**Students' Perceptions of Bullying After the Fact: A Qualitative Study of
College Students' Bullying Experiences in Their K-12 Schooling**

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ABSTRACT

Today students confront more than writing, reading, and arithmetic in school.
Students witness and participate in various forms of bullying at an alarming rate. As
educators we must help create an environment that is conducive for all students to learn.
This study examines college students' definitions and perceptions of incidents of bullying
that they witnessed, or where they were the victim or perpetrator. Through 41 in-depth
interviews and utilizing the constant comparative method of analysis, themes were
identified including reasons students bully and are bullied, such as: weight, size, clothing,
being perceived as different, sexual preferences, and placement in special education.
Clothing as a reason for bullying emerged as a theme that was echoed by many of those
interviewed. Whether it was the brand name of the clothes, where they were purchased,
or the style of the clothes, several participants were bullied and bullied others because of
clothing. Participants' definitions of bullying were from the perspective of those who are
bullied, bully, and who have witnessed bullying, and included defining emotional
bullying. Other students noted in their definitions the role of groups and the role of power
in incidents of bullying. Unique to this study were participants' recollections of regrets.
These regrets were from those participants who had participated as a bully or as a
witness. In addition, themes that emerged in the data included: how students perceive
teachers' involvement in incidents of bullying, ways to reduce bullying in schools, where
bullying occurs, and why some people bully.

Acknowledgments

With the completion of this dissertation, I am prompted to thoughts of the road that led me to this point and those along the way to whom I am greatly indebted. This process would not have been as meaningful without my best friend and spouse, Angela Williams. She has provided constant support and encouragement from when she first suggested I go into teaching and for this, and much else, I thank her and acknowledge her assistance on every facet of my life. I also wish to acknowledge and thank my family, without whom none of this would have been possible. I thank my mother, Susan Williams, and my late father, Randall Williams, as they endured a lot as I grew up and challenged teachers and administrators. They were the ones who encouraged me to pursue a college degree, and that has made a major difference in my life. My grandparents also deserve much credit, as they made college possible, life bearable, and growing up easy. My grandmother, Mary Schroeder and my grandfather, the late John Z. Schroeder Sr., never failed in their love and encouragement and for this I will always be grateful. My sister, Rhonda Malkowski, and my brother, Todd Williams, have been encouraging and supportive and I am glad to have them in my life. Special thanks to Mary Alice Barksdale whose professional advice and guidance have offered me opportunities I would have never imagined. She has motivated me in all aspects of my professional life. She is a very dedicated teacher and researcher whose example is unparalleled. I also acknowledge and thank Terry Graham who has been an inspiration and who stuck it out with me when times were tough. I am thankful for Mary Alice and Terry's friendship and the support they have given me over the years. I am also thankful to Tom Gardner for sticking with this project and offering insights as I navigated this

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Preface

During the course of this research endeavor, the peacefulness and silence at

Virginia Tech were shattered, as were the worlds of many students, faculty, and staff. In

what has been called the "Virginia Tech Massacre," a student gunman took the lives of

32 students and faculty on campus. The horrific events that unfolded on the morning of

April 16, 2007 will always be a part of our experiences at Virginia Tech, but they will not

be the defining experience. On April 16th and since, a community within and beyond

Virginia Tech and Blacksburg, Virginia came together to mourn and rebuild. This study

is about rebuilding. It is about rebuilding a society that demeans others, a society that

looks to violence to find vengeance, and a society that has the ability to do more. This

research project took shape long before the events of April 16th unfolded. The data were

collected and analyzed and the writing of the results had already commenced when our

community fell victim to this violence. While this research project was not originally

constructed in reaction to the events that unfolded that windy day, the words and thoughts

here within are tainted by the events of April 16th, if only by implication and hope.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will break our spirit."

from *The Misfits* by James Howe (2001)

Education is accessible to every child in the United States. The federal government, state governments, and local governments, along with school systems, have the responsibility for providing a free education to all children. Yet, there are children who are not fully obtaining an education -- children who avoid school, children who attend but do not engage in learning with others, children who can not learn due to factors that draw their attention away from the daily lessons, and children whose sense of security is destroyed by other students (Aronson, 2000; Bonilla, 2000; Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Coggeshall & Kingery, 2001). Today's children are facing many obstacles to their education, and one of the considerable problems schools must deal with is bullying (Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998). The findings of one study indicated that "1/3 of middle school students felt unsafe at school because of bullying and did not report such behaviors…" (Bosworth et al., 1999, pp. 341-342) In this same study, it was demonstrated that students did not report bullying behaviors for a variety of reasons, one being that the students felt that the teachers and administrators would do nothing to help.

The significance of bullying in schools reaches far into our society, as its impact stretches beyond individual incidents between individuals, as demonstrated by the federal

government's interest in supporting the use of surveys to gain more information for understanding and addressing the problem (Coggeshall & Kingery, 2001) Bullying is a practice among youth that reeks havoc on the educational establishments of the United States and other countries. Educators are concerned with bullies because they create within other students (and hence the school environment) a sense of fear that is detrimental to the sense of comfort and safety needed in order for learning to occur, and in some cases bullying can lead to "school-related victimizations" (Howell, 1997). Bullying has been defined as "repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful one" (Howell, 1997, p. 144).

Success in the learning environment is not ensured by the absence of bullying, but effective learning environments can be enhanced when such distractions are eliminated (Bosworth et al., 1999). It is for this reason that bullying needs to be substantively addressed in the public schools.

Our schools should be safe havens where learning opportunities are provided for every student and where students' sense of safety is a liberating and equalizing reality that exists as part of a democratic society that provides, believes in, and promotes education. It has been shown that between 80% and 90% of adolescents and preadolescents will have to deal with ongoing psychological and physical harassment, characterized as bullying, at some point in their educational experience (Oliver, Young, & LaSalle, 1994). Adolescent problem behaviors such as bullying are not considered simple isolated events but part of a syndrome (Bosworth et al., 1999). This culture of bullying that persists, and is carried through the media like a well-marketed campaign for

the cola of the month, must be illuminated and eliminated, as nothing should be more sacred than the safety and education of our young people.

Purpose

Bullying can have many harmful effects. In *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2003* (Department of Justice, 2003) it is reported that both males and females, ages 12-18, were more likely to report being bullied in 2001 than in 1999, with males reporting 9% and females reporting 7%. In 1999 there was no difference between males and females, as the rates for both were 5%. Another study found that 60% of 12-to17-year-olds had witnessed a classmate bullying another student every single day (Druck & Kaplowitz, 2005). If students are bullied, they may feel that school is too unsafe a place for them to attend, and this can negativity impact attendance and therefore the student's ability to learn. The number of high school students who reported feeling too unsafe to attend school rose from 4% in 1997 to 5.2% in 1999, and 6.6% in 2001 (The National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). Bullying is toxic to an environment conducive for learning. Whether it is physical or psychological harassment, or a side effect of the harassment manifested in poor attendance due to students fearing for their safety, something has to be done. As Maslow (1954) established more than half a century ago, the basic safety needs of individuals must be met before higher needs such as learning and critical thinking can be achieved. Our students must be protected and made to feel safe on their way to and from school and while at school.

Theory: Anomie

It is important to place bullying within a theoretical framework so as to provide understanding and facilitate a more detailed conceptualization of these concepts, their

possible causes, and possible lines of inquiry. While biological theories, functionalism, and social learning theories provide theoretical frameworks that can shed light on bullying, Durkheim's anomie provides an explanation that moves from the individual to society.

Society has a great impact on the individual's actions, some of which are induced by the rules, norms, and mores of society, or even the lack thereof of such influences. This is where Durkheim's work provided an insight not gleaned from other possible theories. In *Suicide* (1979), Durkheim defined anomic suicide as suicide resulting from man's activity lacking regulation and his constant suffering that occurs as a result of the lack of regulation. Durkheim (1979) defined regulation as being a force that plays "the same role for moral needs which the organism plays for physical needs. This means that the force can only be moral." Regulation is basically seen as a positive force, moral, because it is agreed upon by society as what is desirable. He also stated that society is the only authority that man will respect and it is the only "moral power superior to the individual, the authority of which he accepts" (pp. 248-249). Therefore, lack of regulation means that somehow society loses its ability to regulate individuals. In an anomic situation, society no longer provides the constraints that keep people from committing suicide. An example provided by Durkheim (1979) is when a spouse dies and the other spouse is "not adapted to the new situation in which he finds himself and accordingly offers less resistance to suicide" (p. 259). Shoemaker (2000) defined anomie as the "inconsistencies between societal conditions and individual opportunities for growth, fulfillment, and productivity within a society" (p. 92). Based on the word *anomia,* a term found in classical Greek writings meaning "without law," anomie has been defined most

recently as "an absence, breakdown, confusion, or conflict in the norms of society" (Marshall, 1994). Anomie can provide an understanding as to why some students bully.

Anomie is a theoretical approach that can be used to explain increases in the likelihood of antisocial behavior in schools when teachers do not acknowledge school work that is handed in, when teachers spend less time on instruction, when teacher and administrator expectations are inconsistent, when there is an absence of teacher praise, or when academics are given low priority (Arllen, Gable, & Hendrikson, 1994). While some could argue that anomie does not currently exist in schools today because of the trend in standardized tests, zero tolerance policies, and accountability, it should be noted that these changes may have come about due to anomie. The reality, or maybe the perception, was that teachers may have been spending less time on instruction and not acknowledging work turned in, or perhaps that teacher and administrator expectations were inconsistent and academics were given low priority. A context of this kind could have laid the foundation for anomie and the response to this was standardized tests, more time on instruction, academics being given priority, and other trends that have recently surfaced. These could be a smoke screen cloaking other imperfections and insecurities within and beyond the realm of education, so it may be possible that even though there has been a move towards accountability in schools, anomie may still exist.

One of the assumptions of anomie is that "the structure and institutions of society are assumed to be in disarray or disorganization" (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 77). This "disarray and disorganization" may not be currently taking place in the highly accountable and regulated school systems, but in society. Disarray can be in the form of a nation at war but being told the war is over, loss of jobs, rising prices, and other trends

that point to instability within a society. Expectations and norms are non-existent, unknown, or poorly defined under such conditions, which can lead to anomie. Another example of anomie is when schools lack clarity about rules, expectations and consequences; this has also been identified as leading to increases in antisocial behavior (Morrison & Skiba, 2001). It has also been shown that reducing student feelings of alienation and increasing feelings of connection to the school decreases the potential for, and acceptance of, violence (Coghlan, 2000). When a connection to a larger institution or society exists, there is less anomie, or normlessness; that is, regulation exists to guide the actions of individuals. Understanding where and when anomie is present and how students perceive it may help determine where and when bullying occurs in schools.

Significance of the Present Study

The ultimate goal of this research is to inform teachers and contribute to more effective teacher preparation for addressing the bullying in schools. It is hoped that teachers with greater insight into bullying will be able to reduce these incidents and provide safer environments for their students. Furthermore, providing students with a safe place may increase attendance and improve academic achievement. The development of an understanding of school bullying and its impact on students may be achieved in part by exploring students' perceptions regarding bullying, along with their perceptions of teachers' and administrators' roles in these events.

The development of an understanding of student perceptions of bullying may provide insights that will support school-based efforts to reduce bullying. These perceptions and the insights gained from them could aid in the creation of learning environments that envelop the student in a sense of safety and comfort and provide for

them an alternative to the norm-less society that has been created and to which some students fall victim.

Through development of an understanding of students' perceptions and their definitions of bullying, teachers and administrators could become more aware of the complex dynamics involved in the phenomenon of bullying. This understanding of students' perceptions and definitions will assist teachers and administrators in dealing with bullying that takes place in school. Students may not define bullying the way teachers do, so a revised, refreshed, and enlightened understanding on the part of teachers may shed some light on a problem that has captured the attention of educators, parents, and the media. Some may see bullying as a rite of passage, while others may see it as a form of torment. These varying perspectives need to be understood if change is to occur, for in order to correct a problem, it is important that the problem be defined and understood in the same way by all parties.

Through the examination of student perceptions, the opportunity will be provided for students' voices to be heard. Simmons (2002), in *Odd Girl Out* discussed the importance of developing a "listening guide," as opposed to an interview guide, when interviewing girls about their experiences with bullying, since a listening guide allows the researcher to "move where the girls lead" them. Simmons utilized this approach so that the girls' voices would be heard, which she believed would provide insight into their experiences, feelings, and desires, and allow them to recover knowledge about themselves (p. 6). Another study (Haselswerdt & Lenhardt, 2003) suggested that if we take time to listen to students and try to understand what they say, and treat them with respect, and let them know that they are valued and that their insights will influence the

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running of the school, "they are more likely to feel connected in a caring community" (p. 4). It is important that we are willing to listen to students in order to understand these phenomena from the perspective of those whose lives it impacts on a daily basis.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of bullying experienced and recalled from their school years and to explore students' understandings of how they coped with the experience, whether they were the victim, bully, or witness or had experienced more than one role in a given instance or over time. The research question that guided this study was:

What perceptions do college freshmen have regarding bullying and what are their definitions of the term "bullying"?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review relevant literature on school bullying. The majority of the scholarly literature on bullying does not treat bullying as a solitary topic; rather, bullying is commonly tied to the topic of violence. While these subjects are broad in scope and are not mutually exclusive, they will, in some cases, be addressed simultaneously. When the terms "bullying" and "violence" are addressed together in the literature review, it is because scholarly authors have spoken of these topics as being very closely related.

There is evidence of a connection that exists between school bullying and violence (Howell, 1997), as in the cases of several school shootings in which perpetrators had been identified as being victims of bullying (Aronson, 2000). There is a prevalent assumption in the literature that the experience of being a victim of bullying sometimes seems to lead to violent acts as a form of retaliation (Howell; Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 2005).

The review of literature will begin with a discussion of possible theoretical explanations of school bullying. Following these theoretical explanations, the review will focus on three major components of the topic under consideration: (a) the prevalence of school bullying, (b) explanations for incidents of school bullying, and (c) the prevention of school bullying.

Theoretical Perspectives on School Bullying

Theories provide us with an account of the world around us. If school bullying hinders its victims' education, explanations are needed to understand this phenomenon.

Most of the theories that directly address school bullying tie bullying and violence together, thus, these topics have been explored together from a theoretical perspective.

The literature on school violence and bullying currently provides very limited theoretical explanations of these phenomena. For this reason, attention will be given to theories of delinquency. Both school bullying and school violence are considered delinquent acts; thus, it is logical that theories of delinquency can be utilized in exploring these phenomena from a theoretical perspective. Clearly, because of the fact that theories must be borrowed from the field of juvenile delinquency, as increased attention is given to bullying and school violence there is a need in the future for the development of theories that describe these phenomena and all the intricacies within them. In this review, the following theories will be explored: (a) functionalism, (b) biological theories, (c) social learning theory, (d) social disorganization theory, and (e) anomie.

Functionalism

Functionalism is a logical choice for examining school bullying, and it sheds light on students' perceptions of incidents of bullying in schools. Merton (1968), in his discussion of functionalism, noted that the social activities in which we engage and the cultural items we possess have a reason or function for the social system/society, these activities/items fulfill a sociological function, and these activities/items are indispensable.

While it could be argued that school violence and bullying fulfill psychological functions, such as support in the development of coping skills for the victims and perhaps even skills in persuasion for bullies, these are not sociological functions, which are the focus of functionalism. That is, the means by which these (the development of coping skills for victims and persuasion skills for bullies) are achieved are not functional for the

social or cultural system. School violence and bullying are a drain on financial resources

of society and impinge on the development of the kind of unity that is required in the

building of a sense of community. Further, school violence and bullying are dispensable.

Although they provide a means by which some are able to achieve status at the expense

of others, it is through coercion. The power achieved through coercion is limited in scope

and duration, so activities (such as bullying) that help one achieve this power are

dispensable; other means prove more useful in obtaining power in our society.

Functionalism offers an explanation as to why phenomena occur in our society, in that

the given phenomena have a purpose that is of value to society. Since bullying and school

violence offer no redeeming social value, functionalism is not particularly useful as an

explanation, but it may be useful as a gauge of disorganization and uncertainty.

Biological Theories

Biological theories have also been used to explain bullying. Kauffman (2001)

notes in his discussion of conduct disorders that "genetic and other biological factors

apparently contribute to the most severe cases of conduct disorder," but that the

identification of a biological basis in milder cases is less clear, and environment/context

does contribute to the problem (p. 346). Two of the biological theories are somatotype

theory and inheritance theory. There has been research suggesting that body types, or

somatotypes, can be correlated with one's character and behavior (Shoemaker, 2000).

The specific assumption is that "the overall body shape, in consideration of the relative

development of the various parts of the body in comparison with each other," is

correlated with character and behaviors that relate to delinquency (Shoemaker, 2000, p.

22). This explanation is more specific than the inheritance theory, which posits that

delinquency is inherited and makes the general assumption that behavior is determined by factors present at birth, with these factors being transmitted biologically, from the parents. Shoemaker (2000) pointed to research that demonstrates some relationship between genetics and both criminal activity and antisocial behavior, but he noted that researchers have not yet found the specific "biological explanation of just what is being inherited to produce crime or delinquency" (p. 33). While it may be possible to explain some specific behaviors from a biological perspective, it is difficult to do so with bullying, especially given the fact that those who bully may only engage in this one kind of questionable activity and their bullying may not be defined as delinquent behavior. Biological theories, such as somatotype and inheritance, suggest a genetic element to delinquency, but because bullying can be a limited occurrence, and can be perpetuated by different types of individuals, this explanation falls flat.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is founded on the assumption that there are three primary influences that control behavior: the environment, the behavior, and cognitive/affective characteristics of the individual (Kauffman, 2001). "Whether or not a person exhibits aggressive behavior depends on the reciprocal effects of these three factors and the individual's social history" (p. 347). Social learning theory proposes that "aggression is learned through the direct consequences of aggressive and non-aggressive acts and through observation of aggression and its consequences" (p. 347). This theory suggests that children learn specific aggressive responses from the observation of others who model the behavior. When children see high status individuals engaging in aggressive acts (particularly when there are apparent rewards for the behavior), children are more

likely to engage in similar behaviors. Children are also likely to engage in an aggressive behavior if they do not see their models receiving negative consequences for the victimization of others.

While social learning theory can add greatly to understanding aggression, it does not adequately address some of the more complex issues of school violence and bullying. First, if children see that a peer does not receive negative consequences as the result of bullying, based on social learning theory, it might be expected that more students would bully those weaker than themselves. In other words, if a witness sees a student bullying another and there are no consequences, that witness would then be likely to turn to bullying. Some children bully and some do not, but that difference may be partially explained by the fact that maybe some children see more bullying modeled without consequences than others.

Secondly, social learning is reliant on the notion that the actions of others must serve as models of aggressive behaviors; that is, modeling of the aggressive behavior needs to exist in order for the behaviors to occur. While one does need to learn how to be aggressive and how to bully, it is possible that a variety of other conditions can contribute a great deal to an individual's likelihood of bullying others. For instance, children may see aggression being modeled by their parents and therefore see it as a way of handling certain problems with other people. It has been shown that bullies often come from homes where physical punishment is utilized and where they are taught to strike back physically when dealing with a problem (Banks, 1997). Further, there is no research that supports the notion that the modeling of aggression by other individuals and the acting out of aggression in children are reliably linked - for instance, there have been many

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suggestions that exposure to television violence and violent games may be linked to violence in children (Funk, Baldacci, Pasold, & Baumgardner, 2004). While viewing this kind of material can be considered a form of modeling, it is clear that many children view aggression on television and in games, but these children do not become violent themselves (Blumberg, Bierwirth, & Schwartz, 2008).

Additionally, there is research to support the notion that those who are the victims of bullying can also be the aggressors (Druck & Kaplowitz, 2005; Simmons, 2002), which is supported by the modeling component of social learning theory. However, those who are the victims of bullying are in the position of not only seeing any rewards that the bully reaps, but also experiencing the pain of being the victim. Having the experience of being a victim would be expected to provide victims with understandings of what the victim feels, which might create in the potential perpetrator a desire not to cause this kind of pain in others by bullying. Finally, social learning theory does not account for acts of bullying that are the more common occurrences, such as pushing or teasing. It also does not give as much weight to the societal influences as it does the individual influences, and to address bullying, attention should be given to the environment as well as the individual.

Social Disorganization Theory

While social learning theory looks at three influences that effect behavior (the environment, the behavior, and the cognitive/affective features), social disorganization and anomie theories also look at these influences with greater focus on the environmental, or social, aspect of delinquency. The major assumption of social disorganization theory is that a breakdown in institutional, community-based controls of

society gives rise to delinquency (Shoemaker, 2000). The individuals in a society that is in a state of disorganization and who find themselves in disarray, are not personally disoriented, but they are responding to the disorganization of the environment (p. 78). While these individuals may live in harmony with their environment under normal conditions, when there is drastic change in the system, they are thrown into disorganization because they do not know how to interpret the new shape of their society.

Anomie

Social disorganization theory is broad, while anomie usually refers "to larger, societal conditions" (Shoemaker, 2000, p. 91). Anomie "refers to inconsistencies between societal conditions and individual opportunities for growth, fulfillment, and productivity within a society" (p. 92). For example, anomie could be understood as existing when people find themselves at a disadvantage in relation to acceptable and legitimate economic activities, and choose to respond by engaging in illegitimate, delinquent, or criminal activities. An example of this could be when a child wants the same kind of expensive shoes as worn by peers, but their parents can not afford the shoes, so the child decides that the only way to have the shoes is by stealing them.

Durkheim (1979), in *Suicide,* discussed three types of suicide, one being anomic suicide. This type of suicide results from a lack of societal regulation (or expectations of society) and peoples' suffering because of that lack of regulation. Durkheim asserted that both economic catastrophes and upturns give rise to an increase in suicide rates. Logically, economic catastrophes leave people unable to meet their basic needs and desires, so suicide may be seen as a way out of their unobtainable world. On the other hand, economic upturns provide people with resources, which can also lead to a lack of

regulation. As Durkheim noted, those who do not have much disposable income do not have to regulate themselves in how they spend their income, because poverty demands certain regulations. But, in good financial times, people are not as regulated and "society's influence is lacking in the basically individual passions, thus leaving them without a check-rein" (Durkheim, 1979, p. 258).

The relationship between the lack of regulation and bullying and school violence is found in schools when there is a lack of clarity regarding rules, which can lead to an increase in school violence (Morrison & Skiba, 2001). Studies have also shown that, in many cases, students who are antisocial attend schools in deteriorated and crowded school buildings (Kauffman, 2001), and they may respond to the disorganization of the environment.

The theory of anomie as an explanation of delinquency, school violence, and bullying allows one to look beyond the student and to the system (i.e. society or the school). As noted above, students may perceive their school as disorganized, which could suggest that they are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior such as bullying, when: (a) school rules lack clarity or are erratically enforced, (b) when students diagnosed with antisocial disorder are placed in schools that are dilapidated and overcrowded, (c) when students do not receive tests and papers that are graded in a timely manner, and (d) when course requirements are unclear and teacher expectations are inconsistent, unclear, or questionable. Disorganization in society could also lead to delinquent or deviant behavior. Economic activity outside the norm, natural disasters, and unstable political systems, to name a few, can create a sense of disorganization that produces a feeling of normlessness, anomie. Durkheim (1979) suggested this in *Suicide*

where he notes, "…when society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, it is momentarily incapable of exercising this [moral] influence; thence come the sudden rises in the curve of suicides…" (p. 252). While Durkheim addressed suicide in his discussion of anomie, deviant behavior, under which suicide falls, includes bullying.

