GIRLS AND BULLYING:
DISCUSSIONS WITH THREE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Master of Arts
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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The Ohio State University
2003

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents report some form of bully victimization at a rate of 80% to 90% (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Olweus, 1991, 1994) and 90% of American students surveyed felt their victimization by a bully was the cause of their isolation from peers (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992).

Bullying in boys can take a non-physical form (e.g., intimidation and teasing) as well as the form of aggression that is ongoing and physical (Gottheil & Dubow, 2000). Girls, on the other hand, have been reported to prefer bullying methods that allow them to manipulate peer relationships in non-physical ways (Crick & Bigbee, 1998). These findings are overshadowed, however, by other reports that indicate that when aggressive behavior is compared specifically in girls and boys, only minimal differences occur (Gottheil & Dubow, 2000).

Research exists in the area of social aggression in young adolescent women and studies have been conducted overseas on bullying behaviors in young adolescent girls. However, very little is available in the professional literature on bullying behaviors in girls in the United States, especially from the perspective of urban education.

A qualitative, grounded theory approach was chosen to examine the aggressive behaviors of three girls attending two large urban middle schools in the Midwest. Issues
particularly salient for urban school populations are addressed in interpreting the data from this research and include topics such as poverty and student exposure to violence and crime. These concerns are then examined in terms of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs in an attempt to explain the bullying behaviors of young adolescent girls as they enter the social arena of middle school. Ecological, cognitive developmental, as well as social cognitive learning theoretical perspectives are utilized in the interpretation of the data.
Dedicated to the memory of Peg Wilson

who inspired me to reach for my goals

and to my husband for his invaluable support.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor, Antoinette Miranda, for her encouragement and
flexibility in supporting my choice of topics for this thesis.

I express appreciation to Wendy Naumann whose technical assistance in the
preparation of this document was invaluable.

I am grateful to the administrators, teachers, and support staff of the middle
schools who agreed to cooperate in this investigation. Without their cooperation, this
project would not have been possible.

I thank Melissa Schmidgall, whose assistance was instrumental in the data
analysis portion of this research project.

I also wish to thank Maureen Withgott for her generous flexibility in adjusting my
work schedule to accommodate the data collection required for this research.

I also express gratitude to my sisters who have provided me with important,
weekly emotional support throughout the past year for this project.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

"[At the old school] they'd just call me an idiot, stupid, fat, ugly, whatever ... One incident was I was walking home from school and five or six kids were behind me and they started throwing stones at me ... They were just kind of laughing and I don't know why they were doing this but they were barking at me."

Elizabeth Bush
(Pfifferling, 2001)

The torment that Elizabeth Bush spoke of to Connie Chung in an interview for 20/20 (Pfifferling, 2001) is an example of severe bullying at the hands of her peers. These horrible incidents began for her when she entered public junior high school in the Jersey Shore Area School District and continued after her transfer to a small Roman Catholic school and up to her arrest on March 7, 2001. On March 7th, she entered the school library at Bishop Neumann Junior-Senior High School in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and shot a popular cheerleader in the shoulder.

Elizabeth Bush told Connie Chung and the world that she had confided in her victim, 13-year old Kimberly Marchese, but that Kimberly had betrayed her trust. “She talked to a friend of mine about, about me. She was laughing. She was calling me a freak and all this stuff,” Elizabeth recalled, “I was very hurt ... those feelings, those thoughts that I told her, were never supposed to be revealed to anybody...” (Pfifferling, 2001).
Many of us have listened sympathetically to stories told by friends and acquaintances who were, themselves, tormented by bullies as children and/or adolescents in a fashion similar to the way Elizabeth Bush was harassed. Indeed, the burden of transitioning to the middle or junior high school social setting as well as the physiological implications of hormonal changes, can be especially difficult for many students and may make them extremely vulnerable to peer cruelty. A link to bullying and depression has long been recognized and researched (Olweus, 1993; Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas), especially in light of violent – even lethal – reactions to such incidents.

Gender Differences in Bullying

Of particular interest, however, is that Elizabeth Bush is the only female on the list of student perpetrators of violent deaths and shootings linked to school-related bullying in our country over the last ten years (National School Safety Center, 2002; Appendix A). This striking difference in bullying outcomes appears to point to gender differences in the behavior of bullying itself. Such differences are consistent with research results that seem to indicate that there are differences in psychopathological outcomes for boys and girls. For example, Loeber and Dishion (1983) report a comorbidity with bullying and other antisocial behaviors such as truancy, violence, and substance abuse in boys (Loeber & Dishion, 1983) while Craig (1998) demonstrated that girls had higher levels of depression than their male counterparts (Craig, 1998).

The gender differences in bullying are not limited to outcome. Bullying in boys can take a non-physical form (e.g., intimidation and teasing) as well as the form of aggression that is ongoing and physical (Gottheil & Dubow, 2000). Girls, on the other hand, have been reported to prefer bullying methods that allow them to manipulate peer
relationships in non-physical ways (Crick & Bigbee, 1998). These findings are overshadowed, however, by other reports that indicate that when aggressive behavior is compared specifically in girls and boys, only minimal differences occur (Gottheil & Dubow, 2000).

Further discrepancies in findings appear in the literature with regard to gender differences in outcomes for bullies and bully victims. Callaghan and Joseph (1995), for example, report that the difference in depression for male and female subjects is actually a relatively small one. They found only a minor elevation of Peer Victimization Scale scores for boys who were bullied as opposed to female victims (Callaghan & Joseph, 1995). M. K. Underwood and her colleagues (2001) contend that there are enough conflicting results in the professional literature to call into question labeling the different types of aggression as being gender specific based on our current base of knowledge. These authors note that only by using sound research practices and building wherever possible on previous studies, can we begin to understand aggressive behavior in terms of developmental impact, its social context, functionality, and outcomes (Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2001).

The Problem

One major difference seems clear. More male bully victims retaliate using lethal force than do female victims (National School Safety Center, 2002; Appendix A) and understanding why this is so could be of great benefit in developing need-specific intervention strategies. Recognizing the value of existing research while using it to expand our knowledge base in the area of gender differences is an important step in the creation of intervention strategies, tailored to a specific target audience, that work.
Exceptional work has been done and is available in the literature in the area of female aggressors in general. Paquette & Underwood (1999) used the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents to probe differences in social and physical aggression in young adolescents of both sexes. Among her findings were that girls and boys reported about the same incidence of social aggression, however it was the young adolescent females who felt the most psychological impact as victims. Other work includes a case study of a 12-year old girl who endured the trauma of “severe teasing” at her school and was so negatively affected that she attempted suicide (Solkhgh, Olds, & Englund, 1999).

Gender differences in bullying from a cross-cultural perspective were examined by Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefooghe (2002). These researchers used stick figure cartoons in order to determine not only the degree of gender differences, but also what kind of developmental differences exist in subjects from schools in 14 different countries. What they found was that there were no appreciable differences in how boys and girls interpreted social situations involving bullying as presented to them in the form of cartoons. While age differences were indicated in the study results, these were deemed to be consistent across all of the 14 countries that they sampled (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefooghe, 2002).

Female bullying behavior has also been examined in the popular press. R. Wiseman (2002) talks passionately about Queen Bees & Wannabees. For 10 years Wiseman has been compiling anecdotal evidence based on her work with girls in the Empower Program (Wiseman, 2002). This account details the significant force friendships and clique membership plays in a young teen’s life. Also dealing with young girls and their social vindictiveness is the book, Odd Girl Out, a report of the results of
extensive individual and group interviews conducted by R Simmons (2002), a Vassar College graduate in women's studies and political science. Simmons reveals what she calls the "hidden culture" of social aggression used by girls by sampling an assortment of mostly middle-class elementary, middle and high schools across the country (Simmons, 2002). While the research results of Wiseman and Simmons were not evaluated by a peer review journal, they have both been prominently featured on the media talk show circuit and have stirred up considerable public interest in the topic in the United States.

Investigations of bullying behavior in young girls have also been conducted in Australia. B. Leckie (1998) looked at gender-specific bullying behaviors in female adolescents as they entered middle school. She administered self-report and peer nomination instruments to samples of girls in the 6th and 10th grades in South Australian Catholic and Independent schools that provided a sample representing an socioeconomic cross section. Leckie's results revealed that the social world of middle school girls revolves around tight friendship dyads that operate within larger cliques that promote self-disclosure among group members. These girls are therefore especially vulnerable to bullying victimization if relationships break down and confidences are breached (Leckie, 1998).

While the above represent examples of research conducted in the area of social aggression in young adolescent women, very little is available in the professional literature on bullying behaviors in girls in the United States, especially from the perspective of urban education.
Objectives of this Study

Because dramatic outcomes associated with bullying behaviors have occurred among male teens, it is understandable that research to date has focused on boys. On the other hand, there appears to be a developing interest in discovering why there is a difference in the outcomes of bullying for girls. Important questions may lead to an understanding of these differences. Why do girls bully? Do girls bully others as a function of being prior bully victims? Do they bully to secure social status among their peers? What do girls understand bullying behavior to be? How do social roles impact the outcomes of bullying in adolescent females? In what way does intervention by educators affect future bullying behaviors in a group of teenage girls?

The purpose of this study will be to develop an understanding of the salient factors inherent in the bullying experiences of young adolescent girls during their first year in middle school (grade 6) with the intent to determine: (1) The nature and intensity of social functionality that the girls may ascribe to such behaviors, (2) The role of using bullying as a strategy to manipulate the new social world of middle school, (3) The perceptions of the girls’ parents or guardians to the social choices being made by the subjects, and (4) The perceptions of the subjects’ educators with regard to observed and reported incidents of bullying.

Delimitations

Establishing sample parameters to include same-gender and same-race participants (i.e., girls of one race who have been actively involved in bullying others in some way) will help to minimize contextual differences that could influence results. For the current study, three African American 6th grade girls were selected. These girls were
nominated by school administrators as having demonstrated bullying behaviors since their arrival at middle school at the beginning of the school year. The girls were selected from two demographically similar, large, urban middle schools. While we cannot generalize the results of this study to include all African American 6th grade girls, we have worked to minimize the contextual differences that may complicate drawing inferences from the sample.

Limitations

Identifying the participants of bullying incidents among girls in any school setting may be difficult due to the purportedly covert nature of the bullying behaviors inherent in this population. Educators often are quite unaware of the existence of the verbally aggressive female bully or her victim (Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2001). The administrators who chose the subjects for this study relied, principally, on their contacts with the students during disciplinary hearings. Because most of these disciplinary infractions were physical in nature, the selection bias for this sample may describe the selection of physically aggressive female bullies while ignoring those who are verbally and/or relationally aggressive. This information should inform a cautious review of this study.

Another concern with this research was peer reaction to the subjects’ interface with the researcher. It was anticipated that this interaction between researcher and subject over the course of this study could invite social repercussions from peers directed toward the subject. This, in turn, may have influenced the truthfulness of responses. Great care, therefore, was taken to ensure the participating student’s anonymity and confidentiality in all conversations and to communicate to the student that these assurances would be met in order to encourage an open and honest sharing of their experiences.
Finally, the accuracy of data collection may be hindered by cultural differences. One of the young ladies in the study, Tammy, had a very heavy dialect, common in some African American communities, that made receptive communication with her difficult. Verification of her sentences was attempted during the interview but was ineffectual due to the intensity of her dialect. Extra care was taken during the transcription process to extract the highest quality data from the audiotaped interview with this subject.

Definition of Terms

The truth is that psychologists have difficulty agreeing on definitions in this area of study (Benjamin, Jr., 2002; Underwood et al., 2001). Social psychologists seem to agree only that aggressive acts yield harm or damage in some way. Disagreement seems to focus on whether intent is an important component of aggression and/or whether targets of aggression can be inanimate objects (Benjamin, Jr., 2002). I have chosen to use the following definition.

_Aggression_

Aggression is "[b]ehavior that is intended to injure another person (physically or verbally) or to destroy property" (Atkinson, Atkinson, & Hilgard, 1983, p. 321, as cited by Benjamin, Jr., 2002).

_Indirect, Relational, and Social Aggression_

Often indirect, relational, and social are adjectives that are used interchangeably when describing aggression. However, the terms have subtle, but distinct differences.

- *Indirect aggression* can be described as "a noxious behavior in which the target person is attacked not physically or directly through verbal intimidation
but in a circuitous way, through social manipulation" (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988, as cited by Underwood et al., 2001, p. 252).

