls being socialized to relate to others emotionally.

Malecki et al. (2014) found that there was no significant difference between genders when it came to the frequency of experiencing bullying. However, the researchers did find a significant difference between the way boy and girl participants’ interpretations of the bullies’ intent. Girls reported that the bully was being “intentionally mean” significantly more than boys.
The researchers posit that these interpretations of bullying can increase victims’ chances of developing disorders such as anxiety and depression. The researchers state that most bullying studies have used broad definitions of bullying and do not analyze aspects such as frequency, intent, and power difference; the broad definitions do not pinpoint specific characteristics of bullying that can lead to mental and emotional stressors and disorders (Malecki et al., 2014). The development of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and violent outbursts are the outcomes that allow bullying occurrences to monopolize media headlines.

Suffering from bullying can lead to the development of disorders such as anxiety and depression among children and adolescents. Being a victim of bullying has been known to increase feelings of internal distress, which can in turn affect a child’s ability to learn and be successful in and out of school (Malecki et al., 2014). Experiencing bullying also affects how a student relates with his or her peers. Victims of bullying tend to be less involved in the school setting, reporting lower levels of school connectedness (Malecki et al., 2014). Thus, the victims of bullying receive less social support, which, along with being bullied, heightens feelings of inferiority and alienation.

Malecki et al. (2014) examined the effects of bullying by measuring the factors of frequency, intentionality, and power difference. Data was collected using a victim questionnaire, where students were asked to report the frequency with which they experienced various bullying situations. From this data, the researchers analyzed the participants’ Total Victimization Frequency Score. To assess intent, researchers asked participants to report what they believed the intent of the bully was; reports that the bully was “just joking” was recorded as 0, and if the bully “meant to be mean,” it was recorded as 1. Power difference was assessed by inquiring about the bully’s social status compared to the victim (Malecki et al., 2014). Bullies with more social
capital within the school environment would have more resources and social support to maintain their status while continuing to torment their victims.

The rise in severity and variation of types of bullying has left schools to wonder how to combat the problem. In many cases, children believe that it is the responsibility of the adults to interfere and discipline the bullies. As seen in past studies, this does not always happen (Tamm & Tulviste, 2015). In close relationships, talking with parents can often help victims cope with suffering from bullying victimization (Ozdemir, 2014). However, children and adolescents rarely share the close, confidential relationship with their parents. Those who lack social or familial support often resort to aggression when confronting bullies. On the other hand, Ozdemir (2014) hypothesized that students who had a close relationship with their parents would be more likely to develop higher self-esteem and in turn would increase the frequency of reporting to adults about bullying situations. Ozdemir (2014) assessed participants’ experiences with cyberbullying using the Revised Cyber Bullying Inventory. Ozdemir (2014) also completed the Rosenberg 10-Item Self Esteem Scale. He found that cyberbully victimization negatively correlated with the self-esteem of the participants. Further, victimized adolescents with strong parent-adolescent communication reported higher levels of self-esteem than those victims without parental support and communication. Adolescents who could confide in their parents tended to be less affected by the cyberbullying they experience (Ozedmir, 2014). This supports the notion that if a student has a trustworthy adult in which to confide, he or she is less likely to develop depression or anxiety and is more likely to have increased self-esteem than victims with no support. Thus, to keep victims of bullying from experiencing high levels of stress, adults in schools and at home should take a proactive approach to supporting bullied students.
To combat bullying within schools, many institutions have attempted to implement anti-bullying programs. Ttofi and Farrington (2010) did a meta-analysis on research conducted in schools with and without anti-bullying programs. The researchers found that anti-bullying programs are effective in reducing instances of bullying and victimization. Bullying decreased by 20-23% and victimization decreased overall by 17-20%. In terms of education, Ttofi and Farrington (2010) found that the most effective anti-bullying programs were evidence-based rather than anecdotally based. These results suggest that it would be beneficial if all schools were required to implement some sort of evidence based anti-bullying educational program.