In summary, several theories provide insight regarding the phenomena of school violence and bullying. Functionalism falls short in providing an explanation of school violence and bullying because neither of these phenomena has a value, or function, for society that cannot be achieved another way. Biological theories may offer an understanding of extreme cases of criminal activity, but they do not assist in explaining the bullying that many students engage in during their school years. Plus, the studies that have been conducted using biological explanations have only used public records as a means of identifying criminal activity, and since bullying is not as easy to measure, report, and recognize, it is difficult to find support in the research for this theory as it relates to offenses other than the type serious enough to warrant public documentation. Social learning theory comes closer to explaining school violence and bullying, except that it misses the mark by not giving more credence to the environment in which the delinquent behavior takes place. Disorganization and anomie provide sound theory to explain school violence and bullying. When the society ceases to make available acceptable means of reaching a socially approved goal and when the society lacks regulation through rules and resources, people will respond through unacceptable means, such as violence and bullying.

Prevalence

To paint the full background of the harsh reality that is school violence, one must understand the extent to which it infiltrates our society, and most importantly, our schools. It has been noted that, "for all types of communities, the vast majority of violence involving school-age youngsters occurs outside school settings and during the hours when they are not in school" (Shafii & Shafii, 2001, p. 28). Bonilla (2000) asserted that "there has not been a dramatic, overall increase in school-based violence in recent years" (p. 157). Others note that there is a general decline in youth violent crime (Shafii & Shafii). The Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (2003) reports that "between 1995 and 2001, the percentage of students who reported being victims of crime at school decreased from 10 percent to 6 percent." While it may be true that there has not been a "dramatic increase in school based violence" (Bonilla, p. 157) and that most violence "involving school age youngsters occurs outside school settings," (Shafii & Shafii, p. 28) it is in the school setting where we must concern ourselves, where we as educators have the greatest impact, and where others' educational opportunities are at risk.

Other studies (Nanjiani, 2000) have asserted that hate crimes have been reported in schools and the "incidences of multiple victim homicide have steadily increased over the years in schools" (p. 77). The Digest of Education Statistics (2003) shows an increase in the number of high school students who reported feeling too unsafe to attend school at a given time. In 1997, 4% of students felt too unsafe to go to school, in 1999 the number went up to 5.2%, and in 2001 6.6% of students felt too unsafe to go to school. The number of high school students threatened or injured with a weapon on school property

increased from 7.4% in 1997 to 8.9% in 2001. Violent crimes (rape, robbery, assault) are experienced by young people between the ages of 12 and 19 at two times the rate of the general population (Valois & McKewon, 1998). Violent crimes happen both on school grounds and off. Coghlan (2000) stated that "21% of public high schools and 19% of all public middle schools reported at least one serious violent crime to the police or other law enforcement representatives during the 1996-1997 school year" (p. 84).

Aronson, in *Nobody Left to Hate: Teaching Compassion After Columbine* (2000), noted that while there has been an overall decrease in the number of homicides committed at schools (mostly in dangerous areas that have installed metal detectors, guards, and cameras), there has been an increase in the number of multiple victim homicides in and around schools (pp. 4-5). And while the reality of the current situation may not be as bleak as it could be, the fact of the matter is, no matter the increase or lack thereof, violence in schools should be dealt with so as to improve the quality of education for all students. While it can be argued that there is not a substantial, if any, increase in violence in schools (Bonilla, 2000; Shafii & Shafii, 2001), there are many who would disagree, and who believe that there is an increase in school violence and bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Nanjiani, 2000; Valois & McKewon, 1998). No matter what the magnitude of violence, victimization, and bullying that occurs in our schools, it is an abomination to ignore any violence in our learning institutions.

It has been reported that a substantial number of high school students are involved in violent and aggressive behavior (Perren & Hornung, 2005; Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001), yet when the actual behaviors of students are compared, we find that

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students are more likely to be disciplined for more mundane behavior problems.

Morrison & Skiba (2001) noted that principals at the elementary and secondary levels deal most frequently with less violent and even non-violent behaviors such tardiness (40%), absenteeism (25%), and physical conflicts between students (21%). This is in opposition to the incidents that many perceive as greater and more critical, and have thus become the focus of debates over school safety. The infrequent infractions within school systems include: drug use (9%), gangs (5%), possession of weapons (2%), and physical abuse of teachers (2%) (Morrison & Skiba). Students tend to be suspended more for physical fights and aggressions and less for the more serious offensives such as drugs, weapons, vandalism, and assaults on teachers.

The researchers above (Morrison & Skiba; Perren & Hornung; Valois et al.) examined violence, defined as actions where law enforcement was called in; however, there have been few studies on the day-to-day violence of bullying. Research is needed that addresses all forms of violence, even that which some may see as a less serious form and that may not get reported as often as offenses reported to law enforcement. So, while the offenses that are dealt with on a more daily basis consist of the less sinister crimes, or rule violations, it is the more violent crimes, or the crimes that resemble street crimes, that gain the attention of the press, members of concerned communities, and politicians. The comparison can be carried even further, in that absenteeism and tardiness resemble white collar crimes in that they get less play in the media, yet still have a negative impact on young peoples' education, while those crimes resembling street crimes find their way across the front pages of newspapers, as top stories on the nightly news, and on the floors of our legislative houses.

As was noted earlier, between 80% and 90% of adolescents and preadolescents will face some form of bullying in their life (Oliver, Young, & LaSalle, 1994). There is evidence that bullying is a considerable problem in secondary schools (Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998). In the United Kingdom, 10% of students reported that they have been bullied "sometimes or more often" and 4% claimed to be bullied "at least once a week" (p. 1). In addition to more traditional forms of bullying, which include physical and verbal bullying, relational bullying has also become an issue as many students attempt to negatively impact another student's social standing through "humiliation and/or manipulation of relationships" (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Direct and indirect bullying includes electronic bullying, which is defined as instances in which students use some form of electronic device to "taunt, insult, threaten, harass, and/or intimidate a peer" (p. 3). So while it is the more violent acts in our schools that draw attention and public outcries, there is a serious epidemic of violence and bullying occurring in our nation's schools, as well as in the schools in the United Kingdom.

The findings of the studies noted above show that while there is little increase in school violence and young people are more likely to be the victims of violence outside of school, there has been an increase in multiple-victim homicides in schools. There is also an undercurrent of violence and bullying that may not warrant coverage by the sensationalizing media but that does deserve the attention of educators who wish to create an environment conducive to learning for all students. The weakness of these studies may well be their attempt to portray violence that occurs in our schools as on opposite ends of a continuum where one side denotes a decline in violence and the other points to the tragedies that have occurred in recent years. Again, these studies seem to overlook or

downplay the daily violence, bullying, that occurs in our schools. Regardless, we must amend our thinking and not justify nor accept any type, form, or level of violence and we must not only wish to examine and eliminate the most harsh and deadly forms of violence but any type of violence that occurs in our schools. In order to attempt to lift this burden of school violence and bullying that is placed on schools, parents, communities, and mainly students, investigations of explanations for the trend of violence and bullying are needed.

<div align="center">Explanations</div>

Introduction

The presence of violence and bullying in schools and its frequency is of much concern for parents, students, and educators, as well as communities. As the clamor over school violence intensifies, several possible explanations are given for the violent episodes that have occurred in recent years. Possible causes that have been suggested include violence on TV, child abuse, domestic violence, family breakups, poverty, poor emotional and cognitive development, latchkey homes, child's history of previous violence, school crowding, large schools, teacher isolation, unfair rules, and drug use (Edwards, 2001). While each of these possible explanations warrant attention in their own right, focus will be given to general categories that will encompass most, if not all, of these possibilities.

School culture can be a major factor in any form of school violence, as was suggested by Aronson in *Nobody Left to Hate: Teaching Compassion After Columbine* (2000). Other factors include (a) the presence of conduct disorder, (b) depression,

anxiety, and life satisfaction, (c)the role of parents, (d) previous exposure to violence, (e) location and "undefined spaces," and (f) weapon carrying.

School Culture

After the tragedy that took place at Columbine, many tried to piece together what happened. Aronson (2000) stated, "It is reasonably clear that a major root cause of the recent school shootings is a school atmosphere that ignores, or implicitly condones, the taunting, rejection, and verbal abuse to which a great many students are subjected" (p. 70). As was noted earlier, it has been suggested that in order to understand aggression and violence as they relate to children, one needs to understand the child's eco-system (family, peer-group, and school) (Arllen, Gable, & Hendrickson, 1994). It has been stated that one of the strongest predictors of the use of violence is exposure to violence and victimization (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001). Bullies and victims are not hard to find in any school; therefore, victimization can also be found.

When Aronson (2000) interviewed students at Columbine, he found evidence that suggested that the students who terrorized the school were victims of bullying, which lends credence to the assertion above, that exposure to victimization can be a predictor of violence. Aronson noted that it had been suggested, much to the dismay of the administrators, faculty, and students of the school, that Columbine's administration showed favoritism towards athletes "who dominated the school, that bullying and taunting were more prevalent at Columbine than at other schools, and that the administrators tolerated it" (p. 71). When surviving students were interviewed after the tapes made by the shooters were shown, the students tried to defend themselves, but ironically they seemed to back up the assertion. One student who was interviewed said:

Columbine is a good clean place except for those rejects. Most kids don't want

them there. They were into witchcraft. They were into voodoo. Sure we teased

them. But what do you expect with kids who come to school with weird hairdos

and horns on their hats? It's not just jocks; the whole school's disgusted with

them. They're a bunch of homos, grabbing each other's private parts. If you want

to get rid of someone, usually you tease'em. So the whole school would call them

homos. (p.71-72)

Aronson's work demonstrated how school violence can come about because of, or even

be synonymous with, bullying. Bullying can lead to school violence, and it is for this

reason that the two terms are interwoven within this review of literature. Aronson could

have gone a step further and asked about bullying after the Columbine shootings, and

whether or not students who felt bullied then could relate to the shooters' feelings and the

shooters' desire to seek revenge. This gap in the research seems common. Little, if any,

research has been conducted that focuses on current students and their perspectives.

Bullying/victimization of students for being different, whether based on factual

information or rumors, is the cause of many students' anxieties about school. Edwards

(2001), suggested that organizational elements of schools that may contribute to violent

behavior include: (a) when schools are impersonal, (b) when school officials ignore

misconduct, and (c) when students feel alienated. Impersonal schools and school officials

ignoring misconduct can be fertile grounds leading students to feeling alienated and

disconnected. Some of these "alienated" young people have been defined as "designated

victims" (Greene, 1994). In her article, *America's Designated Victims: Our Creative*

Young, Bette Greene (1994) defined a "designated victim" as "a boy, usually slender,

usually thoughtful, who would prefer creating beauty to crushing bones" (p. 3). She noted

that creative young people are tormented everywhere, from elementary schools to college

and in every city, state, and town in this nation. She also noted that while "much of this

force is generated by the fear of homosexuality, it isn't at all necessary to be homosexual

to be persecuted as one of America's 'designated victims'" (p. 3). She went on to say that

homophobia effects 10-20% of people, who may or may not be gay, and it is not just the

tormenters who contribute to this problem, but it is also the "eggers-on" and the "on-

lookers." The "eggers-on" encourage the tormentors, like cheerleaders at a football game,

and the "on-lookers" find a place to stand and watch and say nothing about the unjust

torment that is taking place, like an audience at the same football game (Greene, as cited

in Alvine, 1994, p. 9). McFarland & Dupuis (2001) found that while teachers often

punish students for making racist remarks, they seldom challenge those students who

make homophobic remarks. It is the tolerating and/or ignoring of this type of behavior,

and any behavior that belittles a person, that must not take place in schools that are truly

safe environments where students are respected and accepted for who they are as

individuals (Shafii & Shafii, 2001).

It has been shown that the way in which schools deal with discipline problems can

impact the quantity and types of problems at a given school. Characteristics such as high

rates of academic failure; lack of clearly defined rules, expectations, and consequences;

punitive disciplinary practices; and failure to consider individual differences contribute to

the antisocial behavior that occurs in schools (Morrison & Skiba, 2001). Students, as

most adults, need clearly defined rules, and they need to know the consequences of

breaking those rules. Without rules or regulations, there exists the potential for anomie.

Schools also need to respect individual differences, not just as they pertain to discipline issues, but also as they pertain to the individual in every aspect of their education. Alienation can be reduced within strong, inclusive communities (Nanjiani, 2000, p. 78) where individual differences are respected, if not embraced. When gay and lesbian high school students are the victims of hate crimes and other crimes at a greater frequency than the general student population (McFarland & Dupuis, 2001), we must acknowledge that something needs to be done in order to protect these students, and others who are singled out as different and unique.

While attention within the literature tends to be given to race, gender, and sexual preference, little attention has been given to other factors that may cause the singling out of individuals to be bullied. These other factors can include weight, cleanliness, location of home, family's status, unique qualities in appearance, or other aspects of one's character or physical appearance that a bully can focus on and attack. Further research could address the various attributes that may lead to bullying and victimization. But while characteristics of the individual victim can play a role in incidents of bullying, characteristics of others and the environment are very important.

Besides alienation and the other factors that contribute to violence in schools, it has been shown that 25% of teachers made two thirds of all referrals for disciplinary action. Schools with higher rates of suspension were also found to be less concerned with school climate, and they had higher student-teacher ratios and a lower level of academic quality (Morrison & Skiba, 2001). There are many factors that are in the domain of the school that contribute to school violence. Antisocial behavior can be at an increased risk to occur when teachers do not acknowledge school work that is handed in, when teachers

spend less time on instruction, when teacher and administrator expectations are inconsistent, when there is an absence of teacher praise, or when academics are given low priority (Arllen, Gable, & Hendrikson, 1994, p. 21). Other studies (LeBlanc, Swisher, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2008; Shann, 1999) also had similar results, such as indicating that (a) schools with higher rates of achievement also have higher rates of prosocial behavior and lower rates of antisocial behavior, (b) schools with lower rates of achievement have higher rates of antisocial behavior and lower rates of prosocial behavior, and (c) antisocial behavior can manifest itself through violent and aggressive behavior.

Conduct Disorders

In order to better understand some of the variables that may impact violent behavior in adolescents, Valois and McKewon (1998) utilized the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a self-report assessment made available by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The survey is part of an epidemiologic surveillance system that is designed to measure various categories of health-risk behaviors, such as unintentional and intentional injuries, tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, sexual behavior, dietary behaviors, and physical inactivity. This survey did not ask students their perceptions, which could provide examples of experiences, definitions, and perceptions of events (i.e., bullying or violent acts). Methods of study, such as this one, offer insight into the complexities of violent behavior. These complexities can become entrenched, as some threatening and destructive behaviors do for children who begin to manifest these behaviors at a young age. These entrenched behaviors become a challenge to both parents and teachers (Arllen, Gable, & Hendrickson, 1994). While isolated displays of aggression can and do occur, "displays of chronic aggression are positively correlated with so-called conduct

disorders" (p. 18). Aggressive behavior in young children can be manifested through harsh reactions to limit setting, stubbornness, extreme tantrums, persistent noncompliance, and immature expression of feelings (p. 18). These types of outbursts can be considered the result or a symptom of a conduct disorder.

Conduct disorders have been said to affect "6 to 16 percent of boys and 2 to 9 percent of girls under the age of 18" (Kauffman, 2001, p. 343). And while many adolescents may exhibit characteristics of conduct disorder, such as fighting with peers and siblings, cheating, lying, temper tantrums, failure to obey parents, cruelty to animals and people, and destruction of tproperty, most young people do not display these behaviors in various contexts, nor do they incite the feelings of their parents and teachers the way that young people with conduct disorders do (p. 343). In short, all children misbehave, but few engage in the level severe misbehavior as those with conduct disorders do.

Students with disabilities, such as conduct disorder, are more greatly represented in school discipline actions and later run-ins with the juvenile justice system. It therefore should not be surprising that youth involved in the juvenile justice system have a higher diagnosed, and undiagnosed, incidence of learning and emotional problems than the general population (Morrison & Skiba, 2001, p. 177). While studies denote the fated outcomes of children with conduct disorders, little is mentioned of their involvement in violent acts and/or bullying in schools.

Arllen, Gable, and Hendrickson (1994) noted that the problematic behaviors of children with conduct disorders are "more intense, more frequent (sometimes twice the normal rate), more persistent, and often fail to decrease over time" (p. 19). Children with

conduct disorders lack the ability to regulate their behavior, and this is even more difficult for them in stressful situations (p. 19). These more intense behaviors and the lack of an ability to regulate their behavior, combined with the difficult and stressful situations that they may find themselves in, leave little hope for the child or adolescent who possesses a conduct disorder to escape the pull of a confrontation. Conduct disorder may be comorbid with other disorders (Kauffman, 2001, p. 342), such as depression. In addition, anxiety, depression, and how youth feel about their lives can also have an impact on the level of violence they engage in.

Depression, Anxiety, and Life Satisfaction

Another possible explanation that has been given for violence in schools are the feelings of depression, anxiety, and low levels of life satisfaction, not just for the victim, but also for the person doing the bullying. In one study it was reported that bullied children were more anxious and that bullies were equally or less anxious than their peers (Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998). The same report noted that bullied children tend to be in lower grades (i.e. they are younger and smaller than bullies). The study also showed that boys with high anxiety and lying scores were most likely to be bullied while girls with low anxiety and lying scores were least likely to be bullied. Boys with low anxiety and lying scores and high depression scores were most likely to become bullies (Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998).

It should not be surprising that those in the younger grades are more likely to be bullied, as those who are older are more aware of the resources around them and the tactics to deal with bullies. It could also be that those doing the bullying might not have continued their education in the higher grades, whether because of quitting school,

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graduating, or being expelled from school. Plus, those who are older may be bullying those who are younger, which would also account for the greater bullying in the younger grades. The fact that bullied children are more anxious suggests that anxiety may be a symptom of being bullied, but it could be a factor contributing to bullying. Anxiety in a child may attract those who desire to exert control over another through bullying. Like a predator in the wild who chases the weaker, lame, and more noticeable prey, bullies can identify a defenseless and vulnerable victim. Once the bullying occurs, the tormentor makes the child who is already anxious even more anxious.

Besides anxiety and depression, life satisfaction can play a role in who will become a bully or a victim of bullying. While many high school students report dissatisfaction with their lives, there are "significant relationships between self-reported life satisfaction and violent and aggressive behaviors" (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001, p. 362). Those who have lower life satisfaction are more likely to engage in violent and aggressive behaviors such as carrying a weapon, carrying a weapon on school property, fighting, and other activities that denote a certain amount of violence and aggressiveness. Valois et al. also noted that there were "significant associations between reduced life satisfaction and feeling unsafe while at, going to, or returning from school" (p. 362). It could be argued that it is difficult to know whether the youth reporting feeling lower levels of life satisfaction felt that way because they felt unsafe at school, and maybe were the victims of bullying, or if they were the victims of bullying because in some way their outward appearance communicated their feelings of a lower level of life satisfaction, which attracted those who would bully, like a wild animal preys on the injured weaker animal. While these studies offer much in the way of quantitative data,

little is offered to answer why this occurs. Which comes first, lower life satisfaction or being bullied? Students' perceptions would enlighten this research and possibly help educators identify potential victims and circumvent future bullying encounters.

Having looked to the child to note the origin of violence and aggressive behavior in the form of, and attributed to, conduct disorder or depression, anxiety, or life satisfaction, we now turn to other aspects that have been cited as possible explanations for violence. The first of these is the role of parents.

Parents and Exposure

One factor that can be interwoven with other factors in explaining violence in schools is the role of parents. There has long been a debate over the use of physical punishment in child-rearing, and while many seem to favor whatever practice was utilized in their own developmental years (Fay, 1997), coercive child-rearing techniques have been identified as having a role in the development of antisocial behavior in children (Morrison & Skiba, 2001). Morrison and Skiba also noted that there are certain risk factors associated with delinquency and youth violence in which the parents play a prominent role, such as if the mother or father has been arrested, the child has been in child protection, or one or more family transitions have occurred, such as death of a relative or divorce (p. 176). Other risk factors that can set the stage for the development of aggression in children include lack of well-defined behavior limits, parental indifference, indulgent child-rearing attitudes, and permissiveness towards aggression. Arllen, Gable, and Hendrickson suggested that "conduct disorders are stable not only within individuals and families, but also across generations" (1994, p. 20). Lacking limits, parental indifference, and indulgent child-rearing are anomic in that there is a lack

of regulation. While these factors can impact the child in harmful ways, and increase

involvement in violence, there is another more direct influence.

Not surprisingly, exposure to violence and victimization is among the strongest

predictors of violence in children (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001). When

children are disciplined with force, they begin to understand that when something needs

to be changed to better serve their desires, physical violence may be necessary. Edwards

(2001) noted a similar finding, and stated, "The strongest developmental predictor of a

child's violent behavior is a history of previous violence, including having been the

victim of abuse" (p. 249). The behaviorists have provided some of the strongest empirical

support demonstrating the learning of aggression through observation and imitation of

behavior modeled by others (Arllen et al., 1994). These factors lend themselves to the

body of evidence that suggests that aggression is social and it is maintained in such a

way, and that to understand a child's aggressive tendencies one must understand the

child's ecosystem (Arllen et al., 1994). Imitation of violence is not limited to what one

child observes or experiences. The final minutes of the Columbine High School tragedy,

when SWAT teams entered the school, became the focus of the media. As the events and

evidence unfolded, millions of people, many of whom were youth, witnessed the final

events in real time on television and relived it for years afterwards as it was reported.

Copycat bomb threats terrorized schools throughout the country. And while we are aware

of bomb threats (some real, but most false alarms that utilize precious resources), there is

no "good" data on imitation of school violence (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). "Imitation is the

sincerest form of flattery" is a common expression, but are young people imitating what

they see other young people do? Are they witnessing bullying and violence and then

committing the same acts? The research focuses on past abuse, television, and parents, but what influence does witnessing bullying and violence have on young people? Research on students' perceptions could possibly yield findings that could inform our treatment of witnesses.

Experiencing violence through observation or personal experience will place a child at greater risk for perpetuating the cycle of violence. The presence of conduct disorder or an individual's feelings of depression, anxiety, and lack of life satisfaction can also contribute to one's disposition towards violence, but there are other factors to consider, such as accessibility of a place for violence to occur.

Location

Violence does not take place in a vacuum; it transpires in various locations. According to Astor, Meyer, and Pitner (2001), a reason given for violence occurring in a housing project was that there was a lack of informal spaces where interpersonal interactions could take place. This lack of interpersonal interaction led residents to retreat into their own apartments and hence into a mode defined as "atomization," which is characterized by the residents retreating into a personal and defensive mode. Because residents retreated into their own physical area, their apartment, which functioned as personal territory, there was little interaction with neighbors in the shared areas, such as hallways (Astor et al., 2001). Since there was little interaction, there was little or no responsibility felt for that location; therefore, there was an absence of norms or rules. This absence of norms and rules relates to Durkheim's (1979) theory of anomie, in which there is an absence of regulation.

Astor et al. (2001) discussed research relating to apartment communities providing evidence for the assertion that territoriality, which is defined as "achieving and exerting control over a particular segment of space," is a possible theoretical concept that may help explain why violence in school occurs at certain times and in certain locations (p. 512). Astor et al. (2001) connected the school settings with the idea of territoriality by noting that, as in the apartment complexes that were studied, schools have undefined spaces. These spaces are places where students and staff gather, such as cafeterias, auditoriums, and playgrounds, but there is little, if any, informal interaction. Teachers seem to feel that they are not responsible for these spaces, unless assigned to monitor those spaces. Since no one appears to be responsible for these spaces, there may be more opportunity to engage in questionable behavior in these undefined spaces.