- **Relational aggression** is aggression perpetrated with the intent to harm “others through purposeful manipulation and damage of their peer relationships” (Crick, & Grotpeter, 1995, p. 711, as cited by Underwood et al., 2001, p. 252).

- **Social aggression** consists of acts that are directed toward damaging another’s self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as verbal rejection, negative facial expressions or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumors or social exclusion” (Galen, & Underwood, 1997, p. 589, as cited by Underwood et al., 2001, p. 252).

**Bullying**

A universal definition of bullying has yet to be established, however virtually all definitions of bullying (e.g., Olweus, 1994; Slee, 1995) maintain that this type of aggression can be delivered with or without an audience by an individual or a by a group, and must include the following key criteria:

- Bullying is aggressive behavior (physical or verbal) that occurs repeatedly, over time
- Bullying is aggression (physical or verbal) that is intentionally hurtful and unprovoked
- Bullying always involves a physical or psychological power imbalance
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Adolescents report some form of bully victimization at a rate of 80% to 90% (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Olweus, 1991, 1994) and 90% of American students surveyed felt their victimization by a bully was the cause of their isolation from peers (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992). While the Columbine tragedy that occurred in the spring of 1999 forced professionals to take a hard look at why our children torment their peers in the United States, rigorous work in this field has been ongoing in other countries for decades, spurred by a significant correlation between the frequency of bullying attacks and depression and suicide in victims (Olweus, 1993; Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas).

Theoretical Perspective

Educators have become extremely aware that the academic achievement levels of our school-aged children are often linked to events outside the classroom where behaviors like bullying can strike at the heart of a child’s self-concept. Two specific theoretical perspectives can help explain why this is so. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model describes a child’s world as being inexorably intertwined with home, school, and community. According to this theory, situational occurrences involving family, friends, or elements of the community can affect the motivational behavior of the student at school (Swearer & Doll, 2001; Gray, 1991/1994). Certainly, exposure to bullying
episodes can whittle away an adolescent’s self-esteem affecting both academic and social functioning. The role of family, teachers, and especially peers becomes particularly significant when viewed from this ecological model.

A second model, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 2.1), also provides an understanding of how student success is impacted by environmental factors (Gray, 1991/1994). From this point of view, a person’s most basic needs such as being nourished, feeling safe, and feeling loved, all need to be fulfilled prior to being able to focus on the resolution of personal esteem concerns. Resolution of all these issues, then, allows the actualization of personal potential.

The Needs of the Adolescent

An unfortunate fact of life is that our urban children may be disadvantaged at Maslow’s most basic level of needs, that of food and survival. While some children living in depressed neighborhoods may not have access to adequate nutrition, these students may even live in daily fear of being victimized in their own neighborhood. In addition, our school children have reason to feel threatened not only by their community environments, but by their schools as well. McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, and McWhirter (1998) cite the National School Boards Association finding that 82% of the 720 school districts polled reported that school violence has increased over the last five years. They note that another organization, the National Institute of Education, found that “nearly 3 million students and teachers are crime victims in U.S. secondary schools every month” (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 1998).

It should be clear, then, that if children must have their basic needs (i.e., food and safety) satisfied as a prerequisite to achieving personal success as Maslow prescribed, a
problem immediately becomes apparent for many children attending our urban schools. Often living in crime-infested neighborhoods, these students face daily dangers that place them in a perpetual survival mode in terms of Maslow’s theory. Poverty may also place these individuals in a position of not having access to sufficient food.

Figure 2.1: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Source: Gray, 1998).
It is at this point that young adolescents are asked to enroll at a strange middle school, often knowing few students in their class. These children are seriously at risk. Poor children in urban school settings, primarily African American (Phillips, 1997), are hit with a triple whammy as they must hurdle two basic areas of needs, physiological and safety needs, before they can focus on one of the big needs of adolescence, feeling loved and needed.

Yet another disadvantage that our children must face involve peer conflicts. We know that peer relations are extremely relevant to one’s sense of “esteem.” Gottheil and Dubow (2000) link depression, low self-esteem, peer rejection, and school absenteeism to bullying behavior (Gottheil & Dubow, 2000). While not unique to the urban student population, certainly peer-related aggression and rejection can negate one of the precious needs of adolescence, that of belonging or feeling accepted and loved, in a group of students already at academic and mental health risk.

Peer relations are extremely relevant to an individual’s need to belong and peer rejection can have a profound impact on the emotional well-being of adolescent students. Using a peer nomination survey based on data that emerged from a violence prevention evaluation project as well as the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991), Espelage and Holt (2001) found that students who are routinely bullied are at risk for severe emotional problems (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Further, suicide incidence rates among 10-14 year olds are sobering. “Each year 7,000 teenagers commit suicide” (McWhirter et al., 1998, p. 6). What’s more, there have been at least thirteen known school-related violent acts perpetrated by bullying victims (National School Safety Center, 2002; Appendix A).
The importance of social relationships seems to be magnified as children enter adolescence and, especially, as they begin attending middle school. One reason is that adolescence is a transition from the life of a dependent child to that of an adult. The job of the young person at this developmental stage is to become independent. As a child, the individual can experience satisfaction of the “belongingness and love” stage of Maslow’s hierarchy, but entering adolescence can place the young teen in the tenuous position of no longer meeting the criteria for satisfying that need. N. J. Cobb (1998) explains:

Children derive feelings of self-worth from the simple fact that their parents love them; adults additionally derive much of theirs from their work. Adolescents can turn neither to their parents with the simple needs of children, nor feel the strength they will later experience through their jobs and families of their own. Friends help them bridge this difficult passage … (Cobb, 1998, p. 249)

Thus, it is critical that a student possess a considerable competency in navigating the social waters of middle school. Because the student is beginning to understand her world from different, more abstract cognitive perspectives inherent in formal operational thought (Wadsworth, 1996), young adolescent girls can be extremely sensitive to verbal insults or exclusionary tactics. From an ecological framework as well as in consideration of Maslow’s needs hierarchy, it is clear that bullying can be yet another roadblock to any child’s path to success, but especially to the success of the urban teen. Academic competence can shift even further away from attainability if the attention these students might devote to achieving success is diverted by insensitive peers who refuse to accept them and who may even take active steps to exclude them from participating in group activities.
Urban Educational Perspective

Urban school children enter their educational careers with many strikes against them, and minority children bear a disproportionate burden of the disadvantage. Forty-one percent of all Hispanic children and forty-six percent of all African American children live in poverty! Comparatively, 14% of European American children are poor (McWhirter et al., 1998). It follows, then, that 56.2% of all “central city” (urban) school districts serve student populations with over 75% eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

As noted earlier, many of our urban school children also have reason to feel threatened by their impoverished community environments. Black adolescent males are victims of fatal gunshot wounds at a rate of more than 100 times that of white teen males, representing the leading cause of death for the minority population (Dwyer, 1999). What’s more, it is becoming increasingly difficult for these children to find safe haven at school. McWhirter et al. (1998) refer to the National School Boards Association finding that 82% of the 720 school districts polled reported that school violence has increased over the last five years. They cite another organization, the National Institute of Education, which reports that “nearly 3 million students and teachers are crime victims in U.S. secondary schools every month” (McWhirter et al., 1998, p. 5). A problem immediately becomes apparent for many of the children attending our urban schools. These children may not be having their basic needs satisfied (i.e., food and safety) which could make it even more difficult to realize the need to belong and be loved.
Bullying

Bullying is an example of aggressive behavior used by some students to manipulate or control social situations. Students interviewed by Espelage and Asidao (2001) identified a variety of motives given by students who bully others. Trying to feel superior, wanting to make their victim feel inferior, and “looking cool” in front of their peers were all listed among these reasons (Espelage & Asidao, 2001).

Although a bully can confront his victim in a one-on-one encounter, the group dynamic associated with bullying is well documented. Such behavior is often reinforced by peers who appear to promote the agonistic encounters. As a matter of fact, in the Scandinavian Peninsula where D. Olweus (e.g., 1993) has been investigating the connection of bullying to childhood depression and suicide for over two decades, the term “mobbing” is used to describe bullying (Olweus, 1993).

Gender Differences in Bullying

While we know that boys physically aggress more than girls do (e.g., Gottheil & Dubow, 2000; Coie & Dodge, 1998; Knight, Fabes, & Higgins, 1996; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), it is clear that defining gender differences in aggression and, specifically, in bullying is much more than analyzing statistics for physical aggression. And yet, it is the physical aggressiveness of boys that has driven much of the earlier investigations into aggression and bullying, focusing on male behaviors. One reason is a virtually exclusive male preponderance in perpetrating acts of violence in our nation’s schools (National School Safety Center, 2002).
Bullying in Boys

The degree to which male bullies exact support and even respect from peers might be deemed amazing considering the amount of grief a bully can cause. Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, and Van Acker (2000) surveyed over 450 6th grade boys. They discovered that more than 13 percent of the boys were rated not only aggressive, but also as being popular by their teachers. A similar number of peers rated these bullies as being "cool" (Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 2000).

Pellegrini (2001) observed that the dominance associated with agonistic exchanges associated with bullying is often apparent as groups are formed, as is the case when students enter middle school in 6th grade. This dominance serves a function. It permits the "ordering" of the social ranks with the dominant individuals capitalizing by claiming their rewards. Where dominance might earn a child access to toys, in adolescence, the rewards are often heterosexual relationships and access to dates (Pellegrini, 2001).

Bullying in Girls

Lagerspetz, Bjorqvist, and Peltonen (1988) suggest that the dynamic social world of the adolescent young girl facilitates her exploitation of relationships in a way so as to harm others. Crick, Bigbee, and Howes (1996) agree and posit that female adolescents choose relational aggression because such behaviors can successfully interfere with another girl's social objectives such as belonging to the "right" clique. Much as Pellegrini and Bartini (2001) describe a social functionality for the bullying behavior that seems to accompany young adolescent males as they make the change to middle school and face an unknown social structure in new school surroundings, Leckie (1998) found similar
functionality in girls who enter Australian middle schools. She has found reason to agree that the transition from primary to middle school is especially ripe for bullying behavior and aggression. According to this study, girls find verbal aggression to be quite effective in manipulating relationships (Leckie, 1998). Leckie (1998) also feels there is a developmental reason that girls appear to use verbal aggression to a higher degree than boys at the 6th grade level. Girls at this age are more adept at the skill. She cites Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) who suggest that not only are girls more skilled in verbal abilities than their male counterparts, they are also socialized to avoid violent behavior. Therefore, their verbal acuity affords them the luxury of expressing aggression without having to rely on physical force (Leckie, 1998).
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Underwood, Galen, and Paquette (2001) urge caution when reporting gender differences on aggression. For one thing, despite a large volume of information that has been published on this topic, there is much disagreement as to whether or not gender specificity is relevant. There is a wealth of empirical knowledge available on aggression and gender that may be confusing in nature. For example, as reported earlier in this document (see page 3), studies in the field of aggression and bullying have yielded discrepant results. Underwood and her colleagues (2001) contend this may be due to many factors such as: 1) observer bias, 2) the existence of a plethora of definitions for aggression, 3) difficulty in operationalizing the definition of aggression, 4) the abundance of subtypes of aggression, and 5) the inherent difficulty in observing aggressive behaviors in children (Underwood et al., 2001).

Further, these authors feel that there is a real possibility that, in the rush to answer public interest in aggression in girls, “current researchers might be ignoring some of [the] basic definitional and methodological issues, at the peril of generating some potentially serious misinformation that might further contribute to negative stereotypes about both genders” (Underwood et al., 2001, p. 249). They believe that it is important that investigators be mindful of contextual implications when conducting research. They have
urged longitudinal studies that they believe to be critical in solving some of the
developmental mystique associated with aggressive behaviors with both boys and girls.
They also suggest that “[a]nother useful research strategy might be to use more
qualitative methods to elicit children’s accounts of their experiencing and perpetrating
aggression, to see what types they perceive as most vivid and important” (Underwood et al., 2001, pp. 253-254).

A qualitative approach was chosen to facilitate the gathering of in-depth
information on bullying behaviors as exhibited by adolescent girls in the United States
due to a paucity of research-based knowledge that currently exists on the topic. By
choosing this method, data can be collected, systematically organized into discrete
conceptual units, sorted into categories, and then analyzed in such a way as to connect
conceptual themes.

Assumptions of the Qualitative Paradigm

The qualitative paradigm can be helpful in extracting the defining characteristics
of a particular phenomenon for the following reasons:

1. *Qualitative research focuses on meanings* of life experiences as interpreted by
   individuals. It explores the individual’s interpretation of their experiences as
   they form perceptions about their personal realities.