The current study focused on adolescents’ interpretations of various bullying events. Vignettes depicting different types of bullying or no bullying (neutral condition) were presented to the participants. Questionnaires analyzed participants’ perceptions of those various scenarios, and the results showed which form of bullying is perceived as a more serious form of bullying (cyberbullying vs. traditional bullying). Many studies show that traditional bullying is perceived to be more serious and has more serious consequences than cyberbullying, while also suggesting that cyberbullying needs to be more frequently addressed (e.g. Jose et al., 2011; Erentaite et al., 2012). The primary hypothesis of the current study is that the adolescent participants would rate traditional bullying as a more serious form of bullying than cyberbullying. The secondary hypothesis is that education would affect bullies’ and victims’ willingness to report being involved in bullying situations. The tertiary hypothesis is that students would rate the male bully-female victim situations as the most severe.
Method

Participants

Participants were 163 students from two Ohio schools and one West Virginia school. Participants were 89.6% white, 2.25% Asian, 1.84% Black/African American, 1.84% more than one race, 1.22% Native American, and 1.22% Latino/Hispanic. There were 81 females in the sample and 82 males. Participants were between the ages of 13 and 18 ($M_{age} = 13.98$).

Procedure

This study was designed as a mixed subjects design with within and between subjects variables. The between subjects variable was the vignette dyad that each participant received; the education levels and experience with bullying situations were the within subjects variables. Written situations and questionnaires were distributed to the students enrolled in various classes at three different middle/high schools. Two of the schools had participants from the seventh and eighth grades, whereas the high school in West Virginia had participants from grades ninth through twelfth. In two of the schools, the teachers had written the survey into the lesson plan, and in the third school participants under the age of 18 were required to have their parents or guardians sign an informed consent.

Participants were asked to answer a series of multiple-choice questions, which inquired about their experiences being victims of bullying, perpetrators, support within the schools, and education received. Participants were then asked to read a variety of bullying situations and rated the severity of each bullying situation on a five-point Likert scale. The surveys consisted of four vignettes. There were four versions of the survey: boy bully-boy victim, boy bully-girl victim, girl bully-girl victim, and girl bully-boy victim. Each participant saw one version of the survey. One vignette in each survey was a verbal bullying situation, one was physical, one
cyberbullying, and one neutral situation (control). The scenarios were presented in a randomized fashion. Participants were asked to rank the situations in order from least severe (1) to most severe (4).

Participants filled out a questionnaire adapted from Bauer, Lozano, and Rivara (2007). The survey consisted of questions about experiences with bullying as well as education received about bullying. There was also a space in which participants could elaborate by writing about any specific bullying incidents they had witnessed at their schools.

Materials

Written vignettes were distributed by paper to each participant. The vignettes consisted of various bullying situations: traditional bullying (verbal and physical), cyberbullying, and neutral situations. The participants were also given a questionnaire, adapted from Bauer’s et al. (2007) study, which asked questions about the severity and prevalence of bullying in the participants’ schools. There were also questions about the demographics of the participants.

Following the study, participants were debriefed, shown a video, and given a handout. The video was from Cartoon Network’s Speak Up Speak Out Campaign (Stop Bullying, 2012). The handout was from the Center for Disease Control (Understanding Bullying, 2013).

Results

The primary hypothesis, which stated that students would rate physical bullying as the most serious form, was supported by the data. The physical bullying vignettes had the highest mean severity rating on a Likert scale ($M_{\text{physical}} = 4.54; M_{\text{verbal}} = 2.85; M_{\text{cyber}} = 3.97$), as seen in Figure 1. Using a Chi-Square analysis, it was determined that physical bullying was rated significantly more severe than verbal bullying ($p < .000$) and cyberbullying ($p < .000$).
Using a multivariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), it was determined that the secondary hypothesis, which stated that receiving preventative education would make bullies less likely to report and victims more likely to report, was unsupported by the data. There was no effect on the bullies’ reporting \( (F(1, 163) = .251, p = .617) \), or of the victims’ reporting \( (F(1, 163) = .007, p = .932) \). These results can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.