Astor et al. noted that in apartment complexes, there are higher incidents of crime in hallways, lobbies, stairwells, and elevators, since these are "undefined" spaces. Students have reported that fights and other infractions of school rules occur in undefined spaces in schools, such as those noted above. Astor et al. also noted that when an individual is responsible for monitoring these spaces, it is more likely that problems will be addressed and reported. They concluded that obviously, these "undefined" spaces in schools need to be identified and reclaimed.

Astor et al. noted in his results that sixth graders in middle school perceived more dangerous spaces than sixth graders in an elementary school. Schools where there are more "undefined" spaces tend to be the middle schools. Teachers in middle schools tend to see their primary responsibility as that of teaching their subject matter and managing their classrooms. Elementary teachers, on the other hand, tend to feel a personal and

professional responsibility to the whole school building and all students and it seems that students perceived this social dynamic (Astor et al., 2001). When teachers felt a personal and professional responsibility to the whole school building, there were regulations and teachers to enforce them. Anomie exists when teachers do not feel "personal and professional responsibility." So while conduct disorders, depression, anxiety, life satisfaction, and previous exposure to violence are issues related more to the individual, spaces where violence can occur stretch beyond the individual. "Undefined" space within schools can be viewed as one possible contributing factor to school violence, and while it can play a role, there is nothing inherently bad about spaces within schools; however, drug use and weapon carrying are much different issues.

Drug Use and Weapon Carrying

Drug use in schools is itself an infraction of school rules, but it can also serve as a contributing factor in school violence. McKeganey and Norrie (2000) stated that there is an association between the use of illegal drugs and violence in the United States. Their own study, which was conducted in Scotland, found that those who have used illegal drugs were more likely to carry a weapon (64 % of male illegal drug users vs. 21% of non-users and 23% of female illegal drug users vs. 4% of female non-users). The same study found that the more illegal drugs a male used, the higher the chance that he would carry a weapon, with the proportions being 21% for non-users, 52% for using one illegal drug, 68% for two, 74% for three or four, and 92% for five or more illegal drugs used (p. 1). It has been shown that across all racial and ethnic groups and social strata, adolescents are carrying a weapon to resolve conflicts in increasing numbers (DuRant, Getts, Cadenhead, & Woods, 1995). Some reports note that weapon carrying is associated with

threats of injury with a weapon while at school, fights, and having had belongings stolen or damaged (McKeganey & Norrie, 2000, p. 6). Furthermore, based on empirical evidence, weapon carrying is "indicative of, and associated with, violent and aggressive behavior and used for purposeful criminal activity rather than self-protection" (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001, p. 362). DuRant et al. also found that the frequency with which subjects carried a weapon was correlated significantly with the frequency of engaging in physical fights (p. 378). Illegal drug use and carrying weapons to school are both actions that violate school rules, and are illegal. These actions promote a dangerous situation, yet the fact that one, illegal drug use, can lead to the other, weapon carrying, makes it important that this association be noted by school officials. And while some studies suggest an association between weapon carrying and violent encounters, there has also been evidence from the United States Department of Justice that shows that males who own legal firearms are less likely than those who do not own firearms to engage in delinquent behavior or drug use, and that both of these groups are substantially less likely than those who possess illegal firearms. The United States Department of Justice attributed this difference to the socialization process and the way in which it occurs, with legal gun owners being socialized by the family and illegal gun owners being socialized on the street (DuRant et al., p. 380). Those who own legal firearms are less likely to engage in violent behavior because they have learned standards and regulation in the family. Thus, while anomie exists with those who own illegal firearms, it does not exist with those who own legal firearms. With horrific events such as Columbine, it is difficult not to focus some energy on weapon carrying, particularly firearms, when discussing violence in schools.

Some of the possible explanations for the violence and bullying that occur in our nation's schools include the presence of conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, and low life satisfaction in some students. Having experienced abuse at the hands of their parents or just the witnessing of physical violence can also contribute to incidents of violence. Locations where violence occurs, as well as drug use and weapon carrying, were also explored as possible explanations of violence, as was the multifaceted component of school culture. There are many possible explanations for the violence that occurs in our schools today, and having understandings of possible causes allows schools, communities, parents, administrators, teachers, and students the opportunity to utilize this information in the planning and implementation of programs, curriculum, activities, and in-service to help reduce the amount of violence that takes place in our schools. Having looked at the prevalence of school violence and bullying and having reviewed some possible explanations for violence and bullying in schools, we now turn our attention to some of the strategies that have been utilized in attempts to reduce these problems. Many programs have been developed and implemented to help reduce violence.

Prevention

It has been stated that we must keep prevention at the forefront of our thinking on school violence, and that we must "prevent the circumstances that give rise to fighting" (Sosin, Koepsell, Rivara, & Mercy, 1995, p. 214). For prevention to be effective, we need to gear our interventions toward both genders and all racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, the need to address violence is even more acute when we examine the impact of violence on youth, health care resources, and the loss of young lives (Valois & McKewon, 1998). One of the major impacts school violence has on youth is intimidation.

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Intimidation can cause problems in school, as children find it difficult to focus on their school work and the activities of the day when they are the victims of bullying. While freedom from being bullied does not ensure learning, for effective learning to take place, there must be an absence of bullying and intimidation (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999). Many programs and strategies have been utilized to reduce violence in schools, such as addressing drug use and gang activity, helping find employment for people, providing social services and skills training, implementing school-wide behavior management, increasing parent involvement, planning for school safety, installing security devices, reducing the size of schools, identifying potential violent offenders, and other methods for securing positive learning opportunities of students within the confines of school (Edwards, 2001; Morrison & Skiba, 2001). In the following section, various methods of violence and bullying prevention will be discussed, beginning with suspension and expulsion, one of the most common methods used in an attempt to reduce school violence. Other techniques for reducing violence that will be investigated include zero tolerance policies, security devices, prediction, curriculum, and school culture.

Suspension and Expulsion

One of the best known and most utilized forms of discipline is suspension and expulsion. Suspension has been used for various types of offenses, but it has been utilized more consistently as a deterrent and punishment for fighting than for any other violation. Suspension is used more in urban areas than in rural and suburban areas. For instance, in one mid-west city, 20% of the entire student body was suspended at some point during a school year (Morrison & Skiba, 2001, p. 174). Findings from the same study reported that minorities and those from low-income backgrounds are overly represented in cases where

suspension is used as a punishment (p. 177). The authors also reported that students are suspended less often for more serious offenses such as drugs, weapons, and assaults on a teacher (p. 173). And while 40% of those suspended are second-time offenders (which raises questions as to its effectiveness as a deterrent), there is little research on the positive effects of suspension (p. 179). Suspension can be the result of another type of prevention that schools have implemented relatively recently, zero tolerance policies.

Zero Tolerance Policies

Zero tolerance policies refer to consequences that are predetermined for infractions of specific school rules. Zero tolerance policies are usually reserved for such offenses as weapon carrying, violence, fights, and drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. States that received federal funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, were mandated by the 1994 Safe and Gun-free Schools Act to implement regulations that would expel students for at least one year for possessing a firearm at school (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). The National Center on Educational Statistics reported that zero tolerance policies are in place in 79% of all schools for tobacco and violence, 90% of all schools for drug and/or alcohol possession, and 90% of all schools for weapons and firearms (Morrison & Skiba, 2001, p. 174). While school officials are required to look at incidents on a case-by-case basis, they usually do not, and they tend to take a more heavy-handed approach. While sending a message about carrying weapons into schools is an important and valuable result of these policies, the other result is that some students may be kicked out of the one place where people may care for them and they feel safe. Some students who are in need of special education could be denied access to such services because they committed an act that falls under the zero tolerance policies (Shafii & Shafii, 2001).

These policies have led to the expulsion of many children and youth who would normally be considered good students (Morrison & Skiba, 2001, p. 175). While the logic behind this solution seems sound, problems arise in its implementation where. News reports have provided evidence of elementary students being suspended from school for bringing an object to school that could be considered a weapon (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004). Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*, which examines various cultural characteristics in the United States and their potential for creating a violent culture, notes that under zero tolerance policies, students have been suspended for various infractions that a decade ago would not prompt such a response, such as dying one's own hair blue (Glynn, Czarnecki, & Moore, 2002). It is sometimes difficult to understand the rationale for zero tolerance policies when young children are subjected to harsh penalties for what sometimes seem to be minor infractions. Students can be the victims of overzealous disciplinary policies that treat dissimilar violations of rules in the same heavy-handed manner. The implications and outcomes of these policies are discussed in various studies, but the impact of these policies on students has been limited in scope within the research (Sughrue, 2003). So, while some students may be safe, at what cost does this safety come to all? Besides suspension and expulsion and zero tolerance policies, which are utilized in many school districts, security devices have become another means for combating violence in our schools.

Security Devices

Security devices have been found in increasing numbers in schools across the country. And while the feeling of being in a police state can hurt learning in the same way that feeling threatened and helpless can, and hinder a child's desire to come forward

with a problem, devices such as motorized gates, spiked fences, and blast-proof metal covers for doors and windows are being acquired by more schools than ever before (Bonilla, 2000). Metal detectors, video cameras, duress alarms, and x-ray inspection of book bags are used in more schools, and up until relatively recently were the only technological adaptations made, based on a report by the National Institute of Justice (Nanjiani, 2000). Video surveillance cameras are one of the most notable devices being used. Astor et al. (2001) noted that surveillance works because someone monitors a certain location which may have previously been an "undefined" area. Theories suggest that this monitoring reduces crime and violence (p. 513). Security devices may help make some improvements in reducing violence, but the negative impact of police states, as noted above (Bonilla, 2000), and the perception that technology produces few identified results in and of itself (Nanjiani, 2000) are valid arguments against technology. However, since technology is easily accessible and already in place in some schools, it can be viewed as part of a possible solution. Lacking are studies that elicit the thoughts and feelings of those under surveillance, the students. Student insight on the impact of these devices on school climate might prove useful in developing approaches to reduce school violence and bullying. So while suspension and expulsion, zero tolerance policies, and security devices are employed in many places, so too is what may appear a more proactive attempt at reducing school violence, prediction.

Prediction

Another solution that some schools are using is trying to predict who will be involved in violent offenses. Edwards (2001) noted that the first thing a program for violence prevention should do is to figure out what promotes anger and puts children at

risk, but the predictions schools want to utilize are those based on students' records and their behavior. Morrison & Skiba (2001) specifically looked at whether or not there should be a focus on school records and patterns of disciplined behaviors, and if they can improve the prevention or reduction of antisocial behavior in schools. The authors noted that it is very complex to predict which students are at-risk for violent behavior by using disciplinary data that is influenced by so many factors such as student behavior, teacher reactions, administrative dispositions and local, state, and national politics. Plus, various factors such as different school policies and teacher temperament and skill at dealing with different students' behaviors play a role in who is referred to the office for discipline action (p. 175). While one teacher who never engaged in a fight as a young person might turn in students who engage in a mutual pushing match, teachers who were more prone to physical altercations in their youth might not think such behavior warranted administrator attention. A teacher whose car broke down while driving to work may be more inclined to send a student to the office for a discipline referral than a teacher whose day has not been marred by such a problem. There are various variables that go into whether a student is given a discipline referral or not. Besides using a student's behavior record as a means with which to predict possible violent behavior, there are demographic and personal characteristics that some schools may use to attempt to predict violence.

Some students are more represented in the literature on discipline than others. Characteristics besides behavior "appear to be associated with the process and outcome of school discipline" (Morrison & Skiba, 2001, p. 177), such as students with disabilities and minority and low income students. African American students tend to receive harsher punishments than Caucasian students. Students who tend to be violent are usually males

from problem families (i.e., those characterized by instability, family violence, and/or mental illness). Involvement with gangs, carrying weapons, criminal records, and substance abuse are factors that relate to violence in boys. Many of these youngsters have histories of school failure and/or delinquent behavior and abuse and neglect. While these factors/demographics help identify some of the perpetrators of bullying and other violent activity in schools, several of the multiple victim shootings that occurred between 1993 and 1999 were committed by white male students who were seeking revenge for discipline actions or rejection by their peers, and perhaps the entire school community. With many of these incidents, there was a strong suicidal dynamic, along with the homicide. The students who committed these heinous acts were different from what many suspect when it comes to violence in school; they were from suburban or rural areas, grew up in middle-class or affluent communities, and usually were doing well in school until just prior to the incident. While some received treatment for mental illness, most did not have a history with extensive involvement in the juvenile justice system (Shafii & Shafii, 2001).

While the students who committed the multiple victim shootings in schools did not usually have juvenile justice histories, many students who have been involved in school violence are repeat offenders. Morrison and Skiba (2001) noted that "the outbreak of high visibility violence in schools in the past few years has led to an intensive search for behavioral and emotional precursors that could provide a prediction of which students might be at-risk for committing such acts" (p. 173). They also noted literature that supports the idea that a history of school discipline problems can act as an early warning sign. While the authors acknowledged this, they also believe, as noted above, that when

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school records are used to determine histories of violence, an amount of skepticism should be used. These records tend to be tainted by teachers, policies, and such that may not accurately reflect students' histories or predisposition. So, while the shooters involved in the multiple victim shootings may not meet the criteria based on demographics or previous history of violent activity in schools, they did possess one characteristic that can aid in prediction, a weapon.

Weapon carrying has been found to be a strong predictor of future violent activity. DuRant, Getts, Cadenhead, and Woods (1995) found that "lower SES black adolescents in their sample who carried weapons were more likely to engage in violent behaviors than those who did not carry a weapon" (p. 376). There was also an increase in morbidity and mortality found in young minority youth who used firearms and other weapons. DuRant et al. cited a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study noticing that within the previous 30 days of the 1991 study, 41% of male and 11% of female high school students had carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club to school. The study by DuRant and his colleagues found that weapon carrying frequency was significantly correlated with the frequency of engaging in physical fights, and that this correlation was stronger among males than females (p. 378). While this study demonstrates an association between weapon carrying and fighting, as was noted above, there has also been evidence by the United States Department of Justice that shows legal gun ownership among males can serve a positive function. Males who own legal firearms are less likely than those who do not own firearms to engage in drug use or delinquent behavior, both of which have been found to be associated with future violent acts in schools. As was also noted above, the United States Department of Justice attributed this difference to the socialization process

in which legal gun owners are socialized by family, and illegal gun owners by those on the streets (DuRant et al., 1995, p. 380). Weapon carrying is something that has been shown to contribute to increased violence in schools, and it is something schools can attempt to control.

Attempts are made to predict who will engage in violent behavior. These predictions are based on data gathered by the agencies interested in this topic, but what students know may provide insight into prediction. Although any attempt at predicting who will commit violent acts is not guaranteed, one factor that schools can control without a doubt is the curriculum.

Curriculum

Curricula can be designed that will have an impact on various factors that contribute to violence and bullying in schools. It has been noted that contention and dissension are the likely consequences of students finding the curriculum irrelevant. It is believed that when students take a more active role in directing their own learning, greater relevance and more effective learning, as well as less discontent can be achieved. There has been a movement within education to define teaching and learning as a constructivist process. The idea that learning is the personal generation of meaning is the basic assertion of constructivism. Students do not just absorb meaning taught by their teachers, but they connect new information to previous knowledge and experiences already stored in their memory (Edwards, 2001, p. 250).

Besides creating a curriculum that encourages and allows students to connect material to their past experiences and knowledge, it has been shown that students learn as well, if not more effectively, using cooperative learning. Relationships in the classroom

also improve with cooperative learning (Aronson, 2000). There seems to be a need within curriculum development to match the child with the curriculum with the hope that the child will feel more connected to school and have greater connection with the material taught.

A connection between the student and the material taught is important, but there has also been an emphasis on the teaching of skills that may help reduce violence. While there is little research available, it has shown that curriculum that aims to teach social skills is meeting with some success in the way of violence prevention when the programs are implemented conscientiously (Coghlan, 2000, p. 85). If students gain confidence in handling social situations, this knowledge and skill might help deter them from using bullying behavior (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999, p. 358). Aronson (2000) noted that schools should teach emotional mastery. He also asserted that if human relations were part of the school curriculum, more students would get along. He believed that this could be accomplished by teaching students to recognize and understand their emotions, helping students develop greater empathy for others, giving students the tools to resolve conflicts, and actively teaching students ways to make friends (pp. 105-106). Aronson went on to discuss various ways that curricula can be are implemented to help students learn to get along. Programs include mediation, recognizing emotion in others through changes in behavior and facial expressions, having a community circle where elementary classmates share their "good news" and "bad news," a classroom mailbox where students anonymously share their concerns with the teacher and the teacher deals with each one at a class meeting, or having classes brainstorm alternatives to dealing with conflicts, to name a few. Coghlan stated that teaching tolerance and respect is proactive (p. 86), while

Aronson noted, "once a child has learned to put himself in the shoes of another person, it is very difficult to aggress against that person" (p. 113). This idea of putting oneself in the shoes of another and viewing the world from that perspective is defined as empathy.

Aronson (2000) stated that "children who are more empathetic tend to be more cooperative and less aggressive (p. 113). He also noted that boys whose parents place a heavy emphasis on competition tend to have low empathy. Aronson set forth the idea of the jigsaw cooperative learning method as a way of helping teach empathy and decrease violence. Coghlan noted that a violence prevention program "must be fully integrated into the students' program of study" (2000, p. 85). The jigsaw approach is incorporated into the curriculum by having a group of students responsible for certain aspects of a lesson, whether a portion of a book, some math problems, or any other fragment of a lesson. The students must report back to the other students in their group with the vital information that is needed to complete a puzzle of information. "Just as in a jigsaw puzzle, each piece -- each student's part -- is essential for the production and full understanding of the final product. If each student's part is essential, then each student is essential. That is precisely what makes this strategy so effective" (Aronson, p. 135). By being in groups and seeing how each individual's piece ties with the others, children gain more of an ability to see the world from the perspective of another person, and this has profound implications for students' ability to deal with empathy, prejudice, aggression, and interpersonal relations in general. As mentioned earlier, Aronson noted that students learn as well, if not better, from cooperative learning, while at the same time improving relationships in the classroom. The jigsaw method and other programs that attempt to reduce violence through various curricula in our schools are excellent ways to try and

cope with a growing and serious problem, and while all of these programs may be utilized in any classroom, the English classroom may prove most effective in reducing violence.

Coghlan (2000) suggested that "The English classroom provides a fitting place to integrate anti-violence teaching into the academic curriculum" (p. 85). She believed that the English classroom allows opportunity to teach and address things that are shown to contribute to the reduction of violence, such as conflict resolution strategies, instilling respect for other cultures, acknowledging controversy and providing a setting for cooperation, and helping foster empathy and respect. Through role playing, discussing short stories, and using peace contracts to practice negotiations between characters in a story, students become familiar with how to handle conflict. She also noted that when students are exposed to different cultures and races in the English classroom, violence prevention is reinforced, because the teacher is fostering tolerance and empathy. An example of how this learning can occur in the English classroom is through the use of a novel, such as Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1960). The father Atticus tells his daughter Scout that "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view." With Scout's reply being "Sir?" Atticus continues with, "until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (1960, p. 34). This quotation from a popular book, which is taught in some ninth and tenth grade literature classes, is an excellent example of how literature can be used to teach students how to think through complex ideas. The quotation exemplifies what Aronson (2000) believed is key to reducing violence in school, empathy.

Besides literature, Coghlan (2000) believed that language can play a vital role in reducing violence, since language can be an aid in setting the groundwork for violence and peace. Students can be better prepared to articulate their feelings, desires, and thoughts. Students can develop these language skills through discussion in academic controversy, which if encouraged by the teacher, will help students develop ways of handling opposing views (p. 87). Besides the students reading the literature, teachers can show their understanding and sympathy for the fictional characters' plight in a story when they read to students and do not stifle their own reaction. This modeling by the teacher can demonstrate acceptable reactions for the students, while at the same time fostering a sense that the teacher will also be understanding and sympathetic to the students and their plights. The teacher reading to the class also provides an opportunity for the teacher to develop a trusting relationship with the class (Pardeck, 1994). There are various ways to utilize the curriculum to teach anti-violence strategies, but the English classroom seems to provide many opportunities for a curriculum of anti-violence.

Peace contracts, writing, and short stories can be part of the English curriculum, and so can other programs to help reduce violence (Gill, 2000), but bibliotherapy can be a part of any curriculum. Bibliotherapy is the use of books to address behavioral and emotional issues, and can be as simple as a teacher providing a book on a topic that a student is currently dealing with, such as death, divorce, or bullying (Pardeck, 1994). The major goals of bibliotherapy are: to provide information on problems and insight into those problems, to stimulate discussion regarding the problems, to communicate new values and ideas, to create awareness that others have dealt with similar problems, and to provide solutions to the problems. All of these goals can be achieved through various

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books that are available on a wide range of problems. The importance of educational and

therapeutic benefits from literature is recognized (Oliver, Young, & LaSalle, 1994;

Jonsberg, 2000) and it is these benefits that those who use bibliotherapy hope to

capitalize on. Connecting the curriculum with the student, teaching empathy, using the

jigsaw method to get students engaged with others, or using the English classroom as a

setting for discovery of diversity and tolerance will help heighten awareness of others and

create a dialogue that will promote acceptance and hopefully reduce violence. Suspension

and expulsion and zero tolerance policies, security devices, and prediction are various

manners of dealing with violence in schools that have been discussed, and while these

can help reduce violence, and the curriculum can provide opportunities, whether in the

English classroom or through literature and other activities in other classes, little can help

reduce violence in a school if the school's culture is immutable.

School Culture

School culture is made up of all the elements of a school, including students,

teachers, administrators, resources, buildings, curriculum, and the community. Just as

schools are influenced by these entities, school culture also influences the same entities

that create it. School culture plays a major role in the violence and bullying that occurs in

schools. It has been noted that school contexts are very influential when the violence is

considered school violence as opposed to youth violence. Morrison and Skiba (2001)

further noted that "schools have been implicated in the contribution to antisocial behavior

through practices such as punitive disciplinary practices, lack of clarity about rules,

expectations and consequences, failure to consider individual differences, and overall

high rates of academic failure" (p. 178). Arllen, Gable, and Hendrickson (1994) noted

that similar factors to those cited above have been associated with an increased risk of antisocial behavior. These factors include inconsistent teacher expectations, failure to acknowledge schoolwork completed, absence of teacher praise, lack of teacher time spent on instruction, not enough emphasis on individual student responsibility, and low emphasis on academics. Adler and Adler (1998) discussed how popular boys in the upper levels of elementary school, in many of the schools they studied, would receive more punishments, be defiant of authority, and challenge rules, and that this activity gained them peer status. Many things influence the culture of schools, and it has been suggested that students who break school rules need some form of additional academic, social, and personal assistance (Morrison & Skiba). The first element of a school's culture that could be addressed is that of the fit between the school and the child.