2. *A qualitative study features a researcher who actively collects information in
   the field*, interacting with the subjects, permitting more meaningful
   interpretation of data.

3. *Data collection is accomplished primarily through the researcher*. Survey
   reports, inventories, and other formatted instruments are used only to a limited
degree. Open interview questions permit the researcher to delve more deeply into reported factors as they become apparent during the course of the investigation.

4. *The qualitative approach allows for an inductive process* that requires that the researcher consider contextual elements as emerging factors are evaluated in a process that could lead to the development of theory. Multiple sources are used to verify the collected information.

5. *The results of a qualitative study* are reported in a narrative report to demonstrate the process of emerging decisions that lead to a theoretical conclusion. (Creswell, 1994)

Because the existing theory and research on bullying in this country deals mostly with males and this approach may not be applicable to females, a *grounded theory* approach is being used to better understand how this phenomenon plays out with girls. Current research on aggression indicates that female aggression within peer relationships may manifest itself differently than male aggression (e.g., Gottheil & Dubow, 2000; Underwood et al., 2001; Leckie, 1998). Thus, bullying behavior for males and females may also be different. Because the *grounded theory* methodology allows for creation of theory where one does not exist or is limited in scope, this procedure fits well with the need for preliminary research in the area of female bullying behavior in young female adolescents. Additionally, the *grounded theory* approach provides an avenue for gaining insight into how participants make meaning of their experiences. One of the major goals of this study is to gain a clearer understanding of why girls bully and what their bullying behavior means to them.
Data Source and Subject Selection

School administrators at two demographically similar, large, urban middle schools were asked to nominate 2-3 students they believed exhibited bullying characteristics. The administrators were verbally provided with the profile of a bully consistent with the definition provided in Chapter 1, that is to say they were asked to identify individuals who repeatedly and over time used power, physical or non-physical, to cause mental or physical harm to another person. Stamped and sealed envelopes were provided to these administrators that contained a cover letter (Appendix B), an informational sheet detailing the research, and a consent form (see Appendix C) for the parent to complete authorizing student participation. The administrators were asked to address and mail the envelopes via the U.S. Postal Service to parents of female students who they felt met the profile of a bullying student. Only students with signed permission slips were interviewed.

To encourage the participation of parents, a pledge was made offering a $25 donation to the school’s parent organization in the parent’s name upon receipt of the required permission form. This form, signed by the parent, communicated parental consent for both parent and daughter to participate in the project. The participating parents also received a gift certificate to Kroger’s in the amount of $50 upon the completion of the project. Their daughters received a $20 gift certificate to a store of their choice.

Role of the Researcher

As the qualitative researcher and primary instrument of data collection for this project, my personal belief system, judgments, and perceptions were all a factor in this
heavily interpretative process. I have been interested in this topic of bullying in adolescent girls for 15 years. My now adult daughter had been victimized by a popular young lady who bullied her in middle school. This individual truly seemed to enjoy the power she wielded as she tormented the girls in this class, manipulating the social climate to accommodate her purposes.

Because I had previously been employed by the school district, I was able to capitalize on prior relationships with school administrators. This proved to be instrumental in gaining initial access to the two middle school sites that were chosen for this study. It was after this initial contact that I was able to apply for approval from the university’s institutional review board as well as request district permission to work with the three students eventually chosen for this project.

Data Collection

The researcher met once with each of the three subjects for 30-60 minutes after school hours so as not to disturb the instructional time they enjoyed during the school day. An open-ended interview format (see Appendix F) was employed with the discussions audiotaped to facilitate accurate collection of data. Each student was asked questions designed to probe, at minimum, their understanding of bullying behavior, whether or not the student had ever been victimized by a bully, why the student believes bullying occurs, what kinds of bullying tactics are used by them or by their friends, where these activities occur, as well as the kinds of reactions they receive from their friends, teachers, and administrators in response to their bullying activities.

The meetings with the students each took place in a room at the school site with a door that could be closed for privacy. The first meeting with each student provided the
researcher with an opportunity to become familiar with the subject. After an initial introduction and brief explanation of the project, the student was asked to provide signed consent (Appendix E) and the interview began (see Appendix F).

At the end of the interview session, the students were asked to keep journals covering ten school days to document the social interactions they encounter on a daily basis. They were given the Journal Protocol (Appendix G) along with instructions (see Appendix G). Each girl was telephoned one week later to see how she was progressing with regard to their journaling and to answer any questions she may have. The journals were picked up from the students’ homes or from the school counselor about two weeks later.

Interview sessions were also held with the parents and teachers of the students (see Appendices H and I, respectively). The parents were all interviewed over the telephone as were three of the teachers. The other three teachers were interviewed in their classrooms, one before school, one during her conference period, and one after school.

Data Analysis

The steps outlined for data analysis by Strauss and Corbin (1990) were followed. First, audiotaped interviews with the subjects, parents, and teachers were carefully transcribed. Next, the text from each student journal and transcribed document was carefully converted into carefully segmented, meaningful phrases.

I then began the coding process starting with open coding, the process of identifying and labeling variables pulled from the raw data and then ascribing labels or codes to them that describe each datum in relation to a conceptual continuum. This information is then outlined for the next stage, axial coding. Causal relationships were
identified at this point between categories, linking categories and sub-categories so that an explanation of the relationships can be understood.

The *selective coding* process that followed involved singling out one core category and establishing its connection to the other categories. Finally, validation of the process (see below) and refinement of the theory were necessary to arrive at a *grounded theory*.

The validation process included:

- A comparison of information as collected from four sources: (1) the student, (2) a parent, (3) teachers, and (4) the student journal.
- The involvement of a graduate student trained in qualitative research methodology who provided additional validation to the creation of the themes.

In this process, the initial open coding process of a journal and transcripts from one of the participants was reviewed by the graduate student to determine if the primary researcher introduced any bias into the data analysis procedure. The graduate student read all of the transcripts for that student and reviewed the final coding scheme. Only minimal inconsistencies were uncovered. The codes were determined to be supported by the raw data.

Revisiting the study participants to review the information collected from them is an additional verification step often used in qualitative research. While this would have provided the opportunity to receive corrective feedback from the participants, time constraints prevented the implementation of this procedure in this study.
School Sites

Two large urban middle schools were chosen for this study because of their demographic similarities. One of these schools is housed in a building constructed over 75 years ago and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (according to the school district). The student population is comprised primarily of African-American students at a rate of 79%. The ratio of White and Black (non-Hispanic) staff members, on the other hand, is reversed. The percentage of Black, non-Hispanic staff members at this site is 21%.

The principal at this school is reported to be very supportive and yet provides the teachers with professional leeway in designing lessons they believe to be specific to the needs of their students. The majority of students attending this school are also at risk due to their economic status. In an effort to counter this effect, funding was obtained this year to support Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) (Project GRAD Columbus, 2002), which includes the facilitating presence of a full-time student advocate.

Although some of the teachers at this site indicate they prefer to handle disciplinary infractions at the classroom level, school policy with regard to dealing with student aggression is often in-school suspension at the on-site PEAK (Positive Effort for Adjustment and Knowledge) Center or suspension from school. A school-wide effort linked with Project GRAD called CMCD (Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline). This strategy actively involves students in classroom management tasks in order to give teachers more time to teach while instilling a sense of self-efficacy in the students (Project GRAD Columbus, 2002). One of Julie's teachers also spoke of an Anger Management Group at the school, specifically set up for student's who are having
a hard time with self control and tolerance issues. Police officers may occasionally be called in for a display of visible support during specific periods.

The second middle school chosen for this study is also a large, urban middle school with a racial composition similar to the first school mentioned: 78% African American (non-Hispanic) with a reversal trend in staff ethnicity: 24% of the teachers at this school are African American. The main part of the building was constructed at the end of the 19th century and is fraught with deferred maintenance. Staff members reported a heavy gang affiliation associated with the students of this school.

On the other hand, this is the first year this middle school has been in session as an Urban Academy for Professional Development, a program supported by the local teacher’s union and the state university, aimed at improving the delivery of instruction to urban children. Because of this, special programs have been implemented to support student learning for the first time this year. For example, there is a Sylvan Lab located on site for academic remediation, numerous after-school programs in conjunction with the YWCA, and an innovative afternoon homeroom period dubbed “Home Away From Home” that is 30 minutes in length with an average of only about 15 students in each classroom. There is a specific student dress code of white top and dark-colored skirts or pants.

Subjects

_Cara_

From the beginning of middle school, Cara’s mother and teachers were concerned about her behavior. Cara’s mother subsequently agreed for her daughter to be transferred from the urban middle school she was attending to a day school facility that provides
extra support, counseling, and educational coursework for students exhibiting problem behaviors. When I last spoke to Cara, she had made friends at her new school, and she said that things were going “fine.” Her mother said she is doing much better at this new school. She is encouraged by the counseling services that Cara is receiving. When she was asked to describe the efficacy of the new school program that Cara transferred into, she said:

   Yea. It was a blessing. It was a hard decision to put her there, but there was a lot of prayer and I just believed the Lord would show me the way to get her through it and she’s out there and they kept saying "you're going to like it - you're going to like it." She does.

Cara’s father returned home from prison during the data collection phase of this research project. He had been serving 6 months for violating his parole (he reported in to his parole officer by telephone that he was in Cleveland visiting his critically ill grandmother). He was originally incarcerated for 2 years. This was the result, according to Cara’s mother, of his defending Cara’s mother against an assailant. He has also, however, had substance abuse problems:

   He’s been in and out of jail because he has had a problem with crack cocaine. The original crime, he hasn’t been back to jail for – he served two years for that and got out and has been in and out of jail for parole violations. They put him back in because he stopped seeing his PO. He was actually clean this time.

With her father home, Cara now lives with her mother, a youth advocate for a local social services agency, and two older sisters, ages 13 and 14. Cara, age 12, and her mother are both overweight. Although Cara gets along with both of her sisters, her weight is monitored by an older, “trim and athletic,” 14-year old sister. This tends to strain their relationship at times. She gets along fine with her other sister.
Cara’s mother expressed a concern for the violence to which her family is exposed to in the streets of their neighborhood, noting that there was a crack house within close proximity to their home. As far as Cara being exposed to aggressive acts in their own home, Cara’s mother mentioned that about a year ago her husband took issue with her oldest daughter’s dating choices. They “got into a real bad argument and he ended up smacking her because she was being very verbal,” Cara’s mother explained.

Cara is required to care for her room at home as well as to do the dishes and clean the bathroom and hall on alternate days. While she does these chores, she often must be prompted to do so. The preferred form of discipline used in this family is denial of privileges. “I don’t spank them anymore,” Cara’s mother explained, “They’re too old.” She last spanked her children when they were about 10 years old.

Cara said she gets along with both boys and girls, but says she prefers to hang out with boys because she doesn’t “want to argue with girls ‘cause it’s mostly girls who argue and fight in this school.” She is characterized by her teachers as being obstinate, but at times supportive; intimidating, but at times caring; loud, but at times sensitive. Her mother agrees and attests to her loving nature. In addition, Cara’s mother and her teachers all concur that Cara exhibits a degree of perseverance. For example, even with her weight problem, Cara participated in the Double Dutch competition at her middle school. However her grades dropped from the Bs and Cs she was getting in elementary school to Fs upon entry into middle school.

Cara’s mother describes her as being “quieter” and “cuddly” at home, a young lady who enjoys listening to her music: rhythm and blues. She likes to sing and dance, and is a member of her church choir and the choir at the service agency that employs her
mother. Cara has also worked at her mother's agency where her role is what her mother refers to as "a counselor in training." Indeed, Cara revealed that she sees herself as being a counselor later in life.

Because this research was initiated while Cara was still at her original middle school, teachers there who know her best from their interactions with her since the beginning of the year, were interviewed in order to get the best picture of Cara's social behavior. Cara exhibits range of behavioral characteristics in the classroom. One of her teachers reported that she often comes to class fatigued and even sleeps in class at least 2, maybe 3 days of the week. Confrontations would result if Cara was especially fatigued:

On the days that [Cara] was pretty sleepy ... getting her to do something was not something to push .... I wouldn't have major behavior problems ... unless I confronted her or really pushed the expectation higher and wanted her to produce a little bit better.... Somehow Cara and I had this respect for each other ... if she chose not to do whatever she chose not to do ... respectfully, she would sit there and sleep or just sit there and not cause a commotion for the other students.