Using a one-way ANOVA, it was found that the tertiary hypothesis was not supported by the data. The tertiary hypothesis stated that participants would rate the boy bully-girl victim dyad as the most severe type of bullying situation, as seen in Table 2. There were no differences between dyads in the physical bullying vignette \( (F(3, 161) = .262, p = .853) \), verbal vignette \( (F(3, 162) = .491, p = .689) \), or cyberbullying vignette \( (F(3, 162) = .819, p = .485) \).

**Discussion**

The primary hypothesis of this study was that the participants would rate physical bullying as the most severe type of bullying. Physical was rated significantly more serious than verbal bullying \( (p < .000) \) and cyberbullying \( (p < .000) \). The results for the primary hypothesis were consistent with Slonje and Smith (2008) in that participants rated physical bullying as more serious than cyberbullying. Jose et al. (2011) found that students were more likely to witness traditional bullying in schools. Participants in the current study were likely more familiar with traditional forms of bullying, such as verbal and physical, rather than cyberbullying. Because physical bullying is the most outwardly harmful, and because participants are familiar with witnessing it within their schools, they rated it as the most severe.

The secondary hypothesis, which stated that receiving preventative education would affect the bullies’ and victims’ reporting was not supported by the data. This suggests that education does not have a significant effect on participants’ reporting of being involved i
bullying situations as the victim ($p = .932$) or as the bully ($p = .617$). These results are inconsistent with those of Ttofi and Farrington (2010), who found that anti-bullying education was significantly effective at reducing the number of bullying situations within schools.

The results for the tertiary hypothesis, which stated that participants would rate the boy-bully-girl-victim dyad as most severe were not supported by the data ($p_{\text{verbal}} = .689; p_{\text{physical}} = .853; p_{\text{cyber}} = .458$). One explanation for the lack of significance is that the participants did not receive all of the dyads, meaning they could not compare the sex dyads across the vignettes. A way to improve this would be to present the vignettes in a different manner, so that the participants would not have to read sixteen different vignettes in order to achieve a within-subjects design. A way to better present the various situations would be to show the participants videos, as in Tamm and Tulviste’s (2015) study. This may also allow participants to better visualize the severity of each situation.

Four outliers threatened the validity of the current study. These participants failed to follow the instructions and their responses were inconsistent with the means. To combat this threat, these participants’ answers were excluded from the data analysis. Possible improvements to the study would be to further clarify the instructions and for the researcher to offer explanations to the participants in person. A second threat to the internal validity of the study was a demand characteristic. Demand characteristics occur when participants guess the study’s purpose and thus change their behavior. There was no cover story and no filler items for the current study, so the participants knew that the researcher was measuring their perceptions of bullying. Though the surveys were anonymous, participants could have acted in a way that was not completely honest, as they knew that the researcher and the teacher would have access to the data.
The sample surveyed was not generalizable to the general population in terms of race and ethnicity. 89.6% of the participants identified as White/Caucasian. Likewise, two-thirds of the participants were from schools in suburban communities in Eastern Ohio. To make the sample population more generalizable, the researcher could conduct the study in more diverse school districts in a variety of states. Another enhancement that could be added to this study is a pretest and posttest method. Thus, the researcher can analyze participants’ understanding of bullying as a concept before and after the lesson. Including a “before measure” could illuminate what students know about bullying and whether their perceptions of bullying change at the posttest measure.

Further, some of the participants in the current study had learning disabilities and may have had more challenges understanding the vignettes. The researcher did not eliminate these participants’ responses, as it was not known that they had disabilities and all surveys were anonymous. To combat this in the future, the researcher will seek out a sample population that has developmental and learning maturity levels that are consistent with the degree of difficulty of the measure.

Future research should examine bullying phenomena in participants of different ages. The researcher should work to gather participants from fifth through twelfth grade. An original objective of this research was to examine age-related changes in perceptions of bullying. A longitudinal study would be the most effective method to measure these changes, but even a cross-sectional study would better illuminate age effects on perceptions of bullying across students of different ages. The researcher predicted that perceptions of cyberbullying would change across ages, such that older students would perceive cyberbullying as more severe than younger students. This hypothesis would further the implications of Bartlett and Coyne’s (2014)
study, which found that older students may have more access to technology than younger students, thus providing more opportunities to engage in or become the victims of cyberbullying. Likewise, more equal age groups would allow the researcher to analyze how adolescents’ interpretations of all forms bullying differ from grade to grade.