It has been suggested by Morrison and Skiba (2001) that principals who adopt a supportive and non-punitive approach to discipline and attempt to help students deal with violence hinder the results of prediction and alter the trajectory of the student. They also noted that there needs to be a "goodness-of-fit" between the school's approach to discipline and the child's characteristics. Shafii & Shafii (2001) found that student teacher relationships are important and that "tough and caring" teachers were more effective and that there is a decrease in school violence when the teacher and administrators work together. Besides the teachers' and administrators' relationships, the students also need to feel connected to the school. If the students' sense of alienation is reduced, school violence also decreases (Coghlan, 2000). Grade inflation and stringent grading are also possible variables that lead to a sense of alienation, which can lead to misbehavior and violence. Another way that alienation can be reduced is through the

schools practicing democratic rule and allowing students to have a say in the processes that form their education. This will instill within the student little reason to rebel, because they will feel they belong to a community where everyone cares about everyone else and they are offered autonomy, which may lessen the possibility that they feel compelled by irrational forces (Edwards, 2001). Besides addressing the fit between the student and the school, other possible avenues can be utilized.

Aronson (2000) believed that the energy and resources that are being leveled in an attempt to reduce violence, deal with weapons, drugs and fighting, and with zero-tolerance policies need to be redirected to deal with bullying, taunting, and insulting behaviors. Others believe that because of the clustering of problems and other factors there is a need for a multifaceted comprehensive approach to ending bullying and violence (Bosworth et al., 1999; Sosin et al., 1995). Some of the facets that might be addressed are architecture and anger management personnel to assist students (Bonilla, 2000). While community would fall under the realm of multifaceted and comprehensive, some suggest the community could be utilized as an agent in an attempt to eliminate violence in schools. It has been suggested that a stronger community reduces a sense of alienation (Nanjiani, 2000) and can provide moral principles and perhaps most importantly, the existence of caring relationships (Edwards, 2001), all of which may help reduce violence in schools. A stronger community has also been shown to add informal social control with neighbors who are willing to confront youth in the name of the common good (Shafii & Shafii, 2001). Community-based programs that help prevent violence and are centered on conflict resolution and violence avoidance could also help

save our youth from the torment of violence both in their schools and in their neighborhoods (DuRant et al., 1995).

Success in reducing school violence tends to be evaluated more quantitatively as a decline in reported incidents is seen as a successful campaign, but what is missing is an informed opinion of the change effected. In other words, what are the students' opinions and perceptions of the outcome and/or success of these programs? Students may provide answers as to the success of the programs attempted or even needed.

While it is difficult to explain all the reasons for violence in schools and bullying, some of the explanations examined here include: the presence of conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, and low life satisfaction in some students, prior experiences with violence either at the hands of parents and guardians or witnessing violent events, locations in schools that are susceptible to violent activity, drug use and weapon carrying, and school culture. Attempts to prevent violence and bullying have been tried in the form of suspension, expulsion, and zero tolerance policies, the installation of security devices, attempting to predict who is most likely to engage in violent behaviors, utilizing the curriculum, and improving the school culture. While no singular explanation will satisfy every circumstance and no method of prevention will totally eradicate violence from our schools, we must continue to seek explanations and find some means by which we can reduce, if not end, violence and bullying in our schools and the torment that it causes so many students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

It is the torment and anguish that we as a society, and most importantly as educators, need to reduce. Educators are in a position to at least attempt to lighten the load that violence and bullying place on so many of our young people. If so much

bullying and violence is occurring in our schools, someone must be ignoring or dismissing it, and through this inaction they are condoning it. Are our students suffering because of our inaction, dismissals, ignoring, tolerating, and accepting a school culture that promotes violence and bullying? Was Aronson (2000) right, when he stated, "It is reasonably clear that a major root cause of the recent school shootings is a school atmosphere that ignores, or implicitly condones, the taunting, rejection, and verbal abuse to which a great many students are subjected" (p. 70)? I have witnessed first hand, both as a student and as a teacher, the bullying and violence that is ignored in schools, and I have seen the sad result. As a student I recall my middle school gym teachers seeming to do little to end the chants that questioned my sexuality, and as a teacher I had a student who was ostracized, picked on, and doing poorly in school, who committed suicide at the end of Christmas break with a hand gun his brother had given him as a gift. I witnessed, and maybe ignored, the treatment that may have contributed to his final action. Maybe it is just a tainted reflection of past events that stirs the grief inside me, or maybe it is the notion that in our schools there are teachers and administrators who accept the status quo. It must be our goal as educators to provide a welcoming learning environment for all, and in order to do this we must have safe schools where students can safely enter and feel protected. We must examine our school culture and see if compliancy is leading to violence and even death. Whether through community forces, the restructuring of schools based on a "goodness-of-fit" between school and child, through literature, writing, reading across the curriculum, identifying the "designated victim" and paying attention to and guarding their rights, or through the teaching, modeling, and honoring of empathy, we as a society owe it to our young people of today, and of tomorrow, to eradicate

violence and bullying in our schools to the best of our abilities. No child should ever want to miss school to avoid being bullied, no child should have to take the longer route home to avoid bullies, no child should be permitted by teachers and administrators to harass another child, and no child should look back on their school days as some of the unhappiest days of their lives because someone bullied them and no one was there to stop it.

Need for More Research

While research on school violence and bullying spans various fields, there is a need for research that addresses some important questions. First, the current self-survey research is more quantitative in nature, seeking basic information. More can be gleaned from the experiences and insights of students than just basic facts. Their reaction to policies and programs could prove useful in evaluating results. Secondly, the studies that have been done do not ask students their perceptions and definitions of school violence and bullying. Students' perceptions could allow for an understanding of their definitions of bullying and school violence. Perceptions of bullies could show how their targets are selected, while the victims could share their insight as to why they think they were the target. The perceptions of students could also prove useful in assessing how teachers and administrators deal with school violence and bullying. Thirdly, many of these studies focus on psychological explanations and overlook possible social factors. Many facets of society influence our daily lives, and ignoring these may reduce our chances of eliminating the problems of school violence and bullying. There are many avenues to explore in our quest to help students obtain a quality education. But it is important to

remember it is the students' education, so it should be a priority to seek their input as we

attempt to alter a culture made over time and based on many influences.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The physically and psychologically bullied have voices that need to be heard.

This study is designed to investigate school bullying, but specifically it will address

school bullying and students' perceptions of bullying and the definitions they have of

these phenomena.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine students' perceptions and definitions of

bullying experienced and recalled from their school years and to explore students'

understandings of how they coped with the experience, whether they were in the role of

the victim, bully, or witness. The research question that will guide this study is:

What perceptions do college freshmen have regarding school bullying and what

are their definitions of the term "bullying?"

Definitions

Bullying is defined as taunting, rejection, verbal abuse, and physical abuse

(Aronson, 2000). Bullying has also been defined as "direct behaviors such as teasing,

taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students

against a victim" (Banks, 1997). More indirect bullying consists of "causing a student to

be socially isolated through intentional exclusion" (Banks, p. 1).

As Spring (1994) states, schooling has historically been defined as a means of

meeting political, social, and economic purposes in a society. Schooling can be defined as

meeting certain political purposes, such as a method by which leaders for the government

of the United States are prepared, a way to educate citizens, a means of creating political

consensus, a system for maintaining political power, and a manner of socializing people for political systems. The social purposes of schooling include: a means of social control, a way to improve social conditions, and a method for reducing the social tensions caused by economic inequalities. Finally, schooling can be defined in terms of its economic purposes. These include increasing national wealth and providing opportunities for advancements in technological development (Spring). Marshall (1994) defined school and schooling as "both an institution and a method of education. A process of learning and management of socially approved knowledge, involving an approved curriculum and pedagogy, paid professional educators, compulsory attendance of pupils, and school grouping" (p. 463). For the purposes of this study, schooling will be defined as every aspect of the educational establishment in which a student participates. Therefore, schooling consists of the time a student spends in the classroom, the time a student spends getting to and from school, activity in the hallways, lunchtime, and extra-curricular activities.

Education has been defined as "a philosophical as well as a sociological concept, denoting ideologies, curricula, and pedagogical techniques of the inculcation and management of knowledge and the social reproduction of personalities and cultures" (Marshall, 1994, p. 142). Education is the focus of schools; it is the product that students are expected to gain within the school. With education being the outcome, or one of the goals, of schooling, it is advantageous to examine bullying and school violence within the larger context of schooling.

Qualitative Research

The research design involved the utilization of qualitative research methods in addressing the research questions. The methodology involved examination of the perceptions of students who had bullied, been bullied, or had witnessed others being bullied, as well as their definitions of bullying. Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because, as Rossman and Rallis (1998) have noted, "there are few truths that constitute universal knowledge; rather, there are multiple perspectives about the world" (p. 29). By exploring the perceptions of individuals who have had experiences with bullying, it was possible to obtain "multiple perspectives" that further our understandings of bullying. Each individual ascribes certain characteristics and attributes to any given situation. This study was designed to gain an understanding of these variations in the interpretation of incidents of bullying. Merriam (1998) noted that qualitative research offers "the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education," because it is "focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of those being studied" (p. 1).

The research question for this study centered on the perspectives and definitions of students who had experienced bullying; thus, qualitative methods were most appropriate. The voice given to past victims, bullies, and bystanders provides educators with the insight to guide practice and further research so as to make our schools as safe as possible for every student and teacher in the future.

Strategy of Inquiry

The strategy of inquiry utilized was biographical research. Biographical research is "the study of an individual and her or his experiences as told to the researcher or found

in documents and archival material" (Creswell, 1998, p. 47). Denzin (1989) defined the biographical method as the "studied use and collection of life documents that describe turning points in an individual's life" (p. 69). Although it is possible that those who had been the victim, witness, or even the bully may not view their interactions in these contexts as turning points in their lives, specific incidents (or a number of combined incidents) may have provided a turning point for some of the involved individuals. Even if a turning point did not occur, it is very possible that these events contributed to some extent to the individuals' perceptions of themselves or others.

By examining the perceptions of students who had previous experiences with bullying, it is possible to explore the relative importance that these students attach to these events, in their own voices. Incidents of being bullied, witnessing bullying, or being the bully proved poignant to many individuals, and in some cases these incidents occurred more than once in a person's life.

The poignancy of being bullied, recalling the experiences and the feelings that were elicited, is illustrated in Simmons' *Odd Girl Out* (2002) when a mother recalled her experiences being bullied and she reflected, "When I had a child, it brought out all of my old fears and insecurities. I had to keep saying, 'Melissa is not me. Melissa is not me.' It brought back memories of my own childhood. And I did not want her to know my pain" (p. 215). The first-hand knowledge of bullying events provided descriptions of, and reflections upon, specific experiences from which valuable information was gleaned. Most importantly, some victims are still haunted by their experiences and these recalled experiences might provide insight that could play a role in the reduction of bullying in schools.

Sample in Qualitative Research

A variety of sampling procedures is available for qualitative research. In some cases, it is advantageous to select sampling methods that allow for the identification of a group of individuals with diverse experiences (Patton, 2002). Some selection procedures produce very heterogeneous samplings that describe "central themes that cut across a great deal of variation" (p. 235). Another sampling strategy involves choosing participants who are information rich because they are "unusual or special in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures" (p. 231). In order to directly address the research questions, this study sampled those individuals who were information rich, specifically, criterion sampling.

Criterion sampling involves reviewing and studying "all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). The criterion for this study was a participant's experience with bullying either as a victim, bully, or witness. It is important to identify participants who are "likely to be information rich because they may reveal major system weaknesses that become targets of opportunity for program or system improvement" (p. 238). Based upon the literature, it is abundantly clear that "program and system improvement" is needed. The results of this study are expected to aid in setting the course for improvements in schools. Much like a compass aids lost individuals, so too this study, as it attempts to provide insight to teachers and the education community to help reduce bullying by exploring the encounters with bullying of those who have directly experienced these painful events.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed in order to identify potential participants. The responses of the participants provided insight as to who met the criteria of having experienced bullying, either directly or indirectly. The questionnaire provided prompts that helped identify participants as bullies, victims, witnesses, or any combination thereof (See Appendix A).

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to review the questionnaire and interview questions and prompts and evaluate their effectiveness. The participant for the pilot study consisted of an individual from a recreational sports team at a large university. Only one participant was utilized because the findings revealed enough about incidents of bullying in one student's life to warrant the use of the questionnaire and conduct further interviews. This participant recalled various incidents of bullying that occurred at a small all-male private school in an urban community. This participant recalled name calling, physical bullying, and other incidents of bullying that he witnessed on an almost regular basis.

Participants

For this study, college students, mostly freshmen 18 to 19 years of age, were interviewed. The students were actively recruited. Both women and men of differing racial and ethnic categories who attended public and private high schools were selected to answer the questionnaires. Participants in this age group were able to recall their public school experiences, as well as the feelings those experiences evoked and the impact that the experiences may have had on their overall experience in school.

A second advantage to using this population was that they were also not currently in the school or lower grades where the incidents of interest occurred. The participants were in college and therefore not in the environment in which the bullying occurred. At the time of the interviews, the participants did not face the teachers whose actions or inactions they may question. Nor did they face (it is hoped) those who tormented them, as they may have when they were enrolled in K-12 public and private schools. The participants of this study were no longer part of the institutions that they may blame for allowing their torment to continue and they were no longer connected with the schools, and to a lesser extent the communities, in which these events occurred.

In other similar studies, researchers have articulated concerns about the validity of self-reports and the fear that students who were currently living in the context of bullying and violence would not be honest in their responses because they feared "that their answers will be used against themselves or others" (Coggeshall & Kingery, 2001, p. 107). Coggeshall and Kingery (2001) also made note of the benefits of anonymous self-report data, such as revealing locations where violence is most likely to occur, the most common types of violence, and student familiarity with school rules. By drawing the sample for this study from a population of college students, it was assured that concerns about revealing information about the contexts of bullying were unlikely to impact the data collected. In short, college students, it was hoped, were not concerned with any possible ramifications from their school community, since they were in college and time had passed.

Procedure for selecting participants. Participants were selected from classes where the majority of the class population is freshmen at a large university. Biology

courses offered during the summer, Communication Studies classes, and one Business Law class were logical choices for selecting freshmen because the courses consist primarily, if not totally, of freshmen. There were only a few cases where other students besides freshman were interviewed. These students were not excluded from participating because it was felt that they too could contribute to the study in valuable ways. With that said, they were the minority and every attempt was made to select freshmen to interview. Selecting students from the courses mentioned, two of which were core requirement courses, allowed for more diversity given that students in Biology and Communication Studies are drawn from a variety of departments and colleges at a large university

The researcher entered one or more sections of Biology, Communication Studies, and Business Law and shared a basic concept of the research project with the students. With permission of the instructor, the researcher then passed out a brief questionnaire (See Appendix A) that asked the students to recall experiences in which they were involved in or witnessed bullying in school (at any level) before coming to college.

A pool of 300 students completed the questionnaire, which asked students to identify whether or not they witnessed or experienced bullying (as victim or bully) in school, and queried whether or not they would be willing to participate in a study about their experiences. It was expected that, of the 300 who completed the questionnaire, a representative sample of students would be willing to participate in the study.

The researcher engaged in an analysis of the questionnaire data for the purpose of identifying participants for the interviews. The participants consisted of students who had been bullied, who had been the bully, and who had witnessed an incident of bullying. Participants were selected with the goal of achieving a balance between these different

roles, but that was not a major focus of who was selected. Based on the literature, it is known that most students are likely to fit into more than one of these roles, which was the case for many respondents.

When the questionnaires were tallied, those who met the criterion of having been a bully, having been bullied, or having witnessed others being bullied and who would be willing to be interviewed were selected to be interviewed. From these categories, participants who represented both genders and various racial and ethnic categories were selected for participation. Given the demographics of the large university, there was little participation by students representing racial groups and ethnic categories other than Caucasian; however, the number of students from various racial categories who were interviewed was fairly proportional to the number of students from the racial and ethnic categories of students attending Virginia Tech.

Interview participants. The selection of 41 participants allowed for in-depth interviews. As was described above, the goal was to have equal number of participants who have been the victim of bullying, the bully, and a witness. Initially the survey results showed that of the participants, 21 had said they had been bullied, 35 said they had witnessed someone being bullied, and 13 said that they had bullied someone. The goal of having equal numbers of participants in each category was achieved to some extent, since some students did not self-identify as bullies or having been bullied, but their interview revealed them to be a bully and/or a victim at some point during their K-12 schooling.

Interview Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were used. As Seidman (1998) noted, through semi-structured interviews that guide the conversation, but allow for participants to provide

information that is important to them but not necessarily reflected in the interview questions, "we can come to understand the details of people's experience from their point of view" (p. 112). He further noted, "We can see how their individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work, and we can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context" (p. 112). It is understanding the participants' points of view and allowing their voices to be heard that requires qualitative methods, specifically interviewing, to be utilized to answer the research question.

During the semi-structured in-depth interviews, a set of interview questions (Appendix B) was used to guide opportunities to explore issues of bullying that the students experienced in school. Interview questions asked participants to recall their experiences with bullying, whether their perspective was that of bully, victim, witness, or any combination thereof. Participants' perceptions of their daily schooling experiences were elicited and recorded so as to assess their exposure to bullying, either directly or indirectly. The word "bullying" was only brought up at the end of the interview in order to have the participants define the term at an earlier part of the interview.

Researcher's Journal

The researcher kept a research journal throughout the data collection and analysis process. Immediately after each interview or set of interviews, the researcher made a journal entry. These journal entries included notes on the researcher's perceptions of the participants and recollections of how the participants behaved and spoke during the interviews. These notes were helpful in allowing the researcher to recall the meanings of

what participants said in the interviews during the analysis process and identify any distractions or comments the researcher felt were important to the findings.

This was not an "objective" data source; rather, it was subjective. In the journal, the researcher recorded all personal impressions that could possibly have an impact on the analysis procedures. By recording subjective information of this kind in the researcher's journal, it was possible for the researcher to make notes on what should be guarded against regarding subjectivity during the process of analyses. For instance, it is possible that the researcher had negative subjective responses to participants who described themselves as bullies. Writing about these negative responses and feelings in the researcher's journal provided a "place" in the study for the researcher's perceptions.

Another role of the researcher's journal was that of recording ongoing thoughts about conducting the interviews. In the process of interviewing the participants the researcher realized that some participants seemed to want to give advice to someone, such as a friend or current K-12 student. At this point it was decided to ask some participants about what kind of advice they would give for current K-12 students regarding bullying.

Finally, the researcher listened for emerging patterns and themes during the process of conducting the interviews. Thoughts on patterns and themes to be investigated during the analysis process were recorded in the researcher's journal. Because a constant comparative approach to data analysis was utilized when the transcripts were completed, the notes from the researcher's journal formed the basis for beginning the analysis procedures.

Confidentiality

Because of the sensitivity of the topic, the interviews were conducted in an office that provided ample privacy while at the same time providing the participant with a comfortable environment that placed the interviewer and participant at a table with chairs that were alike and in a room that offered little to no distractions. When the participants agreed to be interviewed, a date, time, and site for the interview were established collaboratively through phone calls.

The students entered their e-mail addresses and phone numbers on the questionnaire if they were willing to participate in interviews. After a set of interview participants were identified, the researcher called each participant to make arrangements for a first interview. If the researcher was unable to make contact via telephone after three tries, an e-mail message inviting the potential participants to reply or call the researcher at home or on his cell phone was sent. Arrangements for interviews were mostly made via telephone, but e-mail was utilized in a few cases. By providing access to the researcher via home phone, cell phone, or e-mail, the participants were put at ease about the researcher's sensitivity to the privacy of potential participants.

Each participant was given a pseudonym for her/himself. Names in transcripts were changed or deleted, as were the names of schools. The researcher's notes of names of individuals and matching pseudonyms were kept separate from each other and other identifying information was kept in a secure place.

The study was submitted and approved by the institutional review board. The Informed Consent Form to be signed by participants is included in Appendix C and the Institutional Review Board form can be found in Appendix D.

Analysis

The interviews were tape-recorded, with permission of the participants, and then the tapes were transcribed verbatim. Some notes were taken by the researcher in order to assist in accuracy and transcription, but the note taking was limited to allow the researcher to focus on the participants and their answers to the prompts. The transcriptions were analyzed using the constant comparative method.

The constant comparative method of data analysis involves the "process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories" (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). Merriam (1998) defined the constant comparative method as the researcher beginning "with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document" and comparing with "another incident in the same set of data or in another set" (p. 159). These comparisons are conducted throughout the data collection processes so as to inform collection of further data. This means of analyzing data allows the researcher to refine interview questions and probes as needed and to focus in on responses that are comparable to incidents described by either other participants or the same participant.

Patton (2002) discussed the constant comparative method of data analysis as "comparing research sites, doing theoretical sampling, and testing emergent concepts with additional fieldwork" (p. 125). This research is biographical research, in which the researcher tends to focus on epiphanies, stories, and historical context (Creswell, 1998) utilizing the constant comparative method of data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The results of the analysis of the interview data will be presented in this chapter. The themes identified within the data include: (a) students' definitions of bullying, (b) the role appearance plays in bullying, (c) students' perceptions of how to prevent bullying, and (d) students' reflections on past experiences and regrets with bullying.

Definitions of Bullying

The research question for this study - What perceptions do college freshmen have regarding bullying and what are their definitions of the term "bullying"? - led me to develop interview questions about participants' experiences with bullying and how they defined and classified bullying. In order to be able to fully grasp the concept of bullying, an understanding of participants' definitions of bullying was needed. These definitions encompassed the students' perceptions of how they viewed bullying. The analysis of student definitions of bullying led to four sub-themes: (a) overall definitions that include both physical and verbal bullying, (b) emotional bullying, (c) the role of power in bullying, and (d) the role of groups.

Overall Definitions of Bullying

For the most part, students had similar definitions of bullying. These definitions focused on what students referred to as physical and verbal bullying. For instance, to the question "How would you define bullying?" Tammy replied, "I don't know. Any mental or physical or psychological insult or pain you give to somebody else….I think any time you cut somebody else down it's bullying…. I don't know; just anytime you cut someone down probably." Gloria offered a broader definition noting, "Bullying would be walking over somebody else and trying to make them do something that you wanted them to do

and classifying it would be, I don't know how to classify bullying, but like defining it, yeah, walking over somebody and feeling superior to them as if you can do whatever you want to them and they have to listen to you." Hanna defined bullying as:

> It's kind of, I don't know, like joking about somebody to their face. It could be as little as talking behind someone's back or it could be, you know, stealing someone's lunch or ganging up on them and making them feel threatened. It can be like a threat, like a physical threat or just a verbal threat as in joking and mimicking and making someone feel bad about themselves."

While some students believed that bullying was a natural part of growing up, others were more forthcoming in defining and classifying bullying. These definitions, and those offered by other students suggested two major components of bullying: verbal and physical.

Most students agreed that there was a physical component in bullying. Ken viewed bullying strictly as an incident requiring a physical element, when he stated, "I have seen kids get picked on like verbally, but I wouldn't consider that bullying I don't think. I mean I had always thought that bullying was like one guy kind of beating up another guy, like, give me your lunch money type thing." Ken continued to define bullying as more physical, "I would classify it as like the physical, I guess, beating up. Like one person beating up another person; just one-sided physical encounter or something like that." When asked if there were degrees of bullying, he responded with, "like you can shove someone around or you could actually punch them in the face; I would say that's different degrees because one is going to hurt more than the other." Ken

was the only participant who believed that bullying only consisted of a physical component.

While this one student seemed to believe that bullying only involved physical actions, most of the other students interviewed held the perception that there were other types of bullying besides the physical. Paul stated that he believed that everyone would consider "any kind of physical harm done to anybody else" as constituting bullying, but unlike Ken, Paul also saw a verbal component to bullying, as well as an exclusion component. Some of those interviewed tended to view physical bullying as the highest level of bullying.