On the other hand, Cara willingly participates when she is interested in the subject matter at hand. Both teachers note that Cara's behavior in the classroom can be intimidating. While she doesn't describe herself as being popular, peers seemed to want to please her. Part of this social dynamic, according to one teacher, is that Cara assumes a protective role with her friends. She explains:

I know she is intimidating to certain students: I know that. Now, they might not even be consciously aware that they are intimidated by her ... because they just go along and joke with her and if everything is peachy keen, that's fine. Besides that, if somebody else gets on their case Cara will help them out. Cara takes on a great sense of dedication to whoever's friend she may be. She's "got their back." She is very protective.
Cara’s other teacher describes a dichotomous nature to the behavior that Cara exhibits in her classroom:

When [Cara] was your best friend, nobody had better interrupt you while you were teaching or she would have let them know that she was going to get them. As your worst enemy, she could ruin your class and make it impossible for you to teach.

Cara’s teachers are at different places professionally. One had been teaching young adolescents for 7 years. Although Cara’s other teacher reported more years of experience (9 years), her prior experience had been in suburban elementary schools.

“What a huge culture shock for me it was,” she exclaimed. This teacher chooses to use a less confrontational style when disciplining the children in her class:

I don’t like to publicly embarrass students. So I would talk to them alone. To not cause her to act out to impress her friends was how I began. Keeping her after class, talking with her, letting her know that I could help her. I was there for her. Trying to be a supportive role model.

However, when asked whether this management style was effective, she admitted it was “for a minute” and Cara had even given her affectionate hugs. The downside is that she could still be rude and disrespectful in her class.

Both of Cara’s teachers indicate they prefer to handle disciplinary infractions at the classroom level. The teacher with more middle school experience has had the benefit of developing some management and coping strategies over the years to help make the educational experience more meaningful for her students. For example, she frames her classes from the beginning of the year on respect and trust, and she encourages her students to communicate with her. They can see her after class or write her a note and leave it on her desk or in the designated “mailbox” should the message be of a confidential nature.
Both of Cara’s teachers offer their students the opportunity to assist in the classroom. Cara did not take advantage of this at the beginning of the year. However, in an effort to bolster her self-esteem, both of her teachers encouraged her to help during the course of the school year and occasionally she did oblige.

_Julie_

Julie is a petite and perky sixth grader who enjoys being the center of attention. She lives with her unemployed mother and 11 year old brother. While Julie’s mother never married Julie’s biological father, Julie does enjoy a “good friendship” with him. Julie’s mother did marry someone else recently, but soon separated from him when it became apparent that he was “doing drugs” and stealing from the children. There is no contact between Julie and her mother’s estranged husband. Like Cara’s family, Julie’s family lives in a neighborhood that includes a crack house within close proximity to their home.

On the other hand, Julie does enjoy frequent visits with her father. In addition, her house is often visited by her friends. “It’s the house everyone seems to come to,” her mother says. “Sometimes I don’t know whose kids are whose!” Julie’s mother is careful about where Julie hangs out because she feels she is “easily influenced.” If she isn’t at home, she is at her older sister’s house.

The consequences for bad behavior choices in this family are “time outs,” grounding, or the removal of privileges. Julie’s mother used spanking with her children when they were young. Other than the sibling bickering that occurs in their house in which some “hits” are occasionally exchanged, Julie’s mother said there have been no incidents of aggression in this home. Julie has a set time (as soon as she gets home from
school) to do her homework. Her mother explained that since she is unemployed, Julie has few responsibilities around the house.

Julie’s mother reports that, at home, although Julie can be defiant, she is normally pretty relaxed. Her mother admits, however, that her behavior at school has forced unplanned school visits from her on several occasions. Some of these are occasions wherein Julie is non-compliant, not doing as she is told. On other occasions, she appears to instigate arguments that occasionally lead to physical altercations. The root of the problem, her mother feels, is that Julie simply “gets in the middle” of other people’s business which “usually causes a big disruption for the school and then the school calls me to settle it out.”

One of Julie’s teachers experienced some difficulty with Julie at the beginning of the year in his class. She would get overly excited when she was involved in something she found interesting and this translated to an inability on the Julie’s part to “focus and to listen.” He added that “[Julie] likes to perform. She likes to be the center of attention. She likes the kids to know that she’s in the room.” Agreeing with this statement, another one of Julie’s teachers reported a social tension in the room any time Julie was a part of a group situation:

Julie is definitely someone who wants to control whatever group she’s in. She gets her digs in. She loves to talk to someone else about someone else, that kind of thing, to try and be the dominant person.

However, very little is said to Julie by her peers. With Julie, no one seems to want to upset her, according to her teachers. “With [Julie] … it’s almost as if everyone wants to be her friend and not upset her.” Julie has about 5 or 6 friends that she hangs out with,
according to one of her teachers. He notes that she “sticks up” for them and they look out for her.

One of Julie’s journal entries, however, seems to suggest some denial on Julie’s part. She refers to an incident in which another girl is upset with her because her sister told her Julie was “going around telling her business.” Julie’s response was one of incredulity and denial. “I think it would be stupid to tell her own sister that knowing that she would go back and tell her” she wrote. Although she noted that she and the other girl had exchanged heated words, she insisted, “… but she really still is my best friend.”

Academically, one of Julie’s teachers commented that Julie really seems to like math and health and Julie’s mother said she started out the school year bringing home As and Bs, but received Cs and Ds for her 3rd quarter grades. Julie’s mother thinks that it is possible that Julie’s passion for participating in the Double Dutch championships at school and the fact that those practice sessions eat into her homework time may have compromised her study habits.

One of Julie’s teachers has spent the last 3 of his 10 years teaching middle school students. He likes it. His classroom management strategy is to ignore inappropriate behavior while rewarding the good, but he admits he doesn’t do enough of the latter. “Because I expect that behavior,” he said, “I don’t give the kids the strokes for doing it.” It is something he knows that he needs to be aware of and work on.

Julie’s other teacher has spent all 5 of her years teaching middle school. She, too, says she “loves” teaching at this level. When asked about her preferred method of classroom management she said she was big on conferencing with the kids:

We need to go outside and we’ll talk about it, and I’ll get everyone calmed down. I try really hard not to put the kids out just because I feel
very strongly about that.... which is one of the reasons I'm in this school. ... I definitely.... write very few office referrals. I try to keep it between myself and the student, and talk to them about the benefits of behaving in the classroom.

This teacher feels it is critical that students have someone in the building they can turn to if they need to talk, to advocate for them. She tries to play that role with her students.

Tammy

Tammy is an overweight sixth grader who appears to have limited social skills. She lives with her mother who gave birth three months ago to a little girl. In addition to this baby sister, Tammy also has 8-year old and 15-year old brothers. The family’s address is in a lower SES community and their home does not have a telephone. The family appears to have an affiliation with a local church in that Tammy spoke of conversations that she had with “Pastor Barnes.” They live within walking distance from Tammy’s grandmother, who frequently babysits while Tammy’s mother goes to work in the afternoon. Tammy’s mother “goes to the homes of the elderly and helps them out.”

Tammy’s mother said that Tammy “loves her grandmother” and gets along fine with her father, but seems to try to start fights with her brothers, especially the older one. The older brother attempts to ignore her. Tammy and her mother have a good relationship unless Tammy’s mother catches her fighting and needs to say something to her. If this happens, Tammy “goes off,” her mother says. She adds that she believes that Tammy wishes she were an only child:

Don’t get me wrong, she's a good girl. It's just her behavior and the way she just snaps every two minutes. But you know what, I think Tammy would like to be our only child - I think that's how she acts because we'd be at home and my other kids are gone, and it's just me, her, and the baby, then I have no problem with Tammy.
Unlike Cara and Julie’s mothers, Tammy’s mother is not very involved in her school. As a matter of fact, Tammy attends a school in the neighborhood where her father, divorced from her mother, lives because he is better able to participate in making Tammy’s educational decisions. Tammy walks to her father’s house every Friday after school.

According to Tammy’s mother, her daughter’s behavior is different when she is at her father’s house than when she is at home with her mother, brothers, and baby sister. At the latter location, Tammy seems to instigate trouble, but denies any involvement when she is confronted. At her father’s house, however, she evidently does not get into trouble. Tammy’s mother insinuates, however, this is because she is allowed to get away with a lot while she is at her father’s. Discipline usually takes the form of denial of privileges. For example, Tammy’s mother will remove the television from Tammy’s room. She has also refused to let Tammy go to her father’s house as punishment.

In her spare time, Tammy likes to go to the mall. She also likes to go to the library and get on the computer there. When she’s at home, she will play with the baby or watch television in her room. Tammy’s mother voiced some concern about Tammy’s interest in going out:

I try not to let Tammy like do a whole bunch ... ‘cause nowadays it's bad people running the street and a lot of times ... she ask me ... like can I go here and can I go there, and I tell her "no." And she'll say, well Mom, I'm not a little girl no more and I said, “I know.” And ... she'll say something like "Well, at my dad's house, my dad would let me walk there or get on the bus and go there."

One of Tammy’s teachers is a veteran teacher and the other a novice. When the latter was asked how she liked teaching middle school, she smiled and said it was “an experience,” but added that the support she received from other staff members made it a
“good first year.” The veteran teacher, however, commented about some staff behaviors that exist at this school that make her feel “unsafe.” She made some pointed comments about staff bullying:

I don't think it's meant to be intentional but it comes across that way, and I think sometimes there are people that really aren't that mean, ... but I have heard a staff member or two in this building say horrible things to children, and I just knew that I wasn't safe with those grown-ups... Because I've heard them interact with children, and I know how they interact with children ... I don't trust them.

Tammy is described by her teachers as being very reserved, with little desire to interact with her classmates. In fact, she seems to prefer to hang out with staff members. One of her teachers recalled:

When we had the field trip she would hang around me or the other teachers. Both times that we've gone to the park she's been by my side. There have been a couple of other kids, who have been by my side and she has interacted with them. But she's always stayed close to an adult, around those times.

Tammy tends to both initiate fights and fight as a reaction to something that someone says or does to her. When Tammy is caught trying to instigate a fight, she will often deny it, according to her mother. Tammy also exhibited some denial during the interview sessions. She told the interviewer that she was mean to a girl who had been mean to her. She was asked if she thought that helped her make friends and she replied that she had less friends now because she stopped being mean, adding, “I ain’t ever been mean to these kids.”

Tammy and her teachers have also described instances in which Tammy may have been victimized by bullies. For instance, Tammy recalled how her “best friend” said she and her friends were going to beat Tammy up. “They did,” Tammy said, “but we’re back to being friends already.” Tammy’s mother believes this may be why she doesn’t
want to go to class. "For being a 12-year old girl," Tammy's mother said, "she should be happy."

One of Tammy's teachers described an incident with Tammy at the beginning of the year. She had a substitute who was having difficulty handling the situation because Tammy was angry at one of the boys in the class, had thrown her books, and got in his face and would not back down. She never yelled at the teachers or became belligerent with them, but she would not comply either. She ended up getting sent to PEAK (in-school suspension) for that day. When I asked Tammy's mother why she thought Tammy acted out at school, her response was, "You know how kids are: They think they bad, don't nobody mess with 'em."

All interviewees that know Tammy agreed that her biggest problem is refusing to attend classes. She goes to school, but will avoid going into the classroom. She had been doing much better at the beginning of the year, but her classroom attendance began to slide in January of this year. Both of Tammy's teachers have reacted to Tammy's habit of skipping class by doing everything they can to encourage her. They have offered her an incentive: lunch with her teachers, if she attends class just five days in a row. This offer had been on the table for two weeks at the time of this interview, and Tammy had not made it to class for two days in a row.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Informant Definitions of Bullying

Bullying incidents at the middle school sites used in this study were deemed by both teachers and students to be problematic, especially those incidents involving girls. Research participants were asked to define bullying. The results of this survey were coded and indicated on Table 4.1. Most of the definitions provided by the participants referred to control or abuse of power as being a key defining feature of bullying. Only the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Picking on Someone</th>
<th>Abuse of Power</th>
<th>Attack without Reason</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Demeaning</th>
<th>Threatening</th>
<th>Can be Verbal or Physical</th>
<th>To Take What They Want</th>
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Table 4.1: Participants' Definitions of Bullying Behaviors

39
narrow definitions given by Julie and Tammy excluded this component. Their definitions, however, did equate bullying to threatening behaviors (Julie) or mean behaviors (Tammy). In addition, three of the teachers noted that bullying can be either physical or verbal. Allusion to the bully’s actions as compensation for a lack of power in another area of her life was made by both Cara’s mother and one of Tammy’s teachers. Tammy’s other teacher also referenced peer influence in her definition of bullying.