The researcher questioned participants on their additional thoughts or experiences of bullying, so that the researcher could better understand the emotional effects and culture within the different schools. This open-ended question served to provide some context to the participants’ responses to the multiple-choice questions and vignette ratings. Future research should include more open-ended questions, leading to a qualitative variable that can be analyzed in the results.

In conclusion, the results of the study supported the hypothesis that adolescents interpret physical forms of bullying as more serious than both verbal bullying and cyberbullying. The results did not support the secondary or tertiary hypotheses. Future research on adolescents’ interpretations of bullying should expand to more diverse populations and more age groups, thus relating more to the general population. Improving this study could help researchers further understand the experience and long term effects of bullying on adolescents’ mental and emotional health.
References


Understanding Bullying. (2013). *Center for Disease Control*. 
Table 1

*Differences in Vignette Ratings on a Likert Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignette Type</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical vs. Verbal</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical vs. Cyber</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical vs. Neutral</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Results based on Chi-Square analysis
Table 2

*Differences in Vignette Ratings between Dyads*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Vignette</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>1.764</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.491</td>
<td>.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberbullying</td>
<td>2.541</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>4.226</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.183</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Results based on one-way Analysis of Variance
Figure 1. We can see that the majority of participants rated physical bullying as the most severe type of bullying on a Likert scale. 67.78% of participants gave physical bullying a score of 5 in severity on the Likert scale, 37.1% rated cyberbullying a 5 on the Likert scale, and 3.78% rated verbal bullying a 5 on the Likert scale.
We can see that the majority of the participants did receive education about bullying. However, the education that the participants received did not have a significant effect on their reports of being the victim of bullying.
**Figure 3.** We can see that the majority of the participants did receive education about bullying. However, the education that the participants received did not have a significant effect on their reports of being a bully.
Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

To help us provide an accurate description of the sample, please take a moment to answer the following questions. The information provided on this sheet will not be linked to your name or the experimental data in any way. All responses are confidential.

Sex: male female

Age: 

Ethnicity:
  ____ Asian or Pacific Islander
  ____ Asian Indian
  ____ Black/African American (non-Hispanic)
  ____ Caucasian/White
  ____ Native American
  ____ Latino/Hispanic
  ____ More than once race (please specify) _____________________________

Year in School:
  ____ 5th Grade
  ____ 6th Grade
  ____ 7th Grade
  ____ 8th Grade
  ____ Freshman
  ____ Sophomore
  ____ Junior
  ____ Senior
Appendix B

Baur, Lozano, and Rivara Bullying Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about bullying in your school as honestly as possible. Your answers will remain anonymous.

1) I have been called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way in school.

   A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months      C. 2-3 times a month
   B. It happened once or twice                       D. About once a week
   E. Several times a week                            F. None of the above

2) Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me.

   A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months      C. 2-3 times a month
   B. It happened once or twice                       D. About once a week
   E. Several times a week                            F. None of the above

3) I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged.

   A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months      C. 2-3 times a month
B. It happened once or twice                  D. About once a week

E. Several times a week                      F. None of the above

4) I was hit, kicked, shoved around or locked indoors.

A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months      C. 2-3 times a month

B. It happened once or twice                  D. About once a week

E. Several times a week                      F. None of the above

5) I have been called names or harassed via email, text message, social media, or any other electronic resource.

A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months      C. 2-3 times a month

B. It happened once or twice                  D. About once a week

E. Several times a week                      F. None of the above

6) I feel more comfortable **socially** in the home environment rather than the school environment.

A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months      C. 2-3 times a month
B. It happened once or twice  
E. Several times a week  
D. About once a week  
F. None of the above

7) I have hit, kicked, pushed, etc. one of my peers at some point during my school career.

A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months  
C. 2-3 times a month  
B. It happened once or twice  
D. About once a week  
E. Several times a week  
F. None of the above

8) I have called peers names, yelled at them, or made fun of them in the school environment.