Emma noted the consequences of bullying by asserting, "Bullying usually leads to fighting. You can look at it, a lot of people who have been bullied, they are the kind of people who might turn around and actually cause the violence." She went on to discuss the students at Columbine who were bullied and "turned around and opened fire on the school." After her discussion of the progression of physical bullying to violence, she also noted that bullying is not always physical by stating, "bullying is more using your words and maybe giving a shove or something, but [also] fighting and violence that is actually hurting someone physically or mentally."

Several students defined bullying as an act that could include both a physical and verbal element. When asked how she defined bullying, Ursula stated, "I think it can be embarrassing people in front of your peers, you know, and putting them down or it can be physical too, bullying. I mean you can be, or it can just be you and another person and embarrassing them and thinking you have control over them." Another student, Noel, concurred, noting that one of the degrees of bullying is "taunting and teasing and name

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calling; that would be the lowest." Adam stated that a big part of his definition of

bullying consists "mostly making fun of people" and that he just saw bullying as verbal,

"Like Bart Simpson. Like he made fun of people, other kids." Adam also felt that there

was "another level where they actually physically do something to people." Frank

defined bullying as, "… putting down another person or group of people like with words

or actions." "Threatening somebody" or excessively "making fun of someone"

constituted bullying to Jan, while Paul believed that some people would not consider

verbal abuse a form of bullying. Twenty participants included verbal bullying within their

definitions of bullying. Of course, how students responded to verbal bullying would

impact whether or not they defined it as bullying.

In discussing verbal bullying, Adam expanded on his definition of bullying. He

noted:

> It's never going to stop. It's just a way of life. Just try to, the kids that get less
>
> bullied are the kids that keep to themselves because people say stuff about them
>
> or they will say stuff to them loudly, but because they ignore the stuff, it doesn't
>
> register as bullying to them.

Adam's definition of bullying included a verbal element, but it was his opinion that, if

negative verbal statements were ignored, these statements might not be registered as

bullying by the victim.

Harry was one student who did register what had been said to him by others, and

also considered it bullying. He stated, "I received a little bit [bullying] in middle school,

but it was just kind of like, you know, with words and stuff like that. It wasn't anything

physical." Harry implied that physical bullying had a greater impact than the verbal bullying.

Just as Harry defined physical bullying differently from verbal bullying, some students noted that some verbal statements could be even more painful than others; therefore, they should be classified differently. While Veronica noted that just pointing and saying something or laughing could be considered bullying, Gloria asserted:

> I guess, like, something serious is if it was something personal to them, such as, like, something they value that you were, like morally wrong I guess, and if they would really be offended by it by getting upset and running off crying or really getting hurt. I guess, I don't know, there are just different things that you can like say that are over the line and other things aren't.

When asked for an example of something that would be over the line, Gloria said, "Like physically hurting someone or just emotionally embarrassing them like publicly in front of like everyone like really humiliating them by doing something they find not comfortable…" Lucy felt there were some verbal altercations that could be worse than others. Lucy noted,

> I really think spreading rumors is bullying and jeering at someone, jeering behind someone's back…. I really think spreading rumors about someone that either are true or are more severe than what the truth is, is really bullying because I think that hurts people more than anything.

When asked to define "jeering" she said, "Jeering. Just picking at someone; like keep them, I don't know; it's a term we have always used in high school. Constantly ragging on the person; constantly, I guess, beating them down a little bit, but not physically." She

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also noted that she did not remember much physical bullying happening and attributed that to the fact that her school was an all-girls school. Because there was a notable absence of physical bullying, this student may have been more acutely aware of the verbal bullying that took place in her school. These three female students, Gloria, Veronica, and Lucy provided evidence that verbal bullying can have various categories, or at least a range of possible levels that vary according to what is said and how it is said. It was also implied that the intention with which a statement is made could determine the level of bullying.

Emotional Bullying

Some students, like Harry, believed that physical bullying is hurtful and worth recalling, versus "words and stuff" or verbal bullying, which is not worth recalling. Other students included as part of their definition of bullying a discussion of the emotional aspect. The girls mentioned above, Gloria, Veronica, and Lucy, saw the impact that the verbal bullying could have on the victim, but some students' definitions of bullying addressed more specifically the emotional component. When asked how they defined and classified bullying, Nick responded with, "Somebody who goes out of their way to make someone's day miserable." To this same question, Paul stated, "It's making somebody feel uncomfortable either physically or emotionally," while Tammy defined bullying as, "Any mental or physical or psychological insult or pain you give to somebody else." While some made a reference to emotional bullying, others spelled it out in a little more detail, denoting that it can be classified as ignoring and peer taunting. When asked if he had ever been bullied, Ian replied:

Ignored. I don't know if that is considered bullied. I was usually the quiet one, and

I usually went and did my own work, but since I was the only African American

in all of my classes, whichever, most people really didn't notice me. I mean I

know my skin color might clash with the wall, but they see me as a carbon-based

life form. So, I don't know if being ignored is being bullied, but it sure didn't

make you feel very good. I wasn't hit or punched or anything like that, but

ignored. It was just about as bad, I thought.

Paul made a similar connection in his definition of bullying, when he responded with:

I consider myself to be more sensitive than a lot of my peers. I don't think that a

lot of people probably would not consider, you know, not including somebody in

a social event that wanted to [be] included. They might not consider that bullying,

but I think that can be really hurtful, being non-inclusive.

Both of these male students added to their definition of bullying the element of being

ignored. The first student, Ian, remembered an experience where he was ignored. While

Paul didn't recall a specific experience, he instead described what he felt would constitute

bullying. These two students had been ignored and defined bullying, if only partly, as

being ignored.

Sue had a different perspective about emotional bullying. She defined bullying as

having an emotional component, but she also defined it from the perspective of someone

who felt that she had bullied other students emotionally. When asked how she would

define and classify bullying she noted:

I think bullying is any action or act that causes distress to another person and

there are certain levels. There's extreme and then there's little things. I think it

goes both ways. I think classifying bullying is anyone who makes another person feel uncomfortable themselves because it might not be a big deal to the person who is doing it.

She went on to note her role in bullying:

> Like for me, for example, the people who said I was a bitch, I had no idea, but to them, like, I am sure I probably did cause them, like, some kind of emotional like stir up, like I don't like her because she is a certain way to me when it wasn't even intentional, but I think that, yeah, sure, I still could have been considered a bully even if it was unintentional. I am sure people still thought of me as bullying them or, like, not giving them the time of day and causing them distress, and I think that is bullying.

The three students above expanded on their definition of bullying by adding an emotional element, but they went even further and discussed how not being included and being ignored were considered part of their definition of bullying. The role rumors can play in emotional bullying was also worth nothing.

While rumors could be, and are, classified under verbal bullying, based on these data, they can also be classified as emotional bullying. In the process of discussing their definitions of bullying, some students mentioned rumors as something that occurred in school, on what appeared to be a regular basis. Wendy, when asked if there were degrees of bullying, stated, "I think there is physical bullying and emotional bullying, which I guess it is similar to verbal, then it goes to degrees of each category. Like a simple joke, but maybe it was really a harmful joke or just spreading rumors." As noted above, Lucy would agree, as she stated, "I really think spreading rumors about someone that either are

true or aren't more severe than what the truth is is really bullying because I think that hurts people more than anything." While Quinn did not mention rumors specifically, he did seem to capture the essence of what Wendy and Lucy said above; as he classified bullying, he noted, "I think that physical, you know, is one thing, but I also think verbal can be, an excessive amount of verbal I think that can be really, I guess, mentally harming… you know, kind of taking down your pride and makes you feel insecure." Quinn did not mention rumors specifically, but he did discuss the emotional impact that verbal bullying can have on an individual, and rumors are a form of verbal bullying that can also encompass emotional bullying.

Role of Power in Bullying

Besides denoting the difference between verbal, physical, and emotional bullying, some participants, either explicitly or implicitly made reference to a power element in bullying. Power was an important element within the definitions of bullying provided by these participants. Caleb defined bullying as:

> To me bullying is the intimidation of another person. To me that is what bullying is, whether it be physical, verbal, or emotional. It's basically dismantling of that person's psyche from top to bottom. … always going to deal with it mentally because they are going to have to remember that, and they will be thinking about that every time they see you.

Caleb's definition of bullying denoted the destruction of one "person's psyche" and how the incidence of intimidation may play a role each time the victim sees the bully in the future, placing the bully in an ongoing position of power. When asked how bullying works, Ian responded with:

I think it's a transfer of whatever insecurities you are feeling transferred into a

physical force that is redirected at someone else through either envy or fear. So,

it's almost a primitive urge like eating and drinking to have power and control and

when you have the power and control over your own life and you enforce it upon

someone else to satisfy your cravings, if that makes any sense.

Ian explicitly noted the elements of "power and control" and the role they played in the

bully's ability to meet his or her needs at the expense of the victim. While both of these

students noted the direct effect that verbal bullying and intimidation can have on a

person, another way power can be deployed is through numbers.

Some students talked about how they would leave others out by not inviting them

to parties etc. Gloria discussed her friendships in high school and how she and her friends

perceived themselves as "the cool girls." Gloria explained that she and her friends called

themselves the "fearsome foursome" and that other students wouldn't walk near them.

The "fearsome foursome" had their seats in the cafeteria and no one would ever take their

seats; everyone wanted to sit next to them. In continuing her explanation, Gloria stated,

So, like it wasn't really bullying, but it was like a little bit more of a superior thing

as opposed to not being antisocial and a lot of friends like younger, not younger

people, but more quiet people who didn't have as many friends, like, tried to talk

to us a lot and be friends with us, so I guess you could say in a way it was; I don't

know.

I then asked Gloria for clarification and whether or not she talked with the students

mentioned or if she would be friends with them, and she responded with:

Like I was a more, I guess, nicer one of the bunch, and I would talk to them, but

at the same time I guess peer pressure was one of those things that got to me, and,

like, if my friends didn't talk to them, then I guess I wouldn't really talk to them.

But, like, if I was alone or had a class alone with them and they were like near me

I would, like, make small talk and they would be like an acquaintance, but not

exactly like one of my friends I would consider close to me. But I would be the

more friendly of the four of us, I guess you could say; my friends were more

mean, I guess, and more limited on who would be their friend and who they could

talk to and who they wouldn't talk to and who they would sit with at lunch and

stuff.

While Gloria at first seemed to think what she was doing was not bullying, in the same

statement she concluded that it was indeed bullying. Her initial definition of bullying

included walking over someone and feeling superior to them. Gloria adjusted her

definition of bullying as she explained her experiences in school and came to define her

actions as bullying when she noted, "so I guess you could say in a way it was [bullying];

I don't know." While Gloria had some trouble developing her definition of bullying, and

figuring out whether or not something she did would constitute bullying, others had a

clear definition of bullying and the role power played in that definition.

Rhonda, when asked how bullying works, defined it as having power and even

recalled an example of a student who may have been powerless. She stated:

I guess, just people routinely teasing or taunting someone else about certain things

or whatnot. I guess it's a power thing. I have heard that before, you know, they

just do it, because they have control or someone gives them control to do it, or the

young man I mentioned earlier he, I mean, he was obviously in some type of

special ed., so I guess they felt they could take advantage of that; people taking

advantage of other people.

Patrice concurred noting:

I guess it works in a number of ways. Like you can bully somebody. I mean I

guess it's just power. Sometimes blackmail, like I saw you cheating on this so if

you don't go to a dance with me, then I will tell on you. Honor code was big too. I

guess it's just power over someone else. It could be a lot of instances. Like I said

the classic one is taking money or taking spaces like maybe locker space or

maybe even parking spaces. Just basically power over someone else or maybe it's

blackmail can go into it as well.

This was the only interview where a participant said anything about blackmail. It was

repeated four times within the interview with Patrice. Both Patrice and Rhonda clearly

defined bullying as having a power element. Patrice gives examples of how the power

relationship is played out in the bullying scenario with students taking other students'

locker spaces and parking spaces. At least fourteen other participants made some direct or

indirect reference to power in their defining and/or discussing of bullying.

Other students made comments about the role of power in their definitions of

bullying. Dan, for instance, stated, "you know thinks they [the bully] are, basically thinks

they are a bad ass for lack of a better term and that they are you know like they are on top

and other people aren't." Olivia stated, "I feel like there's always like the leader or there's

always somebody that's like stronger than the other kid that thinks that they know more."

Nick, when asked how does bullying work, exclaimed, "I guess it's just an inside urge

that, hey, you know, I want to be big and powerful or I want people to be afraid of me; maybe something that happens or originates from the home." To the same question, asking how bullying worked, Lance responded with:

> ...they [the bully] will actively go around trying to push around other kids and make them feel less, try to demean their self-esteem. Other times you have the rich preppy kids going around and kind of actively comparing themselves to the kids who don't have as much money and you know saying things that would make you feel like I am not as good as these people, but then you realize they are pretty shallow if that's all they got so you don't really care about that so much.

From the responses of some of the participants, a definition of bullying emerged that included an element of power. The role power played in these students' definitions is consistent; bullying is a way to exert control over others.

Role of Groups in Bullying

In defining bullying or asking for clarification of the participants' definitions of bullying, some discussed a group dynamic as part of their definition. The number of participants who mentioned a group dynamic when discussing bullying was small, but the mentioning of it validated a need to explore the role of groups as part of a definition of bullying. The impact of groups on bullying was noted by Patrice who stated, "It's like when one person did it, it wasn't as bad, but when you have like three or four people at the same time that was the worst part." Patrice denoted that there is a greater impact when a group of three or four bully. But others discussed groups in their definitions of bullying.

When asked how does bullying work, Frank discussed how some victims were told not to show any reaction when being bullied and that would cause the people doing the bullying to leave them alone, but he went on to note that was exactly what some people who bully wanted, someone who would not be confrontational. He went on to explain the role of groups as he expressed:

> They bully, bullying happens in groups. Like there might be one person who will bully, but he has all of his friends around and he needs that support and someone to laugh about it because no one really ever bullies by themselves. Like I know we never got picked on or bullied one on one.

To the same question asking how bullying works, Ursula answered, "Well, from what I can see and usually groups of kids they gang up on another person and say things." When asked for clarification if she was saying that it was "more like a group of people making fun of another kid," she replied in the affirmative. When asked how she would define and classify bullying she responded with, "Ah, just kids picking on each other for no reason. Just for entertainment and to make the other person [the bully] feel better, I guess." Ursula and Frank discussed how they defined, or viewed, bullying as occurring between a group and an individual.

Other participants shared their views of how bullying worked, the role that groups played in bullying, and the role they played in the group. Randy asserted, "I think bullying involves, kind of like, one to a small group of people against one person instead of just, in general, people say something mean and not be bullying, just something like, something mean." Later on when asked if he ever bullied, Randy said that he was sure he participated in it, but then he went on to elaborate that his role in bullying "was probably

minimal." He followed with, "I think it was maybe if like I said a small group of going against one person. I think that maybe it would be, I could have been a part of that small group going against someone else" He continued with, "I think that I did it all in good fun and I personally don't consider it bullying, but then again, I don't know exactly what the other person who I made fun of at the time felt about it later on." Randy suggested that he may have been part of a group that bullied other students, or at least another student, but he did not confirm his involvement; he also acknowledged that the "other person" or victim may have viewed the incident differently. While Randy was unable to explain his role definitively, that was not the case with everyone.

As mentioned previously in the discussion of emotional bullying, some students were ignored or not included in activities in school, and this treatment was included by a few students in their definition of bullying. While some participants found themselves ignored or not included, others found themselves persuaded to act in such a way as to exclude or ignore other students, which I will refer to as peer taunting. Peer taunting is the act to exclude, ignore, or bully another person because the person doing the bullying senses peer pressure from a friend or group of friends they themselves wish to impress. Noel realized that she was engaged in some peer taunting when she was in high school. When asked if she was ever the target of bullying in school she recalled:

> … I guess a couple of times in high school I would be with people that some people wouldn't like and had bullied before and they would say something like, why are you friends with them and stuff? But I guess I don't really feel like that's bullying. They were pressuring me and confronting me why I had relationships with those people they didn't like.

This incident, while not necessarily defined by the participant as bullying, included two elements that have been addressed in this discussion of the definitions of bullying. First, this attempt by the group of friends to get the one girl to ignore the other girl was emotional bullying, as defined above, if the girl followed through with it. Secondly, this situation involved a group of people who used peer taunting, or peer pressure, to get the girl to respond to another in a manner they deemed acceptable.

In a discussion of what one participant did after school and how it compared to experiences during school, Mary discussed her involvement with the theatre program and musical at her school. She noted that, "it was always the same people in it so you all got to know each other…we were kind of like a family." She went on to note:

> There would be like one kid that we would maybe pick on, and it would be out of good fun, but sometimes I guess we would take it a little too far, and he would get a little hurt, but we never, we didn't mean any harm in it.

When asked if the person was in the play with them and what they did to him, she shared:

> He was in the theatre group with us and I don't know; we would just pick on things that he would do and be like, 'Oh Patrick, you are so stupid.' I don't know if we said stupid, but we would be like, 'Oh Patrick,' and pick on the stuff that he would do. It was just joking around.

When reconfirming that this was playful, Mary agreed, but then she added:

> Yeah, but I mean I can understand like even sometimes it can get to be too much. I mean he would tell us to shut up, and we would shut up and leave him alone for a while. We knew when we hit a wall and we would stop.

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This incident involved a whole group who would pick on this young man during the theatre program or during rehearsals for the musical. While Mary maintained that they were "just joking around" and that it was "out of good fun" she followed up with how they knew they were getting to him so they would stop, but nothing was said as to why they just did not do it in the first place. Rumors do not just start without any reason. A student does not avoid certain places in a school for no reason. So while it is important to be able to clarify and define what bullying is to students in high school and college, it is also just as important to understand why it happens and to whom it happens.

The Role Appearance Plays in Bullying

In the course of the interviews participants recalled their experiences with bullying, whether they were from the perspective of the bully, the victim, or the witness. In the reflections of the participants, a theme emerged that will be defined as appearance. This category comprises specific sub-themes that were found across several of the interviews. These sub-themes include: (a) weight, (b) size, (c) clothes, and (d) looking/dressing different.

Weight

During the course of the interviews the participants were asked if they ever experienced bullying as a bully, victim, or witness and if so, they were asked to tell about an incident they remembered. A follow up question asked them if they could recall another incident where they were bullied, bullied another, or witnessed someone being bullied. On many occasions, participants would share their experiences, or ones they witnessed, where they or the victim would be bullied because of their weight. Many students talked about picking on someone because of their weight and many more

discussed being picked on because of their weight. In one incident, the person who was doing the bullying was just going along with the crowd and didn't realize what he was doing. Frank discussed how the first time he had invited his friend Jim over to his house, he mentioned to his dad, "Hey I am inviting my friend Dough Boy over," to which his father asked why the friend was called that. Frank replied that he didn't have any idea. Frank's father asked if Dough Boy was overweight and Frank said yes, and his father told him that the nickname was an insult. Frank decided to ask Jim if he minded being called Dough Boy, and Frank recalled:

> Whenever I asked him like it, something you could tell an expression on his face changed like, yeah, you know, I don't really like that. He didn't say it was just like you could tell he wasn't all right with it and that was my first time like, wow, you know.

While Frank was surprised by the meaning of what he had been calling his friend, many other students did not seem to reflect on what they said to others or what kind of impact it had.

Over a third of the students interviewed discussed being picked on because of their weight or having picked on someone because of their weight. Gideon, like some other students, talked about being picked on, but not knowing why, so he attributed it to his weight. He talked about his experience and then another kid's experience, as he recalled, "…but there were other times when people would, like, I guess, just pick on me. I don't know exactly why. Maybe it was because I was maybe overweight. I am not quite sure." He went on to talk about a boy who he tried to mentor, like a big brother. Gideon's

father was retired from the military and became a substitute teacher and wanted Gideon to take on this "big brother" role, because as Gideon explained it:

> …he [the other boy] was different. He was obese, and he was being picked on for it. I must admit though that I was not a good big brother for him, and I guess, at least knowing what he was like, I guess I could see why people would pick on others. They picked on him because he stood out or just because he was, I guess overall it was because they stick out in some way whether or not they are fat or a different color skin or I guess just because they act very different from others that that's why they are picked out from the group…he pretty much no matter what you did to him he pretty much would laugh it off, and I guess that's probably why people would pick on him because he would act, you know, like oh it's funny and everyone would pick on him because they didn't like him at all. I guess it's because they stand out in some way, or the way they act.

Gideon, even though he was supposed to be a "big brother" to this young man, seemed to understand why others might pick on the "little brother" and others who seem "different" or "stand out." When Ian was asked if there were particular reasons for picking on someone he stated:

> Size, weight, height, skin color, eye color, how much money they had, if they are nice or kind. Definitely if you are nice and kind trying to be friends with somebody, they will rip you to shreds. Wearing glasses; not wearing glasses is okay. Not having the correct type of toy; not being in fads, not being popular. Not having the right hair cut. Not wearing the right type of cologne. It could be

anything. They will find something. You show weakness, they will find

something to get you on even if they have to make it up.

Ian's list of reasons why some kids would get picked on is extensive, but it starts with

size and weight. Another student, Izzy, discussed a student she knew who "suffered

severe depression" and who was overweight. Izzy talked about how others would joke

with this young man and make fun of him because they thought he was gay. She

explained, that people would, "always, joke on him for the way he walked and the fact

that he was overweight or he was very involved in church and that was something that

was important to him and the other kids didn't care for it." She went on to discuss how he

had a lot of things going on, like his parents getting divorced when he was in middle

school, he had tried to commit suicide "multiple times," he had transferred schools

several times, and had been in trouble in school. While his being overweight was only

one of the factors that Izzy noted as to why he was bullied, it is still worth noting that

even within the context of these other factors, she saw the child's weight as a cause of his

being bullied. She did note that once he went away to college, he came "out of the

closet." While Gideon, Ian, and Izzy discussed some of the reasons that other students,

and in one case themselves, may have been bullied, others recalled their own experiences

with being bullied because of their weight.

Patrice talked about how she was bullied in late elementary school and middle

school. She said that in fifth grade, she was bigger than everybody else and that she was

smart and that "they weren't used to that." She said that the "bullying and teasing" kind

of stopped for her when she went to high school and that made her happy, but "it [picking

and teasing] was mostly fifth, sixth, seventh grade." When asked if she could tell me about that, she explained:

> It was just, you know, basically fat jokes; Miss Piggy, ah and then I wasn't poor, but I wasn't rich either -- I was like in the middle -- and then my grandma took care of me so she had like the old traditional way of wearing things, and just basically fat jokes and then I was smarter than everybody else.

Patrice noted that "…when it was one person [picking on her] it wasn't as bad, but if it was three or four people it was kind of hard." This idea of more than one person picking on someone because of their weight was a theme with other participants as well, but they were not the victims.

Several of the participants seemed to be in agreement as to the various reasons why people bullied, or picked on, other students. Jan noted, "Like there was, there was one girl in my high school. Her last name was Riscoe and they called her Crisco because she was kind of large and that is the kind of thing I remember." When asked if this was something students said to her face, Jan said others students would call the girl Crisco to her face. That question was followed up by asking about the girl's response to it, to which Jan replied, "She just kind of ignored it. I mean I am sure there were times she was really upset about it, but I don't know." When asked if there were any particular reasons for bullying someone, Jan replied, "I think people were mostly made fun of for physical differences and maybe the way they talked; like people that had funny accents or voices were made fun of and people that were really, really tall, short or whatever, not average you know? That kind of thing. People were also made fun of for the way they dressed."

Not only would some kids get picked on for their differences, one participant even denoted a difference within the category of weight.