**Predisposing Factors**

**Biological Background**

At the core of each student are those factors that helped to shape her personal characteristics and help to direct the trajectory of her life. The most fundamental of these variables are the genetic factors. Cara’s mother indicated that she is overweight, as is Cara, and that she also thought her daughter’s behavior was an inherited characteristic. When asked if Cara fit the profile of a bully, she replied:

> At times, yea. ... But because of her size she is very intimidating. At times, with her gestures, it doesn’t necessarily mean she’s bullying someone and our family is loud by nature, also. ... ‘cause I’ve always been considered a bully ‘cause by nature we’re just loud.

Cara’s mother also recalled that when Cara was born Cara’s mother was plagued with post-partum depression. For a month after Cara was born, the only bonding available to her was provided by her father.

> I had post partum depression with her. First of all, they said she was going to be a boy. The doctor said she was going to be a boy, and they said she was going to be a boy and so I was looking for a son instead of a daughter and was a little depressed about that. My husband really stepped in and I mean I breastfed but I did more pumping of milk than breastfeeding her and so that bond that I bonded with the other two wasn’t necessarily you know happening with her. We’re close now, but the first two months, we wasn’t close at all. He took care of her so now they have
this real close-knit relationship. So, when he ended up going back to jail is when she started having problems at school.

*Family Stress*

Julie’s mother expressed concern over her financial situation since she lost her job in October, right before she left her husband. “I’ve been living on income tax and child support,” she said.

*Exposure to Violence*

All three mothers expressed concern regarding their daughters’ welfare outside of the walls of their home. In addition to the neighborhood violence described earlier, Cara’s mother also describes the exposure Cara has had to violence inside their home:

There was aggression between my oldest daughter and her dad because of her dating. They got into a big argument – a real bad argument and he ended up smacking her because she was being very verbal that was unnecessary.

*Student Characteristics*

*Peer Characteristics*

The teachers described 6th grade students in general terms of wanting to belong, being compliant and wanting to please those individuals with whom they desired to have a relationship, namely Julie and Cara. When asked about how Julie’s peers react to her maneuvers for control, one of her teachers said:

I… went to watch the girls do their Double Dutch state championship team. [Julie’s] aunt … had a little one there … and [Julie] was responsible for watching the child. The child got away from her because she was practicing her Double Dutch. Then the aunt … screams at her and that kind of thing. So the aunt goes back inside and then [Julie], in turn, turns around and definitely starts in on the girls, “You’re not doing that right” and “I can’t believe that” … and they turned around and took [it]. Every last one of the girls, she put down in some way and told them that what they were doing was incorrect.
Figure 4.1: Variables: Bullying in girls as a function of middle school entry.
One of Cara’s teachers explains the reaction of her peers to her classroom antics in terms of intimidation and compliance:

They didn’t speak up against [her]. .... I think that they were either afraid of her or knew ... [that] ... when she was having a bad day I was not [in control] and she was. There was no question about it. and I would have to remove her to get control of my class back. That’s how dominating she could be.

**Bully Characteristics**

**Defiance**

Teachers, parents, and students spoke of defiance as being one characteristic quality of the girls’ behaviors. Julie’s mother talks about the “defiant” “stage” her daughter is going through right now and admits she must go to school to attend to disciplinary matters that come up because of her daughter’s behavior. She reports:

Mr. Hart, her math teacher, has called me and I’ve had to go to school. A computer teacher has called me and I’ve had to go to school because she’s been defiant with those two. Every other teacher she gets along with ... Miss H, she likes really, really well.

**Popularity**

Secondly, three of the participants, including Cara and Julie, felt that a girl’s popularity is a factor in terms of whether or not they bullied. For example, Julie believes that bullies

... might be popular and ... want everything. They want the show to be all on them.... They want everybody to know them and for everybody to think they’re cool and stuff.

**Power**

Third, the students and parents referred to the intimidation aspect of a bully’s personality and referenced the bully’s ability to take advantage of the power associated with the anxiety elicited by their behavior. In addition, both of Cara’s teachers and one
each of the teachers for Tammy and Julie agreed that this is a personality dimension associated with bullying behavior. Cara sees the carrot of friendship as the source of power for a bully. She recalls the response of a bullying victim as follows:

Well, the victim was listening, too, and she said, “I want to be a friend” or whatever and “I want to keep being a friend” because they did argue like that so she said “we haven’t argued like this at all and I just want to be your friend” and the bully was like “Yea, you did want to be my friend but now we’re not” and stuff.

Loyalty to Friends

Finally, Cara, her teachers, and mother, all used the personality dimension of loyalty to describe Cara. They noted that Cara is devoted to her friends. She can take a defensive stance on their behalf, protecting their interests, and even acting as an advisor. At times, she can display such loyalty to her teachers, threatening those students who don’t listen in the classroom as they should. One of Cara’s teachers spoke of this aspect of Cara’s personality by saying, “Cara takes on a great sense of dedication to whoever’s friend she may be. She’s ‘got their back.’ She is very protective.” This teacher speculates that this is because Cara wants to please others – peers and adults – as part of her drive to be accepted.

Bully-Victim Characteristics

It appears that all subjects in this study can be classified as bully-victims. In other words, they are bullies who have themselves been victimized at some point. Especially for the subjects who are overweight (Cara and Tammy), vulnerability to victimization by peers is a reality. Cara describes such an incident as follows:

I get picked on sometimes because of my weight and stuff. Most of the time by boys. ... If I’m arguing with somebody, it’s always someone littler but they are my age and so it will be other people that interrupt the
situation between me. ... [and they'll say], “She’s too big to fight you\nanyway” and “She’ll sit on you” or something like that.

Certain characteristics were described by the participants to fit the reactionary\nstyle of aggression that appears to be associated with this hybrid form of bully: anger and\nfrustration.

Anger

All three of the subjects in this study were deemed by educators to be candidates\nfor anger management classes. Teachers spoke about the girls “holding onto” their anger\nlonger than boys. One of Cara’s teacher’s recounted an incident that induced anger in\nCara. She said,

There was one specific incident in the cafeteria with a girl ...\n[who] supposedly said that Cara was the B word. She got called the B\nword and that’s wildfire around here. You don't say the B word. So those\nwas fighting words. So Cara was hollering, etc.... so I started holding her\narms, I was imitating the breathing, using those kinds of methods, and it\nhelped her calm down. She was still hot under the collar. She’s good at\ncontinuing on her anger.

Frustration

Adolescent girls who meet the criteria of a bully appear to have an agenda. They\nare primed to seek out positions within their community of peers in which their “power”\nis respected. Frustration can loom in the face of such goals. One of Julie’s teachers\ndescribes Julie in a helping role in the classroom and the intense frustration she felt when\nshe sensed her “power,” her “control” slipping away:

She was the pencil club manager. It didn’t go over too well\nbecause kids still kept taking the pencils and she got [extremely] frustrated\nbecause no matter what we tried, the kids still took the pencils.
Julie, too, has been victimized, in an incident that led to an off-campus physical fight. Julie sees the bully-victim as someone who gets frustrated or just tired of being picked on. Of such a bully-victim, she said:

[S]ometimes they get tired of it and they go back at 'em. ... They wouldn't think to themselves and they don't care what anybody else say but like [if something happened] they'd want to do something about it

*Victim Characteristics*

The victims who are not bullies, according to the participants, may have certain defining characteristics. For one thing, they may be smarter and more academically inclined than the aggressor. One teacher held that the subculture's value system may be partially to blame for tormenting a victim. He believes that because a lot of the bullies don't hold education as a thing of value and aren't doing well in school, they tend to envy others who know where they want to be academically. Cara describes this same character dimension in terms of how peers treated a student who did not fit in:

In this school, for instance, if somebody is smarter than somebody, it will be like - there's a little girl in our class and she's sweet and everybody just wants to bully her because she's sweet and she knows what she's doing in her life and everybody wants to bully her because of that and nobody wants to be her friend and they talk about her because she doesn't have as much as others. They want to pick on her because of that and they like just talk about her like, "You don't have much as us and you're dirty and you have lice," and all that.

On the other hand, one of Julie's teachers feels that the academically thriving students elicit jealousy in their bully peers. He explains his point of view as follows:

So, I think, they're jealous in a way of kids that are smart because sometimes they want to be smart and maybe don't know the way to... don't have the perfect skills or ... sometimes, [are] just plain ole mean.
Regardless, the academically driven student may become a bully’s target at one of the schools in this study.

Because two of the subjects were overweight, the topic of victimizing those who are overweight also came up. This “overweight” dimension may fit in with a broader category of “being different” as well as with the characteristic of “being smarter.” Tammy describes being victimized because of her weight. When asked if a “friend” had picked on her, Tammy responded:

Me and her, we both did it twice. “Why should I play with you, fatty.” So both of us, we were like “You skinny, bony girl.” And we argue like when me and her half-sister get tired of it ‘cause sometimes she just goes like keeping false names.

Mediating Factors

Although bullying behavior may be predicted by predisposing factors, it is certainly influenced by several mediating variables. According to the informants, these mediating variables student factors such as attribution bias and their efficacy in coping with the transition to middle school.

Student Factors

Attribution Bias

High on the list of student factors that figures into whether or not a youngster bullies, is attribution style. Those students who are highly reactive may be quick to incorrectly point the blame on someone not at fault. Julie did a good job of explaining such an example when asked what the bully may have been thinking in her account of a an incident:
Julie: [She was thinking] like “she smashed my finger and my thumb, so I’m going to beat her up.” … I guess she wanted to put on a show and plus she wanted to get her anger out on them.

GP: Who do you think was to blame then for that incident?

Julie: I actually think it was the door. (chuckle)

Adjustment to Middle School

Another important aspect of a student entering middle school is the style of coping with the new school, new teachers, and new peer group. For Tammy, whose behavior is not consistent with the definition of bullying outlined in Chapter 1, the teachers at her school made a point of noting that she was quiet and withdrawn when she first entered middle school and that her behavioral outbursts only became problematic in late fall. Serious problems didn’t begin for this young lady until after her remedial sessions with Sylvan were completed in January. On the other hand, the other two subjects were observed by their teachers to actively negotiate a place in the middle school social hierarchy using mostly non-physical and some physical bullying tactics. While the students didn’t seem to acknowledge that they may have bullied to negotiate a social presence within a new group of peers, teachers and parents noticed such behaviors for these two girls. An example of one of these teacher reports is in the words of one of one of Julie’s teachers in describing what may be a technique Julie used to claim the attention she thrived on right from the beginning of the year:

One of the biggest challenges with [Julie] at the beginning of the year was her being able to focus and to listen. She was easily excited when … we’re on a task that she’s really interested …
Peer Influences

One of the strongest influences, in terms of participant response, is the influence of the peer network on adolescent bullying behaviors. All three girls spoke about the importance of their friendships and of belonging to a group. Additionally, the teachers at both schools talked about the girls’ relationships in the sixth grade as being hierarchical in nature, and both of Tammy’s teachers remarked that there was a significant gang subculture at Tammy’s middle school. The factors most described by the participants as influencing the bully’s behavior were (a) the peer group as a reinforcer (b) the peer group as an instigator, (c) and motivation to belong to a particular clique.

The Crowd as Reinforcer and Instigator

Clearly, crowd behavior plays a huge role in reinforcing and even instigating the bully’s behavior. One of Julie’s teachers was asked about the effect of the crowd:

It’s horrible. If there’s a fight and there are kids in the hallway, it’s a mob towards those two individuals that are fighting. There’s a big huge mob around them. Just yelling and screaming. I don’t know if that would be encouragement or reinforcement but they yell and scream while they’re fighting.

Julie also described the reactions of the peer group to an individual who is having a heated verbal exchange with another student:

So, everybody in the crowd is like “get her, get her. You go in there” and then they gonna be workin’ her up while she’s just standing there all alone with her friends standing there by herself arguing and stuff – that’s going to make her want to get on ‘em just to make the crowd happy.

Clique Membership

Belonging to the right group seems to be a critical aspect to the social life of sixth grade girls. Cara shared her reasons for wanting to join the “big group:”
I wanted to be in the big group. I didn’t want to be like in the
group with “Alice” — that’s a group, too — I wanted to be in a big group
where it’s like I could like fit in with everybody and I don’t know
everybody so when I went somewhere I could always know somebody or I
could talk to somebody different all the time.

One of Cara’s teachers was asked to share her perspective on students trying to
please their peers:

In the boys it’s more a macho, tough, I’m as tough as you. So it’s a
different kind of thing. But with girls it’s more obvious because they get in
their little clique and aid each other. The boys will take it out after school
and they’ll fight and be over it. [The girls] need to hang on longer.