A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months  
C. 2-3 times a month  
B. It happened once or twice  
D. About once a week  
E. Several times a week  
F. None of the above

9) I have harassed a peer or peers online or via text message, email, or social media.

A. It hasn’t happened in the past couple months  
C. 2-3 times a month
10) When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you feel or think?

A. That is probably what he/she deserves
B. I don’t feel much
C. I feel a bit sorry for him or her
D. I feel sorry for him/her and want to help him/her

11) Do the teachers or other adults at school try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?

A. Almost never
B. Once in a while
C. Sometimes
D. Often
E. Almost always

12) Do other students try to put a stop to it when a student is bullied at school?

A. Almost never
C. Sometimes
B. Once in a while  D. Often
E. Almost always

13) Students at my school care about each other.
A. Yes  B. No

14) Students at my school want to be friends with one another.
A. Yes  B. No

15) Students have a sense of belonging in this school.
A. Yes  B. No

16) People (either adults or students) at my school help me when I have a problem.
A. Yes  B. No

17) Adults at my school really care about each student
A. Yes  B. No
18) The adults at my school treat all students fairly.

A. Yes  B. No

19) There are many chances for students in my school to talk with a teacher one-on-one.

A. Yes  B. No

20) Most mornings I look forward to going to school.

A. Yes  B. No

21) I have had a class discussion devoted to bullying.

A. Yes  B. No

22) My school has provided education and resources focused on bullying prevention.

A. Yes  B. No

23) Please provide any additional thoughts about bullying in your school in the space below
Middle School Vignettes

Boy vs. Boy

Please circle the number below to rate the severity of each situation. Raise your hand and ask the researcher if you have any questions.

Vignette #1: Henry hides in the boys’ bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If he can avoid Greg, he will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, he sees that the hallways are clear. Henry gets his things from his locker, when he sees Greg and his two friends walk toward Henry. Greg pushes Henry into the locker, takes Henry’s glasses, and breaks them. Henry begs Greg and his friends to stop, but they continue to hurt him.

Not Severe

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Vignette #2: Boyd and his friends love riding home on the bus together. They talk the whole ride home. One day, a boy named Lance is sitting in Boyd’s regular bus seat. Boyd yells at Lance to move, calling Lance a freak and telling him how stupid he is for taking Boyd’s seat. Lance gives the seat to Boyd and moves to a different place on the bus.

Not Severe

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Vignette #3: Andrew likes to cook, clean, and is interested in fashion. He has grown up in a house full of women. Most of Andrew’s friends are girls. Andrew has been receiving text messages from another boy in class and emails calling him “gay” and mean names. He decides to ignore them, but the classmate, whose name is Billy, sends meaner messages as time goes on. Andrew won’t come out of his room ever since he began getting these messages. He won’t talk to his friends and family, and spends most of his time by himself.

Not Severe

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Vignette #4: Max is very popular. He is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Max sees his friend, Jesse, drop his books. Max stops what he is doing and helps Jesse pick up his books.

Not Severe

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Please RANK each vignette in order from the LEAST severe (1) to the MOST severe (4). IF UNSURE ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS, RAISE YOUR HAND AND ASK THE RESEARCHER.

Vignette #1 __________
Vignette #2: __________
Vignette #3: __________
Vignette #4 __________

Boy vs. Girl

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER BELOW TO RATE THE SEVERITY OF EACH SITUATION. RAISE YOUR HAND AND ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

Vignette #1: Heidi hides in the bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If she can avoid Greg, she will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, she sees that the hallways are clear. Heidi gets her things from her locker, when she sees Greg and his two friends walk toward Heidi. Greg pushes Heidi into the locker, takes Heidi’s glasses, and breaks them. Heidi begs Greg and his friends to stop, but they continue to hurt her.

Not Severe Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5

Vignette #2: Boyd and his friends love riding home on the bus together. They talk the whole ride home. One day, a girl named Lily is sitting in Boyd’s regular bus seat. Boyd yells at Lily to move, calling Lily a freak and telling her how stupid she is for taking Boyd’s seat. Lily gives the seat to Boyd and moves to a different place on the bus.