Lance noted the difference as he saw it, saying that, "Some kids, the really fat, lazy kid would be more likely to be bullied than the fat kid who tried real hard." This participant did not define what trying "real hard" means. Another student did not make such a distinction between different types of overweight people. Adam stated, "we made fun of other kids like if they were overweight, we do that, but just mostly we don't do it because we hate them; we do it because it's funny." He went on to say that it was mostly the people they knew that they would bully.

Randy talked about kids getting picked last for games, which is like being ignored or left-out; this was mentioned as part of the definitions above. When asked what he thought led to kids getting picked last for games, he stated:

> I think primarily, it was your physical appearance and how you came across and whether you were the chubby kid or, you know, I think weight definitely plays a role especially in younger years. If you were the athletic guy and they knew you could kick the ball real far, there were teams so you would be picked close to the front, but if you are the fat, slow kid and you had the look then you will be put down…

Randy went on to talk about being "rather chubby" when he was in middle school. Similar to Lance's comment about the "really fat, lazy kid" being the more likely victim of bullying, Randy discussed how others viewed him more negatively and he attributed this to his weight. Randy recalled:

So, but in sixth and seventh I was bigger. I hadn't hit the growth spurt yet. And so that, I felt, set me back a little bit because people didn't ever seem to take me seriously. I never was viewed as being intelligent. I never was viewed as being able to do anything and whether that was the way, I want to say the presentation I gave of trying to wear the right stuff, but just not looking right in the right stuff because I was bigger, you know.

Randy believed that others viewed him as less intelligent because of his size and because of the way he came across trying to wear "the right stuff" and not being able to pull it off. Randy even went on to discuss how he would even show interest in a girl and she would not respond favorably, and his opinion was that her reactions were based on his physical appearance, since she did not really know his "personality and things like that." He did reflect that in high school people noticed a change, as he noted, "In the eleventh and twelfth grade we would look back at year book pictures and people would be like you were a chunky kid, and I am like yeah, I was, but not anymore. It's not a big deal." While Randy experienced a difficult time because of his weight during his middle school years, he was more comfortable with his experiences in high school, if only because he lost weight. While Randy did not note any times where he may have made someone uncomfortable about their weight, others did.

Another young man, Quinn, talked about how he was made fun of for being overweight. When asked the reason he was ridiculed, he recalled:

Ah, when I was younger I was made fun of for being, I was fat when I was younger, so I always made fun of for that and teased about that, but I don't know, I guess I took that motivation to, you know, most of it was baby fat, but to get

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myself in shape to where if somebody were to, you know, I guess try to bully me again, then I would stand up to it with confidence.

He went on to say that other students would call him "fat ass" or "fatty chubs" and other "different nicknames." Later on in the interview when asked if he ever bullied, Quinn replied:

> I have, you know, you know, when I was younger I was more the smart aleck type so I guess that could have been seen as bullying, but [on the] football field is more my lack of toleration for kids who are, the ones who are out of shape or overweight or the ones faking injuries to get out of sprints or whatever else for doing the practice. Other than that, no.

So while Quinn experienced ridicule because of his weight, he also admitted to lacking tolerance for kids who were "out of shape or overweight," but this was only on the football field, and after he had lost his "baby fat."

Amy also talked about what her experiences were like after she lost weight. Amy talked about how she had been bullied a lot in middle school and how other students would say she looked like a boy, was "the dirty girl," or they called her "dumb blonde or ditzy." Looking back she realized:

> So, I wasn't exactly the prettiest girl on the block. You know, I wasn't, I was going through my chubby stage and it was like prepubescent, so you were just kind of like, I don't know, I wasn't the prettiest girl on the block. And then the summer before 9th grade I grew up a little bit and got thinner, and I think in 9th grade because I got a lot of guys' attention, people didn't make fun of me anymore.

Amy did go on to note how she would use her popular status in high school to exclude others from parties, but that treatment was limited to those who were mean to her in her earlier years. Once in high school, she was placed in AP classes and in the "popular crowd," which caused her some grief, as other students in the AP classes would make fun of her since she was in the popular crowd. So while Quinn and Amy did realize that they may have bullied others the way they were bullied, some others sought revenge, or at least displacement, for the treatment they received when they were in school.

Two participants recalled their experiences as the victims of bullying and then they told of how they would bully others. Ephraim, when asked about his experiences with bullying, noted:

> Middle school there was lots of bullying. I was actually a pretty [small] guy. I had some minor experiences where the guys on the football team would push me around, like the bigger guys, just a bunch of pushing around in middle school. Then in high school it became a lot more verbal. When I finally got bigger, I kind of started doing some bullying and pushing around, shoving and things, pretty bad stuff to the smaller guys.

He went on discuss specific incidents where he would get picked on because he was smaller and in the younger grades. He said:

> When I was in 8th grade, it was just they used to make fun of my mom a lot, make fun of how she looks. Say they wanted to have sex with her and stuff like that and then just a bunch pushing me around because I was about, in 8th grade I was probably about 90 pounds, so I was a pretty small guy.

He then noted how, when he got older, he and his friend would pick on a freshman and other students who were smaller than them. Another student reflected on how he treated other students, and even asserted that part of the reason he bullied others was for revenge.

In reflecting on what he had done in his younger years, Adam responded with, "If I look back to what I did to overweight people or people that looked funny, it's mean. I don't know if I regret it or not, but probably won't do it again." He went on to say:

> Ah, I think it's our human nature to look down at people sometimes, and mostly I think for me it's revenge because I was made fun of because of my English, and I was overweight. I was, you know, 50 pounds heavier, and even my close friends made fun of me for being overweight. So, one day I just decided to go on a strict diet and lost 50 pounds. And then after that, I was able to, I guess I was in a shape where I can make fun of overweight people now, since I am not overweight anymore.

In this last passage Adam appeared to want some sort of revenge, even though it might be directed at people who are overweight and not those that made fun of him. Adam confirmed this a little later in the interview when he stated, "Yeah. I couldn't make fun of other people for being overweight because I was one, but once I lost weight, I was able to." So while others made fun of him for his weight, once he lost weight he felt that he could then make fun of others for their weight. Weight, or more directly, being overweight, led to a lot of participants being bullied, made fun of or teased, and it was also mentioned as a factor in why some people bullied others. It has also been noted how some participants lost weight and then made fun of others for their weight; some even

sought revenge for the bullying they experienced by making fun of others for their weight.

Size

Another sub-theme that was found within the category of appearance was size. While weight referred to how heavy someone was, size seemed to refer more to the relative size of an individual as compared to others. Found within the interview data were discussions of people who were "bigger" or "smaller" and the role that their size played in whether or not they were bullied or bullied others.

In one interview a participant discussed how an instructional activity brought out an incident of bullying that was dictated, or decided, by size. When asked how bullying works, and if there were any particular reasons for bullying anyone, Ben talked about a discussion on the death penalty that occurred in one of his classes in school. Ben relayed:

> …8th or 9th grade when we were having a discussion about the death penalty in class, and for some reason somebody was strongly against the death penalty and another person was strongly for death as punishment. And the kid that was strongly for capital punishment, unfortunately was the bigger one and the other one just got knocked around and made fun of all the time because he was against the death penalty. And I think it's just like difference, I think bullying starts from differences that, at later ages, anyway, from differences that can't be solved easily.

Ben noted that the "bigger one" bullied the other student because of their differences of opinion, but others also noted that the "bigger one" is usually the one causing the grief for the others.

Bullying by a bigger student seemed to be a theme throughout a little less than a quarter of the interviews. Beth discussed how players from the football team would sometimes pick on smaller kids. She noted:

So, I think a lot of the kids that were shy and possibly intimidated, and I know a lot of the big guys from the football team wanted to show the little guys that weren't playing football and pick on them. They could pretty much, some of these guys could pick up these kids with like their pinky finger, for example, and so I think it was a lot of intimidation from the older kids saying that this should be right and thinking something is different, but not having enough courage to stand up to them and say this is how I want to live my life.

Beth's comments were similar to Ben's, as they both noted that students will sometimes bully others when their opinions are different. Beth stated, "I think it was a lot of intimidation from the older kids saying that this should be right and thinking something is different." Ben seemed to have a very similar feeling, as he pointed out when he stated, "I think bullying starts from differences that, at later ages anyway, from differences that can't be solved easily." These two examples of participants' perceptions as to how bullying played out in school, or in at least two specific incidents, suggested that differences of opinion were sometimes the cause of the friction between two parties, whether they were individuals or groups, and that, in at least these two cases, the larger student was the bully and was trying to change another student's opinion.

While some students may bully others to change their opinion, some participants suggested that sometimes it is just the bigger student picking on the smaller student. Tammy simply stated, "I mean, I think bullying happens within friends and in different

groups and the big kid against the little geeky kid." Caleb, when asked if he had experience with bullying, stated:

> I have seen several occasions where it would be either a bigger kid or a kid more known for fighting try to take on somebody a little bit more quieter and the quieter person, of course, tries to avoid altercations, but a more aggressive person is constantly badgering that person.

Caleb also admitted to being a bully at some point during his schooling. He partly attributed this to his size. When asked, "So you basically were just a bully because you were bigger?" he replied, "Because I was bigger, yeah." Similarly, when describing someone who bullied during her schooling experience, Fay elaborated, "but he was this big guy, and he always would pick on people for whatever reason. Like he would walk up and say something mean or like throw their books down." These general comments referring to bigger individuals doing the bullying were not as specific as those of other participants who noted characteristics in addition to the bully being bigger.

When asked who did the bullying in school, Patrice, who was African-American, stated:

> Like the kids that were, they weren't special, but they had special classes. They weren't allowed to be in regular classes so they had behavioral problems. They [weren't] allowed to eat lunch with us. Those kids. Sometimes just sometimes somebody who is bigger than somebody else just [like] I want to, you know, push you down or something like that if you don't do my homework. Maybe the kids that are not academically inclined. Something simple like that.

Prior to the above comment, Patrice noted others who bullied, as she recalled incidents that she witnessed. She noted, "He played the trumpet and he was in IB, but he thought he was better than everybody else so maybe that's why they joked him, but some people, it was mainly black boys that would joke or freshman or push him around in the lunch line." While above Patrice noted that is was the student who had "behavioral problems" or those who were "not academically inclined," she also mentioned that it could be somebody bigger. She also mentioned race in passing. Patrice's mentioning of race identified specific students who picked on a specific student, and she also explained a possible reason they picked on the student. While Patrice mentions race in a very specific case, other students also noted size and even intellectual abilities as characteristics of those who bullied, as well as race as another characteristic of bullies.

Size played a factor for two different students, but in two different ways. It was also not the only characteristic mentioned by these students. Harry, who was white, when asked to describe those who bullied others in school, replied:

Who were they? I think a lot of athletes. This isn't as politically correct, but it tended to be a lot of African Americans. I don't know why, but it just tended to be. The strong guys, you know, athletes.

While Harry noted that it was the stronger guys, or the athletes, who bullied others, he also made a racial distinction. Harry was not the only participant to do this. Lance, also white, when asked what his school felt like each morning when he entered, he replied:

,,, there was one intersection of hallways where all the black kids would hang out. Normally you would avoid that because of congestion unless for some odd reason they respected you. I was lucky; I was one of the stronger kids in my class, so

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they saw me and recognized I was pretty strong and likely stronger than them and

they would get out of my way when I had to walk through, but a lot of the smaller

kids, the kids in band, the comp sci [computer science] kids; they would, you

know, specifically avoid that section of the school, but only during the times

when all students were in the halls.

Harry implies that the "black kids" are strong, and therefore the ones who bullied at his

school, because they would congregate in a certain area in their school and some students

would avoid that area. The students who would not avoid this area were "respected,"

which in Harry's opinion and case equated with strength. While size was the focus of the

description by the three individuals above, intelligence, or lack thereof, was mentioned as

a factor in two of the descriptions of people who bullied during the participants'

schooling, and race was also mentioned in two of the descriptions of who bullied in

school. The mentioning of race in both cases was preceded by a discussion of size (Race

will be discussed further in the section that addresses differences in appearances). As

pointed out in the preceding pages, students who were bigger than their peers experienced

bullying as the victim and the bully. The larger students were not the only students being

singled out for their size, for the dichotomous relationship of size required a recipient of

the bigger bully's aggression, found in those possessing a smaller size.

A quarter of those interviewed mentioned that those who were smaller in size

were likely the victims of bullying. This finding seems obvious given that those who

were bigger were the ones who bullied; it seems apparent that their victim would be

smaller. While some of those who mentioned the size of the victims as being smaller than

the bigger bullies, many of those who mentioned the victims being small did not mention

the size of the bully, though that was implied. Of course size can be implied in other ways than being juxtaposed to bigger, as when Quinn discussed those who he had seen as the victim of bullying:

> I mean, I have been a victim, you know made fun of it. I guess it ranges whether it's, you know, I have seen physical bullying normally goes to a kid who's younger or somebody who's not strong enough to where they are going to stand up physically. Verbally I guess it goes the same way or you know somebody who's not "as popular as somebody else," but that's all I can think of.

In Quinn's recollection, there existed a smaller person both physically and socially who was the victim of bullying. In the other participants' descriptions, any reference to someone being small was strictly a reference to being physically smaller.

Several participants mentioned that those who were picked on were smaller in size. As Patrice noted, when asked to recall if she experienced bullying, she said that she had witnessed it. She went on to explain, "And yeah, they would push the boys around at lunch because they were smaller than everybody else." Ursula, when asked what she saw in school in the way of bullying, replied, "I saw people picking on the littler kid I guess." When asked what she thought led to this she clarified, "Ah, I think people just do it for fun or whatever the thing is, I don't know, to entertain." She noted that this occurred in elementary and middle school and not in high school. Like Harry above, Ian made brief mention of the victim being smaller, and he also mentioned sports, in his description of who tended to be bullied. When asked if he could tell me something about those who were the victims of bullying, Ian noted, "They were usually small; physically as well as mentally. Emotionally, I should say, instead of mentally. They were kids who didn't play

sports." The mentioning of students who were smaller in size being the focus of bullying seems almost an obvious conclusion given the fact that so many participants also mentioned that those who tended to bully in school were the larger students. Besides physical appearance (weight and size), the more superficial element of clothing was also referred to as provocation for some incidents of bullying.

Clothing

Clothing was mentioned in twenty-seven of the forty-one interviews. In most cases, if not all, clothing was noted as a reason some students were bullied. While the sub-category of clothing could have been separated out as its own category due to the amount of data, it is part of the broader category of appearance. Clothing is, of course, a component of appearance, and it is appearance in general that seemed to drive some people to bully, as recounted by several participants. In the participants' discussions of bullying and appearance they denoted that students, in reference to clothing, were seen as being in the in-crowd or being cool or popular, or were made fun of and called names, or were seen as weird, different, or goofy. The participants also talked about stereotypes and labels, brands and designers, and cheap vs. expensive clothing. There was even some discussion of shoes and boots as they pertained to the bullying incidents recalled by the participants. But before taking something as specific as shoes and boots, it is important to note some of the major issues related to clothes when it came to bullying, as recounted by the participants.

One of the elements mentioned, in reference to clothing and bullying, was how some students could be seen as part of the in-crowd, or popular crowd, or as just cool, by

others because of the clothes they wore to school. The clothing worn to school was important because it was tied to popularity. Frank noted:

> Well, like the way I dressed, because I guess once you get into middle school, like what you wear really becomes important with some people, and it would be like the people who were popular because of what they wore would make fun of you because you weren't wearing that same stuff or because you didn't care.

Frank pointed out that even as early as middle school, the way people dressed impacted their status within the school community. Other students noted what it took for them to be accepted by others who were seen as more desirable in the school community. Paul recalled:

> High school was kind of weird. I just, I sort of just placed myself with the kids who dressed, you know, preppy and kind of identified them as a popular group the first week of high school and started sitting with them at lunch and following them around, and then I ended up becoming like a part of their group, which was I guess what I always wanted.

Paul also discussed how even in elementary school other "kids seemed to be really wrapped up in style." Paul talked about how in middle school he was aware of what he wore and how his dad helped him socially in school. Paul noted:

> Then [in] middle school I really started to pay attention to what I wore just because I always, I always wanted to fit in; I always wanted to be part of the, you know, "popular group". So, I started you know having my dad take me out to Old Navy and get the button down t-shirts; everybody used to wear those halfway

buttoned with jeans and sneakers. It was amazing how changing the way I dressed

changed the amount of respect you get amongst your peers.

Frank and Paul were not the only students aware of the influence clothes had on one's

social standing in school. When discussing another student, Caleb recalled, "He was in

the in-crowd because of the way he looked." Connie relayed, "Like there is the cool

people who dress a certain way and there is the not cool, like the popular kids and stuff

seem to be the most prevalent in middle school." Besides having the right clothes to be

popular or in the in-crowd, one student said that they would be bullied if they didn't wear

the right clothes. When asked if he was ever bullied, Lance stated, "Ah, in middle school

sometimes because I wouldn't buy like the really nice clothes and stuff. Sometimes the

rich kids would make fun of you for that." In this instance, the "rich kids" were making

fun of others who did not have certain clothes. Besides the popular or cool kids and in-

crowd having the right clothes, those whose clothes were not defined as the right clothes

by the aforementioned group experienced ridicule for their clothes.

Bullying was not limited to physical bullying. Verbal and emotional bullying can

also take their toll on students. Seventeen participants recalled incidents where they or

others were called names or made fun of for what they wore to school. These participants

mentioned that clothes were the focus of some verbal and emotional bullying.

Participants mentioned various things that students in school would say to each other

about clothes. Statements ranged from simple comments about clothes in general, to

calling someone's clothes cheap, to mentioning that basically some students just looked

weird or dressed weird. Frank said that he had been bullied in school because of what he

wore and because of his hair, basically "making fun of someone just because they are

different or whatever." He said he witnessed this and that he avoided those who engaged in this type of behavior, but he also recalled his own bullying experience. In reference to elementary and middle school and the bullying he experienced, he went on to note:

> It continued up until middle school because I still got picked on a little bit. I never really cared about what I wore, but at the same time, I did, because people said, oh, you know, look what he is wearing, dah, dah, dah. And so as far as that aspect goes I didn't really enjoy it because, I didn't care. I still got picked on for it and it bothered me because, you know, why does it matter, the names and stuff?

Hanna recalled what others would say about clothes, as she recalled, "They would say things like, you know, oh look at what she's wearing today; that doesn't even match, or I wonder where that shirt is from, or she thinks she is so smart. Things that most kids you hear say to each other." Noel recalled an experience she witnessed where a male student was dressed in all black and another student started making fun of him. She stated:

> … and this one was getting made fun of because of what he was wearing; he was wearing like all black and stuff. And it was just, it was one other guy and him, and he wasn't saying much. Some of the other guy's friends started coming around and saying more stuff to him, you know, guy in black, and then the one guy just punched him in the face, and he fell on the ground. He didn't say anything to the other people.

Noel went on to note that the group of students who picked on the student wearing all black were usually the ones who picked on other students and "calling people out for what they are wearing."

Some students not only make fun of what the other students were wearing, but they also make assertions about what stores clothing came from. Ken talked about how other kids would be made fun of for their clothing. When asked what was said, he replied, "Pretty much like, what are you wearing? Like where did you buy that shirt? Like K-Mart or something? Something like that." Another student referenced another chain discount store as not the place to buy clothes when discussing the need for students to figure out how to cope with bullying when someone makes fun of them "because they don't wear, they wear cheap jeans from Wal-Mart instead of expensive jeans from Abercrombie and Fitch or something like that." Amy talked about how she was made fun of for her shoes. She had moved from California to Delaware, where as she noted, "everyone is preppy." Her family wasn't wealthy so she couldn't afford the clothes of choice in her new school, so she had shoes from K-Mart. Other students would make fun of her, as she noted, "So, everybody would be like 'K-Mart shoes,' and they would call me 'K-Mart shoes' and stuff like that." Even if a student moved and changed schools and wore what was perceived as stylish in one school, they could be made fun of and bullied at another school. Changing schools didn't guarantee that those same clothes would be accepted as stylish in another school.

Eleven of the forty-one students interviewed made some mention of the role that brand names, labels, and designers had on whether or not a student was made fun of in school. One student gave as an example of bullying that might occur at his school the following possible exchange and thought process of the aggressor:

> … not wearing this type of shirt. You know why aren't you wearing this Nike shirt, you know? And I have this Nike shirt, so I am better than you. So, obviously

the person who is being bullied is, truly believes that, wait a second, I don't have this shirt, you know, I feel inferior. When in all respect you shouldn't feel that way at all, but because the aggressor has such, the aggressor has to have a strong, strong drive and strong belief, as well as an example in the fight, a strong physical appearance and presence as far as their voice and everything is concerned and how they carry out their actions.

This student's description of what the aggressor and victim might be thinking offers one individual's insight into the role of designer clothing and brand name clothing in how students perceive themselves and others. Another student discussed the possibility that bullying was "no big deal" because it's going to happen, but that we need to think about how bullying can affect people down the road. Other students also observed, or experienced, how some people would find themselves victims of bullying only because of their lacking brand name clothing.

Brand name clothing was a focus of some of the torment and bullying that several students witnessed and/or experienced. The female mentioned earlier from California noted that when she moved to Delaware she noticed that brand names were important to people, whereas she also noted that on the west coast brand name clothing was not a focus, but brand name shoes were. She noted, "it was only shoes that really mattered it seemed like." This same female went on to recall her experiences with being bullied for what she wore at different points in her education experience:

In elementary school, I wasn't made fun of that bad. It was just the shoes. It was more the shoes. In middle school, I don't even know what led to it, just me being new and me being different looking. Like me dressing different and not wearing

any, I didn't have the same clothes as they did. Everybody wore the same shirts, and they all said Aeropostale or Limited or some sort of brand on them. That was the style, and I didn't have that style.

The previous student was new to the school in Delaware and she wore what other students thought of as the wrong clothes, not the brand name they wore. Another participant noted how a student she knew in school was made fun of for not wearing the right clothes, and when she tried to wear the socially acceptable labels, as defined by other students, she was still made fun of. She noted, when asked why she thought this specific girl was bullied:

I guess because she didn't meet their standards. She, she didn't I guess wear the American Eagle clothes, and she didn't wear cool shoes, and it didn't matter what she did, even if she tried, she still had that label on her I guess that they gave her, as a nerd or a dork.

While trying to remedy the situation, the girl discussed above continued to be picked on when she attempted to fit in by wearing the brand names that others seemed to value or find acceptable. The student who witnessed and recalled this attributed the victim being continuously picked on because others saw her as a "nerd or dork." Another student recalled a peer getting bullied because "She wasn't like everybody else; she didn't wear brand name things. She just liked to dress up and express herself through her clothes I guess like." This student noted that the girl, who used clothes as a form of self-expression, also wore Christmas lights to celebrate the coming of Christmas and she wore clothes that were not name brands. She went on to note that the clothes worn by this girl were unrecognizable, thus other students were not able to tell where they were from.

These students faced ridicule for their choice of clothing, but particularly for not wearing brand names or designer labels. In other words, these students stood out as different because they didn't wear the same fashions as their peers, or at least some of their peers.

Some participants noted that some kids were picked on for dressing differently, goofy, or weird. Sue put it simply, "Anything that makes you different sets you up to be bullied." Prior to this comment by Sue, she noted:

> When my brother moved to Massachusetts, he didn't wear, like, the preppie clothes. Me and my sister adapted to it, but he never did. I know he had a really hard time fitting in in Massachusetts to where it went bad with my brother. He started using drugs because he couldn't fit in and kids wouldn't accept him for who he was. My brother, I guess it is bullying, but I don't look at it because I guess they never really got to the point where it was like bad, but they never bothered with him.