Safety Issues

Enough teacher responses registered in the category of safety to include it as a
mediating variable. The fact that weapons are found at school sites is sobering and
consistent with the statistics cited in Chapter 2 of this document with regard to violence
in urban schools (see page 11). Tammy told this researcher that she quit bullying a boy
because she was afraid of his knife. In Tammy’s words:

‘Cause this boy kept callin’ him gay and he pulled a knife. I think
if he get — when he at school, they call him gay and then we at home call
him that and so he got to the level. He’s tellin’ me when I ask him why he
do that. He said like “I didn’t really want to take it to the school ‘cause I
didn’t want to pull a knife on my friends. And I didn’t want to do it to
y’all ‘cause you’re my family. ... And like I quit.

One of Cara’s teachers reported that one of her students pulled a “look alike”
pistol in her classroom and was subsequently expelled. Certainly an ever-present danger
exists that any child might carry a weapon into a classroom and such issues can impact
safety. Within the realm of safety issues, however, is what one teacher described as the
“chaos of transition periods.” It is a period during which time teachers have limited
control on the student body and is thus a prime time for aggressive outbreaks. One of
Tammy’s teachers describe her frustration during such a period. She was asked if transition periods weren’t monitored and replied:

Yeah, but you can’t hear... you can be standing at your door in the hallway and be exactly where you’re supposed to be, but you might not hear something five feet in front of you, and somebody could have gotten bullied but it was a verbal bully. ... [Somebody could have said], “I’m going to kill you after school.” [and] I might not have heard that.

Teacher Factors

One interesting factor pulled from the discussions with the students and teachers is the effect attribution bias can play with teachers. For example, one of Cara’s teachers freely admitted that she was intimidated by Cara at the beginning of the year and this probably informed the teacher’s classroom manner. Cara also shared with me that she tries not to fight because if she does get into a fight, she would be the one who would get in trouble. When I asked her why, she said, “Cause I think most of the time [the teachers] think I start it because some of the teachers consider me as a bully.”

Incidents of Bullying

In describing bullying episodes, the participants shared details that they perceived to be characteristic variables in terms of location, and type of the aggressive action.

Locations of Bullying Incidents

One of Tammy’s teachers commented that the students know at which locations they are being watched and where they can act out that will not garner adult attention. Teachers from both schools indicated that although bullying incidents might happen occasionally in the classroom, the frequency and severity of those occurrences are less than occurrences that happen outside of the watchful eye of a teacher. Accordingly, the students spoke of bullying incidents that occur in the bathroom, at recess, and in the
hallways. Cara was the most specific in her description, indicating why students gravitated toward a certain hallway for such action:

Yea, [the bullying] happens in the classroom sometimes. Or it happens just walking down the hall on the 8th grade floor 'cause the 8th graders are the main people who just argue back and forth and stuff or if you're fighting or something it happens on the 8th grade floor 'cause less teachers are up there so they go up there and they fight or whatever.

*Physical or Non-Physical Bullying*

All participants reached a virtual consensus with regard to the bullying styles used by 6th grade girls. It should be noted that the girls at both of the middle school sites participating in this project indicated a willingness, if they had to, to participate in a physical fight. Most incidents that the girls participate in are non-physically aggressive exchanges, and involve calling an individual “outside her name,” spreading rumors, and active attempts to isolate fellow peers. This may be due, however, to the fact that virtually all of the altercations begin with words or non-verbal gestures. They could easily escalate to physical aggression, but often are derailed by the intervention of a staff member or, perhaps, a student. The following excerpt is a description of how fights normally progress at Tammy’s school. There is corroborating evidence that this is the progression of events at the other middle school site as well:

A lot of what happens [during a fight]... is our kids, they have a conflict with another student – they run their mouth. What I mean by that is they start calling names and start attacking them verbally. Our kids don’t know how to back down. With other schools they might not necessarily go to the extreme and stay verbal. But typically, we call that running their mouth and ... the other student ... just won’t take it and they get physical, fighting.
Immediate Consequences for Bullying Behavior

A final variable to consider is how each instance of bullying is handled. Here, this research data varied from “talking with the girls in the hall” to a 10-day suspension for fighting. For instance, Cara and Julie both said that at their school, the administrators would first call the victim and the bully down to talk it out, and work it out, and if that didn’t work they would get an in-school suspension in PEAK, an out-of-school suspension for up to 10 days, or even arrested if the fight is serious enough. One of Julie’s teachers’ comments supported this information. Tammy also reported that, at her school, repercussions for bullying behavior were dependent upon the staff member handling the situation. She said:

Mr. Border (a vice principal) … give ‘em, automatically, 10 days…. Ms. Allen (a vice principal) is a different story. She has to call your parents. And Ms. Cooper (the principal), she’ll talk to you.

When teacher were asked to provide suggestions for improving bullying situations, several teachers voiced the opinion that disciplinary action is not consistent, as noted in Tammy’s quote above. Their recommendation (see below) is that consistent delivery of disciplinary action is important in minimizing bullying behaviors in middle schools.

Participant Recommendations

All three girls were asked to describe how they would handle bullying situations if they were running their school. Cara and Julie who attended the same school, favored counseling the bullies first, encouraging them to work out their problems, and finally “putting them out,” (suspending them) as the last resort. Tammy insisted she didn’t like bullying “at her school” and would suspend the bully.
Teacher recommendations had a more systemic flavor and included:

- Incorporating self-esteem activities into the classroom.
- Smaller class sizes.
- Hiring teacher’s aides, important especially if lower teacher/pupil ratio is not possible.
- Consistency in delivering disciplinary action.
- Providing stringent guidelines for teachers to teach by. While veteran teachers may find it comfortable to “be on their own,” newer teachers may feel isolated and need the structure.
- Providing nutritious menus for the children’s cafeteria meals.

Although the above recommendations require a commitment, for the most part, by the school district, one of Julie’s teachers had one additional, more personal recommendation:

I would say ... a personal connection between an adult that cares about [the student] in the building and the child.... She needs to find someone she can latch onto and will listen to her side of the story ... a kind of an advocate.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The world of sixth grade is a turbulent world. It is a period beset with biological, interpersonal, and intellectual challenges. Students must adjust their self-concept to accommodate their changing bodies. At the same time, they are forced into a new school with new rules, new teachers, and a group of strangers as peers. It is apparent that the primary focus of attention for girls entering middle school, at least in this urban school district, is to establish group membership as well as to form individual peer relationships. Cara was pretty clear about what she wanted when she entered middle school:

I wanted to be in a big group where it’s like I could like fit in with everybody …so when I went somewhere I could always know somebody or I could talk to somebody different all the time.

Theoretical Perspectives

Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Cara’s statement is consistent with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (see Figure 2.1). Recall that, according to Maslow, an individual’s drive is focused on attending to survival needs that must be satisfied in a hierarchical order. The basic needs of physiological survival (i.e., food) must be met prior to being able to attend to satisfying the need to be safe and secure. Likewise, once one is safe, one can focus on finding secure relationships to satisfy the need to belong and be loved. This may be critical for
the urban adolescent whose home life is often fragile. This is because for African American children, about 55% live with only one parent (Duany & Pitmann, 1990). It is understandable, then, that the girls we spoke to were zealous in protecting their friends, guarding friendships, and pleasing their peers, all in an effort to be accepted and loved. In fact, one of Cara’s teachers spoke about Cara’s intense need to be accepted by her peers.

The following comment was made after Cara stole candy from her teacher’s desk in the presence of a substitute teacher. The other students thought it was funny. This teacher said:
And if she could she’d play... people to the 9th and it’s entertainment and everybody thought that Cara was funny [when she stole the candy from my desk and] ... everybody played along with it ... We’re not in trouble, so why not? [Cara] would be someone’s goat just for the sake of acceptance. And it’s funny because she would get that acceptance anyway from them. She ... didn’t have to go that far ...

La Greca and Prinstein (1999) present the work of Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli (1982); Coie, Dodge, and Kupersmidt (1990); Dodge, Coie, and Brakke (1982); and Newcomb, Bubowski, and Pattee (1993) to describe a peer status model that informs an understanding of social relationships in middle childhood. According to this model (see Figure 5.1), children may fall within five peer status categories. The popular children, or children who are well liked and have few enemies, usually exhibit good social skills. Rejected children, on the other hand, are those high in disliking (meaning they have more enemies) while also enjoying a limited number of friends. These children may be aggressive, disruptive, exhibit few social skills, and report more social anxiety. While neglected children don’t have many enemies, they are not liked and so are ignored by their peers. This can lead to social isolation and high levels of social anxiety and social avoidance for this group. Controversial children may be highly visible – even assuming leadership roles – with both a large number of friends as well as enemies counted within their peer group. Few children are included in this category and so research is limited on controversial children. Finally, about 50% of all children fall within the average ranks. These children are considered the “normal” population and are not considered to be at risk (La Greca & Prinstein, 1999).

Piagetian Theory of Cognitive Development

The adolescent girls with whom we have had the opportunity to talk in this study are also at a developmentally unique place in their lives. The bodies of most girls are
physically mature at this age while, at the same time, many are only beginning to access formal operational thought. It is at this time that the individual’s young mind is beginning to contemplate her surroundings at a formal operations cognitive level (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). Intellectually, this young person is now capable of abstract thought, is able to make generalizations based on specific events (Wadsworth, 1996), and is beginning to realize and take advantage of the power that these new skills can exert on personal relationships. In girls of this age, exerting power and control in the form of bullying appears to be a method of manipulating the unfamiliar social landscape they encounter in middle school.

*Ecological and Social Learning Theories*

One can also look at the bullying behaviors of girls through the lenses of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model as well as from the perspective of social learning theory. According to Bronfenbrenner’s theory, elements of a child’s world overlap, creating connecting links from the core, or microsystem, that is the child, to all systems including home, school, and community (mesosystem), to extended family (macrosystem), and even to the exosystem levels that include mass media and government.

At the same time, social learning theory can also be used to understand some of the coping behaviors used by the girls in this study. Bandura’s cognitive social learning theory provides a framework for us to understand how children acquire knowledge and skills without direct instruction. This, of course, is accomplished via observing modeled behavior (Shaffer, 1999). Because the adolescent’s home life is linked to her school and social life, we can see how behaviors that are learned, socially, at home, can affect a
student's life at school. Environmental factors that could influence a student's behavior could involve levels of aggression associated with an individual's home or community. That is, social or cultural factors can play a huge role in the types of learned behaviors that are acquired via social modeling and reflected in a student's school behavior.

Conclusions

Bullying seems to serve a purpose in the young adolescent girl's transition from elementary to middle school. Although the focus of attention in the literature with regard to gender differences has been in the area of physical vs. non-physical aspects of aggressive behavior (e.g., Gottheil & Dubow, 2000; Coie & Dodge, 1998; Knight, Fabes, & Higgins, 1996; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), we know that the girls at the two schools used in this study were not averse to using physical aggression when they wanted to. Although Leckie (1998) contends that verbal skills persuade the choice of bullying methodology in teenage girls, this may be a gender issue only from a developmental perspective. Informant reports for the current study indicate that girls at the sixth grade level actually fight more than boys do at the two schools involved in this study. Verbal aggression, however, is reported more often. This may be because the non-physical aggression portrayed more often in observer and participant accounts often precedes physical exchanges. Other factors relating to the specific incident of bullying may be influencing this trend. The most frequently cited factor by the participants in this research is that verbal altercations may have been broken up prior to their escalating to the next, physical level by the intervention of an adult and occasionally by a student.

The subjects of this study also discussed relationships with boys. While the girls spoke about boys, this talk was limited in scope. Two of the girls each indicated that they
might be interested in one of the boys but this attention appears to on the level of a “crush” relationship. While the third girl said she preferred to hang out with boys because they didn’t argue or fight like her other friends did, one of her teachers indicated that she displayed signs of “having a crush,” albeit unrequited, on one of the boys in her class. However, the researcher collected no evidence to support that their aggressive behaviors at school were linked to any heterosexual activity.

The tendency for some girls to bully their peers appears to be driven by the anxiety experienced by these young girls as they attempt to fit into the peer community that waits for them at middle school. This anxiety may be further complicated by the urgencies of living in poverty and in the shadow of the perpetual danger that exists in neighborhoods contaminated by violence and substance abuse. These students bring to school bullying behavior that is shaped by environmental and biological factors that serve as markers for each girl’s historical background. It is possible, then, that these girls who often come from broken homes also may be party to violence outside of school and may therefore have more difficulty adjusting to their school’s social environment. Seeking a sense of belonging via peer relationships in school may be a necessary part of mental health survival for these young girls.