Not Severe Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5
**Vignette #3:** Melanie likes to play with cars and watch sports. She has grown up in a house full of men. Most of Melanie’s friends are boys. Melanie has been receiving text messages from a boy in class and emails calling her “gay” and mean names. She decides to ignore them, but the classmate, whose name is Billy, sends meaner messages as time goes on. Melanie won’t come out of her room ever since she began getting these messages. She won’t talk to her friends and family, and spends most of her time by herself.

Not Severe  
Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5

**Vignette #4:** Max is very popular. He is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Max sees his friend, Maddie, drop her books. Max stops what he is doing and helps Maddie pick up her books.

Not Severe  
Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5

Please RANK each vignette in order from the LEAST severe (1) to the MOST severe (4). IF UNSURE ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS, RAISE YOUR HAND AND ASK THE RESEARCHER.

Vignette #1 __________  
Vignette #2: __________  
Vignette #3: __________
Vignette #4 __________

Girl vs. Boy

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER BELOW TO RATE THE SEVERITY OF EACH SITUATION. RAISE YOUR HAND AND ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

Vignette #1: Henry hides in the boys’ bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If he can avoid Mary, he will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, he sees that the hallways are clear. Henry gets his things from his locker, when he sees Mary and her two friends walk toward Henry. Mary pushes Henry into the locker, takes Henry’s glasses, and breaks them. Henry begs Mary and her friends to stop, but they continue to hurt him.

Not Severe Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5

Vignette #2: Angie and her friends love riding home on the bus together. They talk the whole ride home. One day, a boy named Lance is sitting in Angie’s regular bus seat. Angie yells at Lance to move, calling Lance a freak and telling him how stupid he is for taking Angie’s seat. Lance gives the seat to Angie and moves to a different place on the bus.

Not Severe Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5

Vignette #3: Andrew likes to cook, clean, and is interested in fashion. He has grown up in a house full of women. Most of Andrew’s friends are girls. Andrew has been receiving text messages from a girl in class and emails calling him “gay” and mean names. He decides to ignore them, but the classmate, whose name is Nadine, sends meaner messages as time goes on. Andrew won’t come out of his room ever since he began getting these messages. He won’t talk to his friends and family, and spends most of his time by himself.
Vignette #4: Jenny is very popular. She is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Jenny sees her friend, Jesse, drop his books. Jenny stops what she is doing and helps Jesse pick up his books.

Please RANK each vignette in order from the LEAST severe (1) to the MOST severe (4). IF UNSURE ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS, RAISE YOUR HAND AND ASK THE RESEARCHER.

Vignette #1 _________
Vignette #2: _________
Vignette #3: _________
Vignette #4 _________

Girl vs. Girl

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER BELOW TO RATE THE SEVERITY OF EACH SITUATION. RAISE YOUR HAND AND ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.
Vignette #1: Heidi hides in the bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If she can avoid Mary, she will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, Heidi sees that the hallways are clear. Heidi gets her things from her locker, when she sees Mary and two friends walk toward Heidi. Mary pushes Heidi into the locker, takes Heidi’s glasses, and breaks them. Heidi begs Mary and her friends to stop, but they continue to hurt her.

Vignette #2: Angie and her friends love riding home on the bus together. They talk the whole ride home. One day, a girl named Lily is sitting in Angie’s regular bus seat. Angie yells at Lily to move, calling Lily a freak and telling him how stupid he is for taking Angie’s seat. Lily gives the seat to Angie and moves to a different place on the bus.

Vignette #3: Melanie likes to play with cars and is interested in sports. She has grown up in a house full of boys. Most of Melanie’s friends are boys. Melanie has been receiving text messages from another girl in class and emails calling her “gay” and mean names. Melanie decides to ignore them, but the classmate, whose name is Nadine, sends meaner messages as time goes on. Melanie won’t come out of her room ever since she began getting these messages. She won’t talk to her friends and family, and spends most of her time by herself.
Vignette #4: Jenny is very popular. She is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Jenny sees her friend, Maddie, drop her books. Jenny stops what she is doing and helps Maddie pick up her books.