She went on to state, "Because he didn't fit in, he didn't look like he fit in so they just never really gave him a chance." While this student's brother didn't fit in due to the style of dress he chose to ignore, another student validated Sue's assertion that students who dressed strange were made fun of for being different. Olivia, when asked what she meant when she said someone would get picked on for saying something funny, noted, "Just like not wearing the latest trends or short pants or tight shirt or high waters or something like that." The girl mentioned above who moved from California, Amy, noted how she didn't care much if she was made fun of for the way she dressed or if someone called her "a boy" but she would be bothered if someone called her stupid. She said, "if you call me stupid that's something about my personality that I don't like." She went on to note about

her clothing, "I did look different, and I wore different clothes. I was more the California style and it was Delaware so it was kind of, I don't know I guess they were more preppy, and I was more like "skater-y." While Amy was perceived as different in the way she dressed because she transferred from a place where she dressed one way that was seen as acceptable by the other students, to another place where what she wore was not seen as acceptable by the other students, other events and the clothing associated with them can also change students' views of what's acceptable, or even the magnitude of what is seen as acceptable or unacceptable clothing.

Beth told of how one student was "made fun of" for wearing a "big, black trench coat" before and after the Columbine shootings. After the Columbine shootings she said, "people really picked on him." She also noted:

> He ended up making a hit list a teacher finding the hit list, and afterwards he did end up transferring schools, but he now, I have seen him, and I still talk to him. I don't know him too well, but I know he graduated from my county, and I say "hi" and he is actually at Local College. And he seems to be you know perfectly fine. He seems happy. He's doing what he wants to do, computer, some kind of computer something, and he seems very happy.

She also noted that, "And it was just a time in his life where making a hit list, and he, it was the only way he could speak out, and he said to everybody at school who would talk to him he wasn't actually going to do anything with it." Beth said that no one knew whether or not he was going to do something with the list, but that she believed, based on the way he acted towards everybody, that his hit list was his way of saying "you know please stop picking on me." In this specific case the young man was being "made fun of"

because of one particular piece of clothing he was wearing, and then later on because of the connection that piece of clothing, the "big, black trench coat," had to the events that had recently unfolded at Columbine High School. There were also cases of students being singled out and made fun of for the style of dress they chose.

In a few cases participants mentioned that those who wore all black or mostly black clothing, sometimes referred to as Goths, because of their gothic looking clothes were targets of teasing. Jan described her "secondary" school experience with other students getting made fun of because of the way they dressed, as she noted:

> …when I first started going [secondary school] there were a lot of kids that were Gothic and dressed all in black so they were made fun of, you know, but, and then after that it became more into like punks and that kind of thing. It's like people made fun of them, but then again they had their own group that was still large, that it was kind of almost not unnormal, you know?

Another female, Lucy, also mentioned the students who wore black to school and even asserted the reason behind their dressing different, even though they all wore the same uniform because they attended the same private school. Lucy stated:

> … the girls who tend to wear a lot of black and paint their fingernails black and wear a lot of black eyeliner and, you know, wear the fishnet stockings and high boots and listen to weird music and witchcraft and stuff like that, I don't mean weird in a bad way obviously, but I think they get bored a lot because they are different.

While it is difficult to know what she meant when she said, "I don't mean weird in a bad way obviously," she still separated these students out as different while donning the same

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uniform. She also ascribed to these students a characteristic, being bored because they are different, that may not have been accurate and could have been a way of dismissing them and their choice in fashion because it deviated from what she viewed as acceptable. Lucy not only talked about those who wore black, she also discussed another style. She observed, "There were one or two girls who were really into like hippie, they wore hippie outfits and stuff and they got bullied a lot." As was mentioned above, one girl, Noel, witnessed a boy at her school get made fun of and then punched in the face for wearing all black clothes.Noel went on to assert, in reference to other students' views on clothes, "I mean, like, if they weren't wearing the same thing that you were wearing; like, they weren't cool and stuff, like the kids that would wear like all black and, like, dye their hair." While some students recalled incidents where someone was picked on for wearing all black, or being Goth, another student recalled students who were different being picked on, but also why someone who was trying to dress like everyone else was picked on.

Beth discussed how clothing sometimes led to bullying in her school. She described her town and school and what she saw as their style or trend and what happened when people didn't fit in, noting:

> … my town is more of the rodeo and the cowboy boots and the jeans and belt buckles and things like that; the cowboy style, I guess. And just like it's the stereotype skateboarder or kind of style that people have the baggy jeans and the black or the all black clothes or the Gothic stereotype, too.

Beth continued to describe more of what happened and tried to explain why she thought it occurred. She stated:

If somebody was different, a lot of the guys and the girls were just so close-minded on this is how it should be. They would pick up on it and they would laugh at them and pick on them and they would say, you know, you are just a skateboarder, you are not going to do anything or you need to go, like, you know, go wear color or different things like that. And just the fact that since we don't have a lot of diversity and the only way that you could really show your individual side was in the clothes you wore and the way you acted, and if you didn't act and wore the certain clothes then you are considered a different, you are considered different in our community since there wasn't different ethnicities and different backgrounds and things like that.

Beth attributed the bullying that occurred to those who dressed "different" to the fact that there was not a lot of diversity in her community. While she noted that these incidents occurred to those who were seen as different, she also relayed a story of an "underclassman" boy when she was a senior who tried to dress like everyone else but who was still made fun of.

Beth told of how this boy wanted a certain pair of cowboy boots that were $200 and how he was saving his money so that he could get a pair. In the meantime he wore a pair of cowboy boots that were his father's. She told how these boots were too big for the boy and how you "could hear him coming down the hall and everybody would laugh at him and say oh, they had a nickname for him." She remembered they had a nickname for him, but she couldn't remember what it was. What she did remember was:

They would say, oh, here he comes with his boots and you can hear him from a

mile away and just that's all he could wear, or that's all he could have for shoes,

but yet they, you know, they meant a lot to him, and people still picked on him.

Beth even recalled how when they had to change into their uniforms for gym class, he

would wear his boots with his shorts even though he was supposed to wear tennis shoes.

She went on to note that one day the boy with the boots won $50 in a raffle and when he

was asked what he was going to do with the money he said, in front of the audience, that

he was going to put it towards buying his boots. Beth noted that:

There was some laughing in the audience, but there was mostly clapping, but the

laughter came from the kids that usually hollered at him down the hall saying, you

know, here you come, we hear your boots from a mile away…and they tried to

imitate that sound.

She did say that when she went back to her high school one weekend while she was in

college that she heard that he did get his boots. She also mentioned how she thought he

should have, "stood out and said I love my boots, and I am going to wear them." She said

that would have "made a bigger impact on the people who made fun of him." Not only

did Beth relay how she thought the boy with the boots should have handled his situation,

she also told how she handled her own issues related to something she had to wear.

Beth shared an experience she had during her sophomore year of high school. She

was in the Mountain Academic Competition Conference, which as she described is "a

scholastic kind of game show kind of thing where you ask questions and you buzz in and

different things." She said that because she was in that organization she had to wear the

team tee shirt to school. She recalled how, "You are known as a smart kid if you wore

this shirt." She discussed how she was worried that no one would walk with her or talk to her if she wore that shirt and how she was very concerned because she was a sophomore and was "still trying to find friends." She said that she decided to:

> … put a smile on my face and said, hey, I gotta do what I gotta do, and so I went in and had fun with it. And they, if somebody said something to me, oh, you are wearing a MACC shirt, I would say yeah, you know, I like MACC. I am the only sophomore on the team, and I know everything about geometry. I was like I just thought that was the coolest thing. So, I made it play that it was the best thing in the world to have this shirt on and to be part of this team than what I was thinking that it was.

Beth continued her plan in spite of her first thoughts. She went on to note:

> I was pretty embarrassed at first when I knew that I was going to have to wear it and be labeled a smart kid, but I turned the way of thinking around and, you know, took it one day at a time and said I will have fun with this.

Beth found a way to deal with how she perceived others would relate to her given her shirt and the notions the other students might have had about the shirt, like that she was a "smart kid." Of course these were Beth's perceptions and she never said whether or not anyone ever said anything about her shirt. Like the boy with the boots that she talked about, she was fearful of being different and created her own way of dealing with that fear. Whether it is a student's boots, a tee shirt, not having brand names, where your clothes are from, or choosing to wear all black, some participants noted that these differences were contributing factors to one getting bullied.

Being Different

Besides standing out and being bullied for weight, size, or clothing, students who were different seemed more likely to be the target of bullying. These differences included: race, being gay or perceived as gay, being in special education or having an exceptionality, or just being generally seen as different. Some of the differences mentioned by students in the interviews as possible reasons people were bullied included: race, actual or perceived sexual preference, students with accents or of other ethnicities, students in special education, smart students, and other aspects that were seen by some students as different from the rest of the students.

Within 23 of the 41 interviews that were conducted, race was a topic that participants discussed as part of bullying in their K-12 schooling experiences. From name calling to fights, race was mentioned as a factor. Racism was mentioned in passing and there were comments made that stereotyped people of others races, particularly black students. There was also discussion of white students and their role in incidents of bullying and receiving preferential treatment.

During his interview, Ephraim mentioned that there may have been some racism at his school, as he noted:

> We had a lot of, I won't say a lot, but we had some racism in my school, I feel like, because my school was pretty diverse with [a large university] right here, so that could have caused some of the bullying, just different racial things.

When asked "When you say there was some tension with race, what would happen?" he replied, "Just a lot of racial comments." He went on to say that this occurred mostly in middle school and early in high school and that in "upper high school" the "people were

pretty respectful." When prompted to expand on what he meant by "racial comments" he recalled that students would "Just make jokes about Mexicans and make fun of the Chinese kids and make up different jokes. They would call the black people niggers, of course, and stuff like that." While Ephraim could recall things that other students would say to students of different races, Ian who is black and admitted to being the victim of bullying, recalled how other students made comments about his skin color. Ian talked about how they had pretend sword fights with pencils and how he got stabbed with a pencil causing him to bleed. He went on to note how they hid materials he needed and made comments about his name:

> (W)e had a garden and they would hide the materials for the garden stuff so I wouldn't be able to find it, and they would say you look just like the manure. It was black, and I am dark; oh you look like the manure. I would cry to the teacher; oh, don't call him that. So, yeah mostly verbal stuff.

He also noted that he was taller than most of the other students so they wouldn't "actually pick on me" but that he was the one who would protect other students. He noted, "It was always me going and pulling the other kid off of them if someone was getting hit." While the discussion of name calling seemed limited, there was much discussion of fights and race. One student pointed out that he "witnessed a lot of white and black fights because of what they called each other." He went on to talk about how one boy got "beat up pretty bad in middle school" for calling one of the black students a nigger, which he said was what they, white and black students, called each other. Six other students who were interviewed mentioned fights in the context of race. Those who mentioned race and fights in relation to each other consisted of: 2 white females, 2 white males, an Asian male, an

Asian female, and a black female. There were a total of 33 participants who mentioned fights in their schools during their interview. The times where fights were mentioned within the interview were categorized as fights. Some incidents, while not actual fights, did have a physical element to the bullying. The only difference in these incidents and others is that the student who was bullied did not engage in a physical altercation.

Patrice, a black female student, recalled how there was a student that "thought he was better than everybody else" and that because of that other students would joke with him. She noted that the boy was a freshman, in the IB program, and played the trumpet. She also noted that it was "mainly black boys that would joke… or push him around in the lunch line." She went on to note that it stopped and that there was "nothing that hard core like beating up." Patrice never mentioned the race of the student that got picked on, therefore implying that the reason the student was picked on was because of the way he acted, which seems to have antagonized the other students, therefore being seen as different. It also seemed like this incident never really evolved into a fight, given that the group of boys was picking on one young man.

One incident that a participant asserted, with great certainty, as a fight involved two girls and clearly involved a racial issue, specifically this incident also occurred because someone was seen as different from others, in this case she was perceived as "acting too white." Olivia told how there were a couple of fights in her school and that they were "mostly girls do the hair pulling stuff over a guy or something." When asked if she ever saw one of these fights she replied in the affirmative noting that it was "kind of a bad one." She went on to note:

> this one black girl thought this other black girl acted too white, and she would
>
> give her crap about that, and just eventually it led to yelling and screaming and
>
> pulling hair and then the cops showed, you know we have a like police, an officer
>
> in our school, and he showed up and had the teachers and everybody had to break
>
> it up.

Olivia was able to recall this fight, even defining it as "kind of a bad one." Other participants were not as precise in their discussions of fights. Some other students spoke more generally of the fights, or perceived threats, that occurred.

Lance discussed an intersection in the halls of his school "where all the black kids would hang out." He went on to talk about how students would avoid that intersection "unless for some odd reason they respected you." He went on to note that he had their respect because he was "strong and likely stronger than them" and that because of this they would get out of his way when he walked through. He also mentioned that those smaller than he would have more difficultly getting through the area, as he noted:

> … a lot of the smaller kids, the kids in band, the comp sci [computer science]
>
> kids; they would, you know, specifically avoid that section of the school, but only
>
> during the times when all students were in the halls… unless you find people
>
> fighting people next to you and throwing them into a wall because they fought
>
> across in your way, unless you find that fun, you don't normally want to walk
>
> around.

As Lance discussed the fights that he attributed to the blacks in his school, he simultaneously discussed those who were the targets of bullying and identified as the bullies only the black students who would "hang out" at "one intersection of hallways."

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Another student described a specific incident that involved a lot of students at his school. He recalled, "there was a lot of racism in my, during middle school, and we had big, I don't know it was a fight, do you consider that bullying?" He went on to say that the reason for the fight was, "There was the rednecks and the black people, and what happened was the rednecks took, like, started dating one of the black girls in our school." He continued:

> This made all of the black people in our school really mad. That escalated and eventually just was a huge fight about 20 people involved. It made news like all the way to Virginia Beach and stuff. That's one of the big things I witnessed.

This participant pointed out not just the black students as being confrontational but also those he referred to as "rednecks," which generally tends to denote white people with certain characteristics, implications, and stereotypes. The specific mention of black students in this interview was germane to the description of the conflict between two racially different groups; however, the mention of a specific race, black, in the previous interview implied a separate distinction being made regarding the students. Were there no white groups of students in the hallway intersection or gathered in other parts of the school? In the interview where the female witnessed a fight between two girls, race was also a factor that was mentioned because the fight had to do with race, specifically the way one defined and experienced their race versus another's definition of and experience as that race. While race may or may not play a factor in a fight or in bullying that occurs in schools, it is sometimes difficult to know the impact it has, since race can sometimes be embedded in terms and discussions that appear to put the focus elsewhere.

While there are legitimate uses of the terms lower-class and ghetto, based on the following examples from a couple of interviews, they are also commonly used euphemisms for black people. One participant, Sue, discussed redistricting in Virginia and how her county was redistricted and how "it seemed like a lot of the upper class people moved to one school and the lower class moved to another school and they were really, really concerned." She also mentioned that she was a senior and that her and some of her friends, who were also seniors, decided to stay at their schools which were being redistricted and where the "lower class people were going." Sue mentioned noticeable changes in the school environment. One such change she described:

> And they were really concerned about how it was going to mesh with different groups of kids coming from all the different high schools, so they installed cameras in our school, so that if there was a fight they could witness it and it wouldn't be like he said, she said. They would be able to see what really happened…

She also talked about how the rules were going to change and how the students used to be able to leave for lunch and when the redistricting occurred they were no longer allowed to leave for lunch and how certain areas of the school that were previously opened to students were closed off after the redistricting.

Even though Sue didn't mention race, it was implied in her discussion of redistricting and her making a distinction between lower and upper class people. In another interview a student discussed how "everyone knows to stay away from the ghetto people who think that they own the school, and those are the bullies I guess you could say." As she discussed the above, Sue recalled a time where a black male student threw a

cookie at her and she turned and looked at him and he made some comments and he and his friend laughed at her as she walked away. She then went on to say she couldn't do anything because "they were like the ghetto kids who, like, they have a big group of friends, like if you mess with one of them then you are messing with all of them." While Sue didn't initially mention the race of the "ghetto people" she eventually went on to talk about black students in her school and some of the things she witnessed. She then clarifies what she meant by "ghetto kids" when I asked "And you call these bad kids the ghetto kids?" she replied:

> Yeah, like, they are the ones that are, I am not saying it racially; but just like the African American people, who I guess since they are ghetto because they dress in, like, all like Timberlands and baggy outfits and then they have, like, dew rags and, like, bandanas and they walk around, like, talking, like, what up, you know, and like stuff like that and they are the ones who are the bullies because, like, they [were] kids who you don't want to mess with because they look dangerous, you know, and they are the ones who, like, I guess can get into fights and come in groups and have each other's back…

Sue continued to talk about a fight that some black students had in a fast food restaurant and how they carried themselves. Again, while Sue didn't specifically mention black people, except in the passage above, she did allude to the fact they were black, based again on her definition of "ghetto kids," in the following:

> I think for the most part a lot of people agree, because a lot of my friends feel the same way as I do and everyone, like, for the most part stays away and, like, walks (around the ghetto) kids because they just always start things with everyone.

Again, the implication, based on her previous use of the term "ghetto kids" suggested that they were the black students and that she and her friends, and "a lot of people" felt as though the black students created the problems in that school, if it is true that her use of the term "ghetto kid" meant black student.

Using the stereotype of the black person as someone from the ghetto in describing that person is a form of racism. Other students also mentioned how stereotypes were propagated throughout their schools and communities. One such example was found in a young Hispanic/Mexican man's discussion of his move from a military town in South Georgia, which he described as diverse, to a "predominately white area." He asserted that there was racism in the community, but that he realized that it was "just their mindset and they were going to do that no matter what." He noted that when he lived in Georgia he and a friend, who was also Hispanic, would make fun of each other when they saw people who were Hispanic doing yard work, and they would tell the other one that that was their family. Frank also mentioned how he thought people in his new community thought they were better than him and how they would make jokes. He went on to state:

> … this idea people have that Mexicans are less educated or doing yard work and
> that is what they are good for, I can't really think. That was the main things, you
> know, go out and cut the grass or things like that would be the jokes that they
> would [say] towards me. They would point out people who were outside, you
> know even if they could be of any Hispanic descent, you know, there's your
> family or whatever.

Frank also talked about how if he had been picked on "real bad" he would go home after sports and reflect on the day and he would question the reasoning behind him returning to

school the next day. He went on to note that while he might get "emotional" at night, usually the next day he would consider it a new day and time to start over. He also discussed how he was picked on for being Hispanic, until 9/11, when he was picked on for being Middle Eastern. He said people would make jokes about him being Middle Eastern until they found out he was Hispanic. He attributed this mistake to the fact that it was September and school had just started and people didn't really know him. He also seemed to be understanding of the situation, noting, "Obviously the world was affected the events and then just picking on people." Being stereotyped and singled out for your race is something that many students experience, but sometimes the problems go beyond stereotypes and racially charged names; sometimes things are unequally handled within the school community, or at least perceived that way by some students.

Ian, a black male who attended a public school, discussed in great detail the inequalities that occurred at this school and at his expense. He first talked about how other students would hide gardening materials from him during school and then they would say that because he was black he looked like manure. He also talked about how he would be the one to pull another kid off of someone when they were picking on another student. Besides being called names based on his skin color and having supplies hidden from him, Ian also said that teachers and others treat students different based on their skin color. He said, in reference to being stopped in the hallway at school:

> … it was always only minorities that got stopped. If you had a bunch of, for lack of a better term, white people, especially the white jocks or the cute looking girls who always had their bosoms hanging out and shaking their rears, they never got

stopped. They could be as loud as they want, they could do anything they want, but it was always on the minorities.

He went on to talk about a specific incident where he was stopped when he was carrying a flask of vinegar to a supply room. He went on to state:

What am I going to do? I mean what do they think I am going to do, kill somebody with a giant flask of vinegar? There were six other guys talking and yelling and throwing their baseball up and down in the middle of the hall talking about lacrosse this and tracking mud all over the place cursing like sailors, and they let them pass. But you see a little Latino kid over there, they stop him and look at his backpack and where are you going? Where have you been? And let me escort you here. But no, no the white girls come in here and you are not supposed to go off campus for food, they would come in with bags full of McDonald's and stuff.

He went on to discuss how what these teachers at his school did is racial profiling "bordering on racism." While his was a more extreme example, there were other students who witnessed similar incidents or who even did things that seemed to be "bordering on racism."

Tammy, a white female student, talked about the rules at her school. She talked about how students were not allowed to wear tee shirts with any connotation about drugs, sex, or alcohol. She also noted that they were not allowed to wear bandanas or other things that might be construed as gang colors. Tammy mentioned that they were not allowed to use cell phones in school or to have pagers. She also mentioned that they were not supposed to leave campus for lunch but that no one followed that rule. In reference to

rules she noted how some students got special treatment; therefore it can be inferred that this preferential treatment was obvious to the students. She noted:

> Technically we weren't supposed to leave campus for lunch or anything. No one followed that rule, but we weren't supposed to just because the school was liable, whatever, for you when you leave. I mean the obvious ones you weren't allowed to have guns or knives or anything, but the thing about my school is if you are in a certain group, the rules, not because we just didn't want them to apply to us, but they didn't apply to you just because you were the good kids so nobody ever checked up on you. (Interrupted by her cell phone.) I mean it's just if you were in that group of kids, and I was, no one ever checked up on you, but that doesn't necessarily, like we weren't breaking the rules necessarily, but we were above the letter of the law; absolutely nobody really paid attention to what we were doing because they were too busy worrying about the other group of kids who were actually breaking the serious rules like bringing weapons to school…

This student saw herself and some others as being "above the letter of the law" while those who were "actually breaking the serious rules" she saw as the ones the teachers were more concerned with. When asked if she got away with anything because of this, she said that they got to leave for lunch. While Tammy denoted those for whom some of the rules of the school did not apply, Lance discussed the groups that some students belonged to and how they seemed to be created along racial lines. He also discussed how some students, who were not in these groups, but consisted of white students, "fit into the school." Lance stated, "For some reason the vast majority of social groups were single race or single ethnicity in nature." He categorized one of the groups as, "the Korean kids

with their cars and maybe one or two white kids in that group who also had cars." In his discussion of the group that the black students belonged to he stated that, "There were all the black kids into African American pop culture and a couple of kids who were into African American pop culture." The only group of white students he talked about, he described in the following manner, "You would have all the white rich kids that have a rich neighborhood and fit into the school. You would have a lot of the more, the less wealthy kids hanging out in their own group." Besides the couple of white kids who maybe part of the Korean car kids or the students into "African American pop culture," he mentioned that the groups in his school where he noticed the most diversity were those students involved in band or computer science. He even mentioned how the various groups would not be welcoming if you sat down with them and how that was "a surprising way of filtering out to the racial identifiable…." Ian, Tammy, and Lance illustrated the role race played in the singling out of some students who were seen as different and treated differently by not only students but also faculty. This treatment can have implications on incidents of bullying, as some students are given preferential treatment that causes jealousy in other students, as seen in the tone of Ian's comments. Besides race, some students are pointed out, harassed, bullied, and ostracized because they are either gay or perceived as gay by other students.

In a quarter of the interviews conducted, some reference was made to students being singled out because they were homosexual, perceived as gay, or were called gay either by other students or by their own friends. Some of these incidents involved students being made fun of for being gay, called gay, and one incident even involved a student getting beaten up because he was openly gay. In analyzing the incidents of

students being called gay, it is important to first denote those who use the terms "gay," "fag," or "homosexual" when addressing friends vs. times when these terms are used as ways to bully other students.

In various interviews students mentioned calling another person gay as a way to make fun of that person and as a way of singling them out as different. In other interviews students mentioned how they would call their friends gay, homosexual, or other derogatory terms to denote sexual preference. While examples of students calling friends these names came up in some cases, students calling others these names as a way of making them appear different occurred with only a slight increase. One student explained how he and others saw "gay people" as "abnormal." Adam admitted, "We also made fun of gay people at school." He continued asserting that in Virginia, especially in rural areas, it's more difficult being gay than in other parts of the country. To this he added, "So, we made fun of gay people a lot." He also compared "gay people" to foreigners stating, "So, he was pretty, he's, like, you know, I said foreigners, we used to make fun of foreigners, but we counted gay people as foreigners, too, as abnormal people." Other students also talked of how some students were called gay or fag in a derogatory way. Dan, who attended an all male school, said that "being called a faggot was like the worst thing because it was an all boys' school." Sometimes these names would be used against someone who may or may not be homosexual, but these names were said to the people to whom it was directed. In another interview the name calling was only mentioned in reference to gossip and/or rumors. Jack recalled:

Like people would tell stories about guys being gay or they would say something

to each other like, look at that, like, don't be a fag like him, but it wasn't too bad

usually. I was friends with one of the guys that was gay actually, and he

overheard some stuff once. He was all right. He dealt with it.

So while the other examples of calling others names were more direct, this example was more behind the victim's back or indirect. So whether the comment questioning one's sexuality was made to the victim's face or as part of an attempt to spread rumors, it was done against someone with a perceived attempt to belittle that person. There were also some students who, during the course of the interview, mentioned how they and their friends would call each other names questioning each other's sexual preference.

While the terms "fag" and "gay" in the above examples take on a more derogatory tone than perhaps other names that students call each other do, this may or may not be the case for those who use these terms towards their friends. Another example a student gave of calling someone gay was discussed by Ken. He said that "probably the biggest one," meaning something that students said to each other was that the person was gay, if someone said "something girly or something." Later on when asked if calling people "gay" happened a lot Ken said, "Yeah… even amongst friends we did. Like, you never really took it seriously because it was just everybody said it to everybody, so it was kind of like, whatever. So, it wasn't like really like a big put down." The student mentioned above, who attended an all male high school where being called a faggot was considered a big deal, when asked if people used the terms "gay" or "faggot" towards each other in college, stated, "The only people I have heard do that are people that do it jokingly to one another; like friends would do it." He went on to say, when asked if he ever heard anyone called faggot in college:

I have never heard anyone called that in a derogatory way like to a point where, you know, I mean, like, someone who is a homosexual being called, you know, a faggot or someone, like, being called that just jokingly between friends that I have heard it.

Ben also mentioned how friends would call each other names like: "loser, dorks, fags…" He went on to say, "It was, like, you know, you make a stupid comment or something and your friends, oh, you are such a fag." In describing how "guys" bully each other Amy noted:

Guys, they don't really bully guys about clothes because that would be weird I think, but guys, I guess they bullied them about not having a girlfriend or, like, I guess they would call people gay just because they would be, like, I don't know, just something they would say you are gay. I am like, don't say that because I don't like it when people call people gay. So, I definitely would yell at people for calling other people gay. That's not a word you need to say.

As Amy asserted regarding "guys" using the term "gay," "they would call people gay just because…just something they would say…," implying that it was one of the words that males commonly used as a putdown. As the terms "gay" and "faggot" were used to harass other students, or bully, some friends used the terms as a putdown when making fun of each other. In these incidents the students were impervious to the comments, or at least that was what was reported by the students interviewed, some of whom witnessed these interactions or were part of these interactions. Contrary to the above comments made to friends, some students who were known to be, or even perceived to be, homosexual were subjected to harsh treatment by others in their school.

The treatment that students who were gay, or were perceived as gay, received spanned from getting made fun of, to getting in trouble for a possible act of retaliation for treatment by other students, to getting beaten up and hospitalized. Making fun of people perceived as homosexual was addressed to some extent in the discussion of students who were called "fag" and "gay" in a mean-spirited way versus the examples of how friends used these terms against each other. Ken, who discussed above how friends would call each other "gay" or "fag," when asked if he ever bullied readily admitted:

> I am sure I did, yeah, I mean if it's just making fun of people, I knew, I mean I made fun of people and that is pretty much the same thing as what I explained, kind of like, you know, you see somebody walking to class and maybe they are walking kind of, their wrists are kind of up or something and walking like he's gay or something like that.

So while Ken was not sure if the target of his bullying was homosexual or not, he perceived him to be, or at least have a stereotype characteristic of someone who might be gay. Adam, whose story was earlier told in relation to calling other students derogatory names related to their perceived sexual preference, discussed how he and others made fun of gay people at his school. He discussed how one student "tried to be a girl" but "was a dude" and how they would "make him get in trouble," which Adam believed the student deserved, since he had made a bomb threat to the school from a phone within the school. Adam and some others witnessed this student making the bomb threat using the phone within the school and reported him to the administration and he got suspended. Adam continued:

But we didn't have to say that, but just because he was gay, and we felt

uncomfortable around him, being around us. So, I think that was the main reason,

the whole principle, we thought it was funny because you know we didn't have to

see him again. He did make us feel very uncomfortable in, like, the locker room.

When asked why this student made him feel uncomfortable, Adam said:

Because in the locker room and changing and everything, he stares at you. He

would just stand there and stare at people. And he takes like estrogen or

something trying to grow boobs. That is just abnormal for guys to do that.

Adam was very clear about what made him feel uncomfortable about this other student.

He even recalled how he and others responded to this feeling by getting the student in

trouble. While Adam seemed to insist that they told on this student for making the bomb

threat because he was gay, it should be obvious that any student who witnesses a bomb

threat should turn in the person doing the threat, since in many cases they could get in

trouble had they not turned the student in. With that said, it is important to at least note

that Adam justified his telling on the student because the student was perceived to be

homosexual. While making fun of a student for a characteristic which may or may not be

associated with being homosexual, and getting a student in trouble for making a bomb

threat, are incidents that can impact the victims greatly, there were two students' stories

where the victims experienced great emotional and physical pain.

Izzy, who is white, attended a private school, and said that she had been bullied

and witnessed bullying during her school experience, talked about one student, who will

be called Ricky. At one point during the interview, when discussing who gets bullied, she

simply said, "Poor Ricky." When prompted further about what she meant by "Poor

Ricky," she went on to talk about a student who struggled with many issues, like "severe depression" and his parents' divorce, during his high school years only to be harassed for the way he walked, for being overweight, and for being very involved in church. Students also said that he was "gay," to which his reply was that he was not and that there was a girl that he really liked. Izzy went on to discuss how he went off to college and discovered that they were "in a sheltered environment, that there were people out there who were like him and searching for whatever." She went on to say that he "experimented and he, and he was just like, you know what I am; I am homosexual and that's how it's going to be…" Izzy also talked about how Ricky tried to kill himself multiple times because of all the things going on, which was compounded by the fact that he would get in trouble at a school and transfer to another and then another. She went on to add that at some point he didn't get in trouble anymore and he started making good grades, which also caused him some grief. Izzy described the impact good grades had on Ricky, "for a while making good grades wasn't the cool thing because the football guys weren't making good grades and they were, like, ha ha, you are in the smart class, you know." Later on she talked about the football player "all the other football guys kind of looked up to," who she did not like, because she implied that he was one of the ones who picked on Ricky. When asked if she thought being picked on was the reason he attempted suicide Izzy replied, "it was just a lot of things" and that he "had the medical clinical depression side of it." Ricky's torment at school and home was compounded by the fact that other students picked on him for various reasons. Ricky had a lot to deal with in school and outside of school, but from what Izzy communicated, Ricky also ended up

making it to college and discovering who he really was. Unfortunately sometimes the torment students suffer can result in brutality inflicted by their peers.

When asked about "other examples" of bullying that occurred in his K-12 schooling Ben relayed an incident that he witnessed in the cafeteria at his school. Ben recalled:

> Well, I mean there was a really bad incident at my high school one time where a kid, he had, he was gay, and he had finally come out to some of his friends, and it got around the high school. And a couple of football players beat the crap out of him. Actually, they ended up sending him [to] the hospital and both kids got expelled. They beat the crap out of him.

Ben said that it "was really bad and that [it] was actually really scary for everybody who was there, too." In describing what he had witnessed, Ben recalled that it was during lunch and "they just threw him into a, we had booths in our cafeteria, and they threw him into a booth and punched him in the face a couple of times and slammed his head off the wall." When asked if anyone tried to stop the beating, Ben said no one stepped in because there was a zero tolerance policy at his school and if you tried to stop a fight "you are basically viewed as being in the fight as well. So, you get in trouble as well for trying to stop a fight." The two students, who were football players, got expelled from school. The injured student returned to school two weeks after having surgery. Ben says how the victim had been a very sociable person but when he returned to school "he didn't really socialize with anybody, and he became kind of what we called a 'runner.'" He noted that the boy didn't have any friends after that, and that he thinks "a lot of it came from him being gay and not many people accepting that at my high school." When asked where his

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high school was located, he said the name of a relatively big city in the North that could be described as working class and a football city. These demographics are worth noting, if only to highlight some characteristics that may be seen as typical or ironic in the construction of one's impression of where some of these incidents are thought to occur. It is difficult for students to accurately identify students who are homosexual, unless those students are openly gay. Race is an easier characteristic to identify and something that can not be controlled by any force outside the individual's genetic code. One of the other differences that many students noted as a characteristic of a group who gets picked on were those in special education or those seen as having special needs and/or being in special education. While some of these needs can be obvious to other students, some are not. In addition, some of the services provided to students are easily noticeable to other students, which could assist in identifying targets of bullying. Furthermore, services provided to students with special needs are not always administered at the request of student, and may in fact be utilized based on the request of the school system. This fact opens up the possibility of the school system creating an opportunity for a student to become a target of bullying based on their intervention.

As with other students who were picked on, there seemed to be more focus on verbal bullying of students in special education. Some of this verbal bullying, and mocking behaviors, language, etc. is done without the target/victim's knowing that it is occurring. After discussing those incidents where students discussed occurrences of verbal bullying or students in special education being made fun of, those students who were perceived as having mental problems by other students, and were consequently picked on, will be examined. Finally, as in other examples of students getting picked on

or made fun of, students in special education were sometimes defended by other students. This seemed more likely to occur in incidents of students who were in special education getting bullied than in other incidents.

At various times during the interviews students were asked who the victims of bullying were at their school. This was done after they had defined bullying. In answering who the victims of bullying were in her school, Rhonda said, "Obviously some of the special ed kids; that's all I really know of." This also came after a discussion of her witnessing a student who was in special education getting picked on. However, before she got specific she noted, when asked earlier in the interview if she ever witnessed a student getting bullied, she responded with, "Yes. I would witness mostly handicapped kids; they would be picked on and I guess people would make fun of them. Sometimes they would pretend to be your friend and turn around behind their back and say something." She continued by saying this occurred mostly in high school. When she went on to discuss an incident she witnessed she recalled:

> Well, one incident I know of and the only incident I know, like, this kid would, he had this habit of eating Chap stick, and he was picked on a lot by numerous students in and out of his classes, and he actually ran away. They found him two weeks later and they were 100% sure it's from picking on in school, but that's one of the things he said that drove him to do it so.

When asked if this student was in special education, Rhonda replied, "I am not sure if he was in special education, but he had a teacher that would come sit with him sometimes during his classes, but I don't think he was really classified as special education." Later on in the interview she reverses her assumption noting, "I mean he was obviously in

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some type of special ed so I guess they felt they could take advantage of that…" When asked if other students made fun of him for anything else she said that his eating the Chap Stick "was one of the main things," but that they also made fun of him for his clothes, like if he had "a stain on his clothes from lunch or whatnot." She thought that he didn't seem to "take it personally" but she went on to say, "…I guess he did. I mean obviously if he ran away."

Emma described a fight that occurred in eighth grade because one student was making fun of another student for having a learning disability. She recalled, "Well, one boy's brother had a learning disability, and one person would make fun of them and they actually got into a fight one day over that." When asked what happened after that she said that both students got suspended. While there were some incidents of students getting picked on and made fun of to their face, there were also several incidents where students recalled how others would make fun of students and/or mock them behind their backs.

Hanna, when asked if she could think of any specific kids that got picked on, replied:

> The main kids that got picked on were like I said the outsiders, but then also, like, the handicapped kids or kids that were disabled in some sort of way, like, they would, you know, not necessarily say something to their face, but you could hear them, like, joking about them being, like, oh, did you see so and so and just saying rude things about them especially when it was something that they couldn't help like a disability or blindness or hearing impaired or like mental retardation. Anything like that.

A couple of other students also said that they witnessed other students making fun of students who had disabilities behind their backs. Another representation of what students had witnessed was relayed by Tammy, who recalled, "There were a few kids who had, like, problems with, like, walking or whatever and kids would never say anything directly to them, but, like, kids would always whisper when they would go by, and I think that's ridiculous." While Tammy specifically mentioned students who had "problems with, like, walking or whatever," Beth had witnessed incidents where other students would make fun of a student with a hearing impairment and how she talked. Beth shared:

Some of my classmates would pick on, I had a classmate that was partially deaf and she didn't talk the same way we did so she got made fun of behind her back. Never in front of her, but behind her back they talked about her a lot and made fun of her and tried to talk like she did and things like that.

These examples represent a sample of what students could remember about the students who were picked on in school. A quarter of the students interviewed mentioned something about students getting picked on because they were physically different or in special education. While some of these incidents of verbal bullying occurred in the presence of the student who was targeted, others were uttered outside the presence of the victim. It is worth noting that after describing the incident above of the girl with the hearing impairment getting made fun of behind her back, Beth also discussed how a student in a wheelchair got treated by other students. She noted:

And we are all 100% white school, and there is no diversity so. We did have one classmate that was, that grew up with us, that was in a wheelchair, and I am not quite sure what his disease was. And we, you know, everybody in my class and

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classes surrounding were nice to him and helped him along and very

supportive…. But then this other girl, she, I don't know. I can't quite pick up why

they decided to pick on her.

When asked to confirm that the boy in the wheelchair did not get made fun of, Beth

confirmed, adding:

And he, he was in classes with us from the time I moved to that school. I was in

third grade, and from the time I was in third grade on he was with us, and his aide

was with us, and then she came and they just made fun of her and laughed at her. I

can't quite pick up on that.

Besides the differences in gender, and the fact that one had a hearing impairment while

the other was confined to a wheelchair, one was established in the school while the other

moved to the school later in the student's educational career. Besides physical and

learning disabilities being the cause of some students being targets of bullying, some

students were subjected to bullying for known or perceived emotional problems.

While those who were made fun of for emotional problems were only a quarter of

the number of those made fun of and picked on for physical and learning disabilities,

these cases are worth noting. Rhonda, in the discussion above, mentions a boy who ate

Chap Stick and how he was picked on, ran away, and had an aide attend his classes.

Rhonda was able to relay a story she witnessed, whereas Manny talked about being

picked on for general reasons, like "just to do it." Further along in the discussion Manny

talks about being in seventh grade and being picked on; he felt it was because of a blood

disorder (ITP) he had which required medicine. He stated, "I had to go on Pretazone and

stuff and that makes you a little edgy and that's when I gained weight and stuff. So, that

was probably what it had to do with starting it all." He talked about how he would be called names and that during lunch:

> Everybody as a whole would do it at lunch, I mean, and they would get you in trouble for no reason because, you know, there was a group of people and I would try to hang out with them. They would do something and somebody would get in trouble and they would all take it and put it on me or something. So, I would go home crying, you know, like I didn't do anything and my parents would understand.

Directly following his above recollection, Manny talked about how one year his parents had him go see a doctor "to see if something was wrong or anything. I guess it was psychology. I don't know. I am assuming. I have no idea." There is no direct mention of Manny having psychological problems, but his reference to the medicine making him "edgy" and his parents having him see a doctor for what he referred to as "psychology," implies that he believes either he was made fun of because of his "edgy" behavior or he needed to see a doctor because he had been picked on. Both of these reasons could also be true, therefore providing more of a foundation for Manny having had psychological problems. In the above two cases there was no direct proof that these students, who were the targets of bullying, suffered from psychological problems, but in other cases students were known to suffer from psychological problems.

Mary, in describing how she and others would pick on one girl, talked about how they would make comments such as, "…she's crazy. I am thinking probably what she was wearing and how she looked and stuff." When asked what the girl was wearing or how she looked that made them make fun of the girl, Mary replied:

She was, it's hard to explain. I don't know. She looked, she actually had a lot of

mental problems that I think affected how she looked. Sometimes she would get

really dirty and then she wears a lot of makeup and she caked it on and she was

really pale and it didn't match her skin, and we would make fun of her for that.

When asked if the girl had any mental problems that she knew of, Mary said that they

were "pretty sure she was bipolar." She went on to note, "…she would miss a lot of

school and there was times when she was like you could tell she was on this crazy like

high just like manic and then she would like disappear from school for a few days." Mary

goes on to share that she and her friends felt they confirmed their suspicions, as she

recalled:

And I think, my friend, Katy, said that she saw on one of her field trip permission

slips where you had to fill out, like, if you have any problems; she thinks she saw

that she was bipolar and on medication for it.

Mary went on to say that another one of her friends was friends with the girl they bullied

during their freshmen year and that the girl they thought was bipolar Instant Messaged

her one day after missing a couple days of school saying that she was in the hospital.

Mary's response to this was "So, I mean we just, it was kind of obvious that she did have

problems or that she was a pathological liar and was making it up." It should also be

mentioned that Mary talked about how during eighth grade she didn't mind going to

school on Monday and Tuesday but the rest of the week she "dreaded it." She said she

just wanted to go ahead and go home and sleep. She continued by saying that she might

have been depressed and that she didn't have "many friends" and that she "couldn't really

stand the people anymore." Mary talked about how she and her friends would make fun

of a girl that they thought was bipolar, but some students don't go along with others; they stand up for and defend those who are seen as different, whether that difference is psychological or physical.

Nick, who attended a private Catholic school, recalled how even though he had never been bullied in school, his brother had. When prompted he said that some other students at their school were telling his brother to stop hanging around one girl at their school. Nick said that his brother was "supportive of this girl and that a lot of people didn't like that." When asked why students didn't like that particular girl, Nick said "I am not exactly sure why. I mean she was suicidal and some people didn't like that and thought that it was weird." Nick confirmed that other students wanted people to ignore this girl because she was suicidal, and he went on to say that students thought she was doing it for attention. Nick further explained that this certain girl whom his brother had befriended was at first rumored to be suicidal without confirmation, but then she told him that she was suicidal. Whether or not it was fact or a rumor, Nick's brother defended a girl who was suicidal and in defending her he was picked on. Nick, and even some of Nick's friends, stood up for the boy who stood up for the girl. This girl was picked on for what appeared to be more than a perceived emotional problem, and she was defended by another student who wanted to be there for her when everyone else thought she was being suicidal for attention and that she should be ignored. This boy's defending the girl who was seen as suicidal is one example of an incident where a student defended someone who was picked on for being either in special education, having a special need or mental illness, or being perceived as having a mental or emotional illness.

In several of the incidents where one or more students picked on a student who was in special education or had special needs, or was perceived to be in one of the later two groups or have some emotional problem, someone else took up for the targeted student in six of the eleven examples. In one of the six examples of someone defending a student who was in special education and/or was perceived, correctly or incorrectly, to have some psychological or emotional problem, a teacher came to the target student's defense. In the case of a deaf student who had problems speaking clearly due to her deafness, Beth recalled how students made fun of the girl mostly out of earshot of teachers, but sometimes even in front of teachers during a break in class. When asked what the teachers would do, Beth replied:

> The teachers, I remember one teacher said, she said to be quiet and, you know, everybody is different and they learn different ways and just to accept it, and you are all in the same classroom and you are here to learn. So, that shut them up.

The teacher simply mentioned how people were different and they were all there to learn, and that the students should stop talking about the girl. Based on what Beth saw in this one case, this was enough to get the class to cease in their comments. Sometimes, as in the case mentioned earlier, students were the ones who came to the defense of another student.

For the purpose of this analysis, two different scenarios are defined as defending responses to the bullying of students who were in special education or who were perceived, correctly or incorrectly, as having emotional or psychological problems. The first scenario encompasses those actions, like those previously mentioned, where someone took a stand by defending the targeted student(s). This occurred in the presence

of those who were the ones bullying the student. The second scenario is more a verbal reassurance during the interview that the student interviewed did not agree with, partake in, or encourage the bullying of the students in special education. While those in each of these categories were defending the targeted student by denouncing the bullying of these students in some way, the distinction will be made by referring to the former group as defenders and the latter group as denouncers.

Both the teacher and the young man in the above example were defenders in that the teacher told the students who were making fun of the deaf student to "be quiet" and the young man stood up to others who thought that the girl who was suicidal was doing it for attention by remaining her friend even in the face of conflict. His brother was also a defender, since he stood up for his brother's actions. Another case of a student defending a student in special education occurred as Fay recounted:

> … someone was telling me that, like, one day at lunch a kid stuck a ketchup
>
> packet in one of the special ed kid seats at lunch. And one of my friends got up
>
> and was, like, why would you do that? There is no reason for that.

Fay said that she guessed the student doing it thought it was funny. When asked about the students in special education, she said that "There is a couple of kids who have Down Syndrome" and that "a couple of kids are autistic." She also mentioned how there was a "big group of them" at her school when discussing the students in special education. Similar to what Fay recalled having been told by someone, Beth, who above shared how the teacher spoke up for the hearing impaired student, shared how her frustration led her to confront others who were making fun of the same student. Beth recalled:

I remember just they were talking about it one day, and they were talking the way

she talked, and I said, you know what, she is a great girl, you know, she works

hard, she's going to school, or she is graduating and going to a university, she's

making something of her life, and I said that's the least I can say for you guys.

And I just walked off because it just made me so mad. I got tired of it.

She went on to say, "So, they stopped talking about her around me because I said I was

really mad because it had gotten to the point where I just couldn't take it anymore." These

students, the defenders, willingly shared their dislike for the making fun of the students in

special education with the students who were engaging in the bullying. In three other

cases students shared the fact that they disliked it when others made fun of students in

special education, but not necessarily with those engaged in the behavior.

As mentioned above, those who denounced the picking on and/or making fun of

students in special education will be referred to as denouncers, which is in contrast to

those referred to as defenders who made their negative feelings towards the treatment of

students in special education known to those engaged in the behaviors. There were three

examples of denouncers in those who stood up for those in special education. Darla's

comment, "…it's not their fault. It's just how they were born" is similar to other

comments. Darla's assertion came after she described how some students had trouble

socially because:

They might have ADD or something because I know that a lot of times those

people can't adapt socially. And so a lot of the kids that seem to be, that seem to

be bullied are the ones that don't know how to communicate or can't communicate

because of a disorder that they have.

While Darla did not specifically mention special education, she did denote ADD, which is sometimes treated within special education classes. It is also possible that she was not really sure of the problems the individuals were facing, but she was aware of some type of behavior, social, and/or emotional difference. As suggested, Darla's comment that this was "not their fault" is similar to other comments made in defense of those seen as in special education or having some type of emotional or psychological problem. The girl who discussed the student who ate Chap