The safety issue of the potential existence of weapons at school is yet another complication. Although school personnel are doing everything possible to minimize this possibility, including hiring police officers to be on site, there remains an ongoing risk that students may carry weapons onto a school campus. The extent to which these students are made to feel safe in the at school and at home may determine the level of
efficacy which they can apply to the task of fitting in, or to belong, to their middle school world.

From a Piagetian perspective, girls may be in a better position, developmentally, to cognitively process possible relational scenarios in 6th grade and to be better able to execute a non-physical means to achieve an end than are boys. This more advanced cognitive ability is valuable in helping these girls achieve social status (see Figure 5.1). In Maslow terms, in order to achieve a sense of belongingness, they may feel the need to manipulate their social relationships so as to avoid being rejected or neglected by their peers, and this motivation may drive aggressive behaviors. In addition, if the girls are also exposed to violence at home, the behavioral strategies they choose to achieve peer-related goals may be influenced through a social learning process (see page 59).

It may prove helpful, at this point, to revisit the definition of bullying set forth in the literature. Bullying consists of hurtful behaviors, physical or non-physical, that occur on a regular basis and involve a real or perceived power differential (see Chapter 1). The behaviors of both Julie and Cara appear to be driven by their desire to be the center of attention, crowd pleasers, and “the one” with whom peers will want to associate. While some of their aggressive confrontations were provoked by peers, hurtful comments or gestures were often proffered by these girls in an active attempt to manipulate the social environment at their school. This just was not the case with Tammy. Tammy’s normal in-school behavior was clearly quiescent. Tempestuous outbursts did occur, but only as a result of some provocation.
Summary

When girls enter middle school, they arrive with biological and ecological histories that predispose the behavioral decisions they make as they strive to fit into their new social world. These girls also arrive with more advanced cognitive abilities which can enable them to socially negotiate an advantageous level of social status (see Figure 5.1). The motivation to seek this social status among their peers may be powerful in influencing the decisions they make which may result in proactive aggression directed toward their peers.

The degree to which these students are successful in taking an acceptable place among their peers may be compromised, however, if the individual has not been able to satisfy her need to feel safe, either at home or at school. In this case, it is possible that frustration levels may influence more reactive patterns of aggression in those who bully.

Suggestions for Further Study

The current study was an in-depth look at the bullying behaviors of African American 6th grade girls. The current research was conducted in a large urban school district in a Midwest state in the United States. Similar work in other urban districts may balance the available knowledge on bullying behaviors specific to other ethnic populations and other situational contexts.

Implications for Treatment

For imminent victims, for the future Elizabeth Bushes of this world who may face merciless teasing and torment by their peers, the type of intervention designed to derail the inevitability of bullying behaviors in our schools is important. Information gathered through research could prove to be critical in tailoring selective intervention programs
rather than depending on universal intervention strategies typically designed in a one-size-fits-all format. The results of this study indicate the need for bullying interventions to foster friendship alliances, improve a student's empathic concern for others, as well as to provide training in problem-solving skills. Continued emphasis on anger management, self-esteem issues, and social skills training is also important.

We know that some differences exist (e.g., by gender and economic class) in bullying behaviors. For intervention techniques to be effective, intervention curricula need to be tailored to answer the needs of specific target populations. Perhaps by providing need- and population-specific interventions, we can minimize the anxiety and frustration experienced by young, victimized teens.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Project GRAD Columbus (2002). *Project GRAD Columbus: Graduation really achieves dreams* [Brochure]. Columbus, OH: Author.


# APPENDIX A

**SHOOTINGS/DEATHS AT OR NEAR SCHOOLS IN THE PAST TEN SCHOOL YEARS DUE PRIMARILY TO BULLYING**

(Primary Source: The National School Safety Center’s Report on School Associated Violent Deaths, 6-3-02)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Incident Description</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-24-93</td>
<td>Jason Michael Smith (16)</td>
<td>Shot student at school</td>
<td>Upper Perkiomen H.S.</td>
<td>Red Hill, PA (1,794)</td>
<td>Victim had bullied offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-19-94</td>
<td>Phillip Hernandez (14)</td>
<td>Stabbed classmate in heart at bus stop</td>
<td>Valley View Junior High School</td>
<td>Simi Valley, CA (516,259)</td>
<td>Stabbing victim had been bullying his stabber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2-96</td>
<td>Barry Loukitas (16)</td>
<td>Shot &amp; killed 1 teacher and 2 students</td>
<td>Frontier Junior H. S.</td>
<td>Moses Lake, WA (11,235)</td>
<td>Loukitas, described as a “nerd”, had been teased relentlessly by 1 of the victims, reportedly said it would be “cool” to go on killing spree a la “Natural Born Killers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-19-97</td>
<td>Evan Ramsey (16)</td>
<td>Killed principal &amp; classmate, wounded 2 others</td>
<td>Bethel Regional High School</td>
<td>Bethel, AK (4,674)</td>
<td>“Palacios may have called Ramsey names.” High school is a dormitory school drawing from neighboring villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-18-97</td>
<td>Deshard Mosely (15)</td>
<td>Stabbed &amp; killed 1 student on football practice field, egged on by 40 onlookers</td>
<td>Southwest Dekalb High School</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA (394,017)</td>
<td>Student victim had taunted Mosely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-1-97</td>
<td>Michael Carmel (14)</td>
<td>Killed 3 female students, wounded 5 others at school group meeting</td>
<td>Heath High School</td>
<td>West Paducah, KY (27,256)</td>
<td>Suspected teasing by members of prayer group as well as athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-21-98</td>
<td>Ricardo Martin (15)</td>
<td>Killed self on campus</td>
<td>Rialto High School</td>
<td>Rialto, CA (72,388)</td>
<td>Suicide: upset at not advancing to next grade &amp; being teased because of dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-2-98</td>
<td>Unnamed 15-year old male</td>
<td>13 year old student beaten &amp; kicked as he got off the bus, killing him</td>
<td>E. T. Booth Middle School</td>
<td>Woodstock, GA (4,361)</td>
<td>Perpetrator had been taunting victim during bus ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1-99</td>
<td>Unnamed 15-year old male</td>
<td>Shot &amp; killed self at school</td>
<td>Richland Hills High School</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX (447,619)</td>
<td>Suicide: had been taunted by peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-20-99</td>
<td>Eric Harris (18) Dylan Klebold (17)</td>
<td>Killed selves after going on killing rampage throughout the school leaving 15 (incl. them) dead</td>
<td>Columbine High School</td>
<td>Littleton, CO (37,753)</td>
<td>Revenge: Harris and Klebold had been bullied for years²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-24-00</td>
<td>Chris Joyner (12)</td>
<td>Excused self from gym class &amp; hanged self</td>
<td>Zebulon Middle School</td>
<td>Zebulon, NC (3,200)</td>
<td>Suicide: suspected victim of teasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5-01</td>
<td>Charles Andrew Williams (15)</td>
<td>Killed 2 students, wounded 13 others</td>
<td>Santana High School</td>
<td>Santee, CA (59,000)</td>
<td>Victim of frequent taunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7-01</td>
<td>Elizabeth Bush (14)</td>
<td>Shot classmate in shoulder in school cafeteria</td>
<td>Bishop Newmann Junior-Senior High School (230)</td>
<td>Williamsport, PA 1ycoming County (118,710)</td>
<td>Prior to attending Newman, Bush had been called homosexual and other names &amp; problems continued at Newman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Secondary Source: http://www.forouryouth.org/juveyjustice/cases/evan/  
² Secondary Source: http://weinholds.org/bullyimport.htm  
³ Secondary Source: http://www.cbsnews.com
APPENDIX B

Letter Requesting Parental Permission for Student to Complete a Survey Questionnaire

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Educators today are looking for every possible way to improve student success in school. One issue of concern deals with the social life of adolescents as they enter middle school from the elementary school grades. It is during this period that students appear to experience aggression and bullying at an increased level. Of course, this can affect their ability to learn in school. This can be a difficult time for sixth graders, but researchers are trying to discover more about these experiences from a student’s perspective in an effort to better understand the phenomenon.

I hope you will agree to permit your son or daughter to complete a brief questionnaire that will serve as the first step in helping to understand the social climate of your child’s school. All questionnaire responses will, of course, be kept completely confidential. We will pursue no other research activity without your express, written approval.

Please keep one copy of this letter for your records, and sign and return the other to us using the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to call (614) 292-4255.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Antoinette Halsell Miranda, Ph.D.  Gloria Puskas, B.A.
Associate Professor  School Psychology
School Psychology  Graduate Student

☐ Yes, my son or daughter may participate in the student survey
☐ I do not want my son or daughter to participate

Comments (optional) ____________________________________________________________

_________________________________________  _________________________________
Student’s Name School

_________________________________________  _________________________________
Parent’s Name Parent’s Signature
APPENDIX C

Letter Requesting Parental Permission for Student to Participate in a Case Study

Dear Parent or Guardian:

You have received this letter because we asked the principal of your daughter’s school to mail this letter to a concerned parent who might be willing to help us in our quest to learn more about the social world of sixth grade girls – especially about those behaviors that may negatively affect their developing social relationships. We are especially interested in talking to sixth grade girls at your child’s school who have been involved in a bullying experience. By doing so, we hope to gain a realistic perception of bullying behavior from the student’s perspective. Only by talking to girls who have been involved, can we better understand this social interaction.

We are asking for permission to meet and speak with your daughter over a period of 2-3 weeks. We are not only interested in your daughter’s point of view, but yours, as well as your daughter’s teacher(s). The first interview with your daughter would occur within the next 1-2 weeks. At this time she will be asked to complete a journal that she can turn in to us when she returns for a second and final interview about two weeks later. Our interview with you can be conducted either over the telephone or at the school. I will be contacting you as soon as I receive your signed permission in the enclosed envelope.

All student identities will be protected against disclosure. All conversations will be protected by strict rules of confidentiality – no real names (student, teacher, parent, school) will appear anywhere in any written report. Conversations with students will be individually conducted after school to ensure your daughter’s privacy. Although the interviews do need to be audiotaped to ensure accuracy, absolutely all information collected will be held in confidence and the audiotapes will be destroyed after use.

We are enclosing two copies of this letter as well as the enclosed form that describes the project and includes a consent form. Please sign and return one copy of the enclosed form and this informational letter to us in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Keep the copies for your records. Please note that participation in this project is voluntary and you may terminate it at any time without penalty.

We would very much appreciate your granting approval for us to speak with you, your daughter, and her teacher over the next two months. As a token of our appreciation, we will
make a donation to your school’s PTA treasury in your name in the amount of $25. It will also be our pleasure to provide you with a thank you gift certificate to Kroger’s or Big Bear (your choice) in the amount of $50.00 after the interviews are completed, the first part of May. Because your daughter’s opinion is so vital to our research, we will also be providing her with a token of our appreciation in the form of a gift certificate to a store such as Media Play or Lazarus (her choice) in the amount of a $20.

Thank you for considering our invitation for you to participate in this effort to learn more about the social life of our teenage girls. Because we need to begin our interviews soon, we are asking you to please return both the letter and the consent form to us as soon as possible. Please note that we will need to limit participation to the first three responses that we receive. Please call 292-4255 if you have any questions at all about this project.

Sincerely,

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Antoinette Halsell Miranda, Ph.D. Gloria Puskas, B.A.
Associate Professor School Psychology
School Psychology Graduate Student

I have signed the attached consent form. My daughter and I will be participating in this research project voluntarily, but know we may terminate our participation at any time.

At the completion of the interview sessions (February or March) I would like to receive a $50.00 gift certificate to Krogers or Big Bear (please circle one).

Student Name __________________ School ____________________________
Parent Signature_________________________ Phone ____________________

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APPENDIX D

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH
CONSENT TO INVESTIGATIONAL PROCEDURE

Protocol title: Girls and Bullying: Conversations with Three Middle School Students

Protocol number: 2003B0013

Principal Investigator: Antoinette Halsell Miranda

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH:

1. Description of the procedure or treatment. Reason for performing this procedure or treatment.

In order to better understand the social interactions of young teen-age girls, particularly those behaviors associated with bullying, individual interviews will be conducted with three students from similar backgrounds who experienced bullying behaviors on some level. These confidential interviews will be conducted on a voluntary basis, with parental consent.

2. Participation in this study is optional and voluntary. Possible appropriate alternative procedures or treatment are:

None.