Not Severe

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Very Severe

Please RANK each vignette in order from the LEAST severe (1) to the MOST severe (4). IF UNSURE ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS, RAISE YOUR HAND AND ASK THE RESEARCHER.

Vignette #1 __________
Vignette #2: __________
Vignette #3: __________
Vignette #4 __________
Appendix D

High School Vignettes

Boy vs. Boy

**CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT YOU BELIEVE RATES THE SEVERITY OF THE SITUATION. PLEASE ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.**

**Vignette #1:** Henry hides in the boys’ bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If he can avoid Greg, he will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, he sees that the hallway is deserted and thinks he will make it home without dealing with Greg’s harassment. Henry begins to collect his things from his locker, when he sees Greg and his two friends walking his way. Greg pushes Henry into the locker, takes Henry’s glasses, and breaks them. Henry begs Greg and his posse to stop, but they continue to hurt him.

Not Severe  Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5

**Vignette #2:** Boyd and his friends love riding home on the bus together. They use the bus rides to catch up on each other’s days, make jokes, and gossip about what is happening at school. One day, a boy named Lance is sitting in Boyd’s regular bus seat. Boyd yells at Lance to move, calling Lance a freak and telling him how stupid he is for taking Boyd’s seat. Lance reluctantly gives the seat to Boyd and moves to a different place on the bus.

Not Severe  Very Severe

1 2 3 4 5

**Vignette #3:** Andrew likes to cook, clean, and is interested in fashion. He has grown up in a house full of women. Most of Andrew’s friends are girls, and he goes over to their houses to hang out and watch movies. Recently, Andrew has been receiving text messages and emails from another boy in class calling him “fag” and other slurs. He decides to ignore them, but the boy,
whose name is Nate, uses more offensive language as time goes on. Andrew has been refusing to come out of his room ever since he began receiving these messages. He has been avoiding his friends and family, and spends most of his time by himself.

Not Severe                      Very Severe

1  2  3  4  5

Vignette #4: Manny is very popular. He is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Manny sees his friend, Jesse, drop his books. Manny stops what he is doing and helps Jesse pick up and reorganize his books.

Not Severe                      Very Severe

1  2  3  4  5

Please RANK each vignette in order from the LEAST severe (1) to the MOST severe (4). PLEASE ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU ARE CONFUSED ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS.

Vignette #1: __________
Vignette #2: __________
Vignette #3: __________
Vignette #4: __________

Boy vs. Girl

CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT YOU BELIEVE RATES THE SEVERITY OF THE SITUATION. PLEASE ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.
Vignette #1: Heidi hides in the bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If she can avoid Greg, she will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, she sees that the hallway is deserted and thinks she will make it home without dealing with Greg’s harassment. Heidi begins to collect her things from her locker, when she sees Greg and his two friends walking her way. Greg pushes Heidi into the locker, takes Heidi’s glasses, and breaks them. Heidi begs Greg and his posse to stop, but they continue to hurt her.

Not Severe                                      Very Severe

1                                              2

3                                              4

5

Vignette #2: Boyd and his friends love riding home on the bus together. They use the bus rides to catch up on each other’s days, make jokes, and gossip about what is happening at school. One day, a girl named Lily is sitting in Boyd’s regular bus seat. Boyd yells at Lily to move, calling Lily a freak and telling her how stupid she is for taking Boyd’s seat. Lily reluctantly gives the seat to Boyd and moves to a different place on the bus.

Not Severe                                      Very Severe

1                                              2

3                                              4

5

Vignette #3: Melanie likes to play sports and is interested in cars. She has grown up in a house full of men. Most of Melanie’s friends are boys, and she goes over to their houses to hang out and watch movies. Recently, Melanie has been receiving text messages and emails from a boy in class calling her “dyke” and other slurs. She decides to ignore them, but the boy, whose name is Nate, uses more offensive language as time goes on. Melanie has been refusing to come out of her room ever since she began receiving these messages. She has been avoiding her friends and family, and spends most of her time by herself.

Not Severe                                      Very Severe

1                                              2

3                                              4

5
**Vignette #4:** Manny is very popular. He is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Manny sees his friend, Christie, drop her books. Manny stops what he is doing and helps Christie pick up and reorganize her books.

Not Severe                                Very Severe  

1     2     3     4     5

Please RANK each vignette in order from the LEAST severe (1) to the MOST severe (4). PLEASE ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU ARE CONFUSED ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS.

Vignette #1: __________
Vignette #2: __________
Vignette #3: __________
Vignette #4: __________

Girl vs. Boy

**CIRLCE THE NUMBER THAT YOU BELIEVE RATES THE SEVERITY OF THE SITUATION. PLEASE ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.**

**Vignette #1:** Henry hides in the boys’ bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If he can avoid Mary, he will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, he sees that the hallway is deserted and thinks he will make it home without dealing with Mary’s harassment. Henry begins to collect his things from his locker, when he sees Mary and her two friends walking his way. Mary pushes Henry into the locker, takes Henry’s glasses, and breaks them. Henry begs Mary and her posse to stop, but they continue to hurt him.

Not Severe                                Very Severe  

1     2     3     4     5
**Vignette #2:** Angie and her friends love riding home on the bus together. They use the bus rides to catch up on each other’s days, make jokes, and gossip about what is happening at school. One day, a boy named Lance is sitting in Angie’s regular bus seat. Angie yells at Lance to move, calling Lance a freak and telling him how stupid he is for taking Angie’s seat. Lance reluctantly gives the seat to Angie and moves to a different place on the bus.

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**Vignette #3:** Andrew likes to cook, clean, and is interested in fashion. He has grown up in a house full of women. Most of Andrew’s friends are girls, and he goes over to their houses to hang out and watch movies. Recently, Andrew has been receiving text messages and emails from a girl in class calling him “fag” and other slurs. He decides to ignore them, but the girl, whose name is Nadine, uses more offensive language as time goes on. Andrew has been refusing to come out of his room ever since he began receiving these messages. He has been avoiding his friends and family, and spends most of his time by himself.

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**Vignette #4:** Maddie is very popular. She is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Maddie sees her friend, Jesse, drop his books. Maddie stops what she is doing and helps Jesse pick up and reorganize his books.

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Vignette #1: Heidi hides in the bathroom, waiting for a safe time to leave school and walk home. If she can avoid Alexia, she will reach home safely for the first time in months. After an hour, she sees that the hallway is deserted and thinks she will make it home without dealing with Alexia’s harassment. Heidi begins to collect her things from her locker, when she sees Alexia and two friends walking her way. Alexia pushes Heidi into the locker, takes Heidi’s glasses, and breaks them. Heidi begs Alexia and her posse to stop, but they continue to hurt her.

Not Severe  Very Severe

1  2  3  4  5

Vignette #2: Angie and her friends love riding home on the bus together. They use the bus rides to catch up on each other’s days, make jokes, and gossip about what is happening at school. One day, a girl named Lily is sitting in Angie’s regular bus seat. Angie yells at Lily to move, calling Lily a freak and telling her how stupid she is for taking Angie’s seat. Lily reluctantly gives the seat to Angie and moves to a different place on the bus.

Not Severe  Very Severe

1  2  3  4  5
Vignette #3: Melanie likes to play sports and is interested in cars. She has grown up in a house full of men. Most of Melanie’s friends are boys, and she goes over to their houses to hang out and watch movies. Recently, Melanie has been receiving text messages and emails from another girl in class calling her “dyke” and other slurs. She decides to ignore them, but the girl, whose name is Nadine, uses more offensive language as time goes on. Melanie has been refusing to come out of her room ever since she began receiving these messages. She has been avoiding her friends and family, and spends most of her time by herself.

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Vignette #4: Jenny is very popular. She is well liked throughout the entire school, and is especially talented in the theatre and at sports. One day, Jenny sees her friend, Christie, drop her books. Jenny stops what she is doing and helps Christie pick up and reorganize her books.

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Please RANK each vignette in order from the LEAST severe (1) to the MOST severe (4). PLEASE ASK THE RESEARCHER IF YOU ARE CONFUSED ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS.

Vignette #1: 
Vignette #2: 
Vignette #3: 
Vignette #4: 