3. Discomforts and risks that might reasonably be expected from participation in this study.

Every effort will be taken to minimize any risk to the student’s social status as a result of participation in this project. Interviews will be conducted in a secure, pre-arranged location at the school. Information collected will be annotated only with a research number -- names will not be used. Audiotapes will be destroyed as soon as the results have been published.

4. Possible benefits for participants or for society.

A tremendous benefit for all adolescent students is possible. With an in-depth understanding of social behaviors such as bullying, and the motivation that drives such behaviors in girls, interventions can be designed to target behavior patterns specific to the adolescent female population which, in turn, should produce maximum results.
5. Estimated amount of time it will take (number of sessions; length of each session, period of time).

It is anticipated that it will take 6-8 weeks to collect this research data. During that time, the researcher plans to meet with the three primary subjects in two one-hour after-school sessions. Interviews with parents will be conducted either in person at the school or via telephone. It is anticipated that each interview will be 60-90 minutes in length. Each interview with a teacher should be approximately one hour in length.

6. Use of audiotapes, videotapes or photographs to collect information for this study.

The only electronic medium used in this study will be audiotapes to ensure the integrity of the data collected. These tapes will be destroyed after use.

7. Access to archival records such as academic records or medical records. List the information that will be obtained from these sources.

There are no plans to access any records at this time. All information used will be collected verbally from each participant. If an unanticipated need should arise to access records, it would only be done with expressed, written permission from the participating parent.

CONSENT:

I consent to my participation in (or my child’s participation in) research being conducted by Antoinette Halsell Miranda of The Ohio State University and his/her assistants and associates.

The investigator(s) has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures that will be followed, and the amount of time it will take. I understand the possible benefits, if any, of my participation (and/or my child’s participation).

The investigator(s) has explained the risks, if any, and I understand what they are. No guarantees have been made regarding the effectiveness of this treatment or procedure.

I know that I can (and/or my child can) choose not to participate without penalty to me (or my child). If I give my consent to participate, I can (and/or my child can) withdraw from the study at any time, and there will be no penalty.

- I consent to the use of audiotapes for this study. I understand how the tapes will be used for this study and that they will be destroyed after use.

I have had a chance to ask questions and to obtain answers to my questions. I can contact the investigators by calling Dr. Antoinette Miranda at 292-4255. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant I can call the Office of Research Risks Protection at (614) 688-4792.
I understand in signing this form that, beyond giving consent, I am not waiving any legal rights that I might otherwise have. My signature on this form does not release the investigator, the sponsor, the institution, or its agents from any legal liability for damages that they might otherwise have.

I have read this form or I have had it read to me. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

**Print the name of the participant:**

Date: ___________________________  Signed: ___________________________

Signed: ___________________________

*(Principal Investigator or his/her authorized representative)*

Signed: ___________________________

*(Person authorized to consent for participant, if required)*

Witness: ___________________________

* *(When required)*

*HS-028B (revised 05/01)*
APPENDIX E

Girls and Bullying: Discussions with Three Middle School Students
Principal Investigator: Antoinette Halsell Miranda, Ph.D.

Student Statement of Understanding and Consent

I, ______________________________, agree to be interviewed by Gloria Puskas, a graduate student with The Ohio State University, and to complete a daily journal for the purposes of this research. I also understand that this journal, as well as any conversations with Mrs. Puskas, will be kept strictly confidential. I have been told that my participation is completely voluntary and that I will receive a gift certificate for $20.00 after the last session has been completed. I also understand that I may withdraw from the program, without penalty, at any time.

SIGNED:

_________________________________________  ______________________________
Student                                          Date

_________________________________________  ______________________________
Researcher                                        Date

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APPENDIX F

Student Interview Protocol

The researcher will employ intensive, semi-structured interviews, in order to derive the richest data for these case studies. The following outline will be followed:

Pre-Interview

*Introduction and establishment of rapport:* The researcher will greet the participant and introduce herself. She will then take the time to establish rapport with the student, by asking two or three questions such as:

- How is school going for you so far this year?
- What is your favorite subject?
- Do you get a lot of homework?
- What do you like to do when you aren't studying?
- Where do you like to hang out with your friends?
- Have you seen any good movies lately?
- Have you seen (name of a movie of possible interest)?

*Brief description of study's goal:* The researcher will continue by saying, "I am an OSU graduate student working on a special project concerned with how sixth grade students socialize and, especially, with some special interactions that can occur in sixth grade. One particular type of interaction that we don't know very much about is bullying. I am asking you to help me because it is very important to learn as much as possible about this kind of behavior from a student's perspective and so I would particularly value any contribution you would agree to share with me. I want you to know that everything you share with me will be very much appreciated and would be held in the strictest of confidence. The tape recordings I make of our conversation will be erased as soon as they are transcribed. No real names (yours, your school's,
your friends”) will be used anywhere in the transcriptions of our conversations. There will be nothing in writing that will tie you, personally, with what you tell me.”

Request for Consent: “As a matter of fact, prior to talking to you, I had to show my university and your school district that I would do everything possible to protect your identity. For instance, I told them that:

- There would be two interviews with you. The first would last about 30-60 minutes, while the second would be a brief telephone interview. The interviews will be audiotaped for accuracy in transcription. Only I, the researcher, would have access to these tapes, and that the tapes will be erased after the transcription process is complete,”

- Students should also be told that their participation is completely voluntary, and that they may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and that,

- In addition to parental permission, they, as student, are also to be presented with an opportunity to consent to participation.

The student would then be given the Student Statement of Understanding and Consent Form (see Appendix E) to read. The student will be asked if she has any questions prior to signing the document.

The researcher will begin tape recording. A semi-structured interview with the student will then be conducted. Minimally, the following questions will be asked, with follow up questions possible to clarify student responses.

1. What do you think is meant by the term, bullying?

2. Think of a time that you saw someone being bullied. Can you tell me about that time?
10. What effect do you think the action of teachers or administrators has had on the number of bullying incidents that occur at your school? Do more or less incidents occur?

11. If you were a teacher or administrator, would you think bullying was a problem? If so, how would you handle it?

12. Have any of your friends ever bullied?
   - If so, what did they do?
   - Who did they bully and why?
   - What happened to them after they bullied?
   - How do their friends feel about them?

13. Have you ever been victimized by a bully? If so:
   - Why do you think the bullying started?
- What do you think the bully was thinking/feeling?
- What did you think/feel?
- Who was to blame for the bullying?
- Why did the bullying stop?
- What happened after the bullying? How did others (friends, teachers) respond?
- What do you think should have happened?

14. Have you ever bullied? If so:

- Why do you think the bullying started? Who was to blame?
- What were you thinking/feeling at the time?
- What do you think the victim was thinking/feeling?
- Why did the bullying stop?
- What happened after the bullying? How did other people respond?
- What do you think should have happened?

The student would be thanked for her cooperation, and arrangements with her would be made for the next interview in approximately three weeks: “Thank you for sharing your experiences with me, [student’s name]. I am now going to ask you to do one more thing. Will you keep this journal [See Appendix G] for me over the next two weeks? Please keep it at home, but think about what happened at school when you are at home at night, and write those thoughts down at that time. You can start tomorrow and we will put that date on the first page. [date each day’s entry page with the student] We’ll talk again in about three weeks to arrange for you to turn in your completed journal to me.”

The researcher will ask the student if she has any questions. She will tell the student that she will call her once within the two-week period to see how the journaling process is going and to see if any questions have arisen. The student will be thanked one more time, the next appointment will be confirmed, before saying “good bye.”
APPENDIX G

Journal Protocol

DAILY JOURNAL

Day 1: ____________________________ (day, date)

Things that happened today at or around school involving me, my friends, or other students (use back of paper if necessary) ____________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

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______________________________________________________________________

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______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

There will be one section like the above for each of the ten days that students will be requested to make notes about their social interactions. During the first interview session with the student, the days and dates will be identified in writing for each of the ten entries requested.
APPENDIX H

Parent Interview Protocol

The researcher will employ an intensive, semi-structured interview. Except for initial background questions, open-ended questions will be asked in order to derive the richest data for these case studies. The following outline will be followed:

Pre-Interview

*Introduction and establishment of rapport:* This interview can be conducted in person or over the telephone. The researcher will introduce herself and greet the participant. The researcher will then take the time to establish rapport with the parent, by talking about anything that may be of interest to the parent.

*Brief description of study’s goal:* The researcher will continue by saying, “I would like to tell you a little more about the special project we are conducting that is concerned with how sixth grade students socialize and, especially, with some of the special interactions that can occur in sixth grade. As I mentioned before, one behavior we don’t know much about is bullying. So, I will be asking you questions to try to get your perspective on this topic. Some of the questions may be personal, but I would particularly value any contribution you would agree to share with me and I want you to know that everything you share with me will be held in the strictest of confidence. The tape recordings I make of our conversation will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed. No real names (yours, your daughter’s, the school’s) will be used anywhere in the transcriptions of our conversations. There will be nothing in writing that will tie you, personally, with what you tell me.”
Interview

Questions asked of the parents may include some questions that evolve from discussions with their daughters. In addition, a minimum of the following questions will be asked, with follow up questions possible in order to clarify responses.

1. What is your marital status?
2. Do you work outside the home?
3. How many children are living in your home? How many adults?
4. How would you define bullying?
5. How would you describe your daughter at home?
6. Describe your daughter’s social life outside of school.
7. What kinds of responsibilities are expected of your daughter at home?
8. Will you share with me how you discipline your children?
9. Please describe any incidents of aggression that occur (regardless of who the actor is) in your home.
10. Do any of your daughter’s behaviors concern you? Please explain.

Other questions may be asked as necessary. At the end of the interview session, the parent will be thanked once again. He or she will be given, as a token of our appreciation, a gift certificate to either Kroger’s or Big Bear in the amount of $50.00. If the interview is being conducted over the telephone, the parent will be told the gift certificate will be mailed to them with our thanks.
APPENDIX I

Teacher Interview Protocol

The researcher will employ an intensive, semi-structured interview. Open-ended questions will be asked in order to derive the richest data for these case studies. The following outline will be followed:

Introduction

The researcher will introduce herself to the teacher and take the time to explain the project to the teacher in and to see if the teacher has any questions about the process.

Interview

Questions asked of the teacher may include some questions that evolve from discussions with the student. In addition, a minimum of the following questions will be asked, with follow up questions possible in order to clarify responses.

1. How would you define bullying?

2. How would you describe the student in the classroom?

3. Describe the student’s social life at school.

4. What kinds of responsibilities does this student exhibit in the classroom?

5. Describe methods you use to manage behavior challenges in the classroom.

6. Have you personally observed incidents of aggression among the female students.

7. Please describe that aggression. Include all parties involved.

8. Where do you observe these incidents of aggression?

9. How do you deal with such incidents of aggression?

10. In your opinion, what is the best way to minimize this type of aggression?
Other questions may be asked as necessary. At the end of the interview session, the teacher will be thanked for his or her participation in the project. The teacher will be asked to participate in a second brief interview.

**Follow-Up Interview**

At the second interview, the researcher will present the teacher with a summary of her interpretations of the first interview and request feedback to verify the integrity of the information as analyzed during the coding process. This may be done over the telephone.
APPENDIX J

Statement of Understanding for Student's Teacher to Participate in a Case Study

Dear Teacher:

As you may be aware, research indicates that 80-90% of the teenage population report some form of bully victimization during their school years. We at The Ohio State University are interested in talking to sixth grade girls at your school who have been involved in a bullying experience. By talking to girls who are involved, their parents and teachers, we expect to better understand this social interaction.

We will be, with parental permission, working with several girls from your school in conjunction with this project. The parents understand that we will also be asking to talk to you as well. We are hoping that you will agree to spend about an hour with us to answer some questions about the behaviors of your students with regard to their social interactions. Although the interview does need to be audiotaped to ensure accuracy, absolutely all information collected will be held in confidence and the audiotapes will be destroyed after use.

Two copies of this letter are enclosed. Your signature at the bottom of this letter will indicate that you understand that your participation in this interview process is a voluntary one. Please return a signed copy to me and keep the other copy for your records.

Thank you. If you have any questions, please feel free to call 292-4255.

Sincerely,

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Antoinette Halsell Miranda, Ph.D.  Gloria Puskas, B.A.
Associate Professor  School Psychology
School Psychology  Graduate Student

I have read and understand the information contained in the above letter. I agree to participate in this project and understand that my participation is completely voluntary.

Teacher ___________________ Student Name ___________________ Phone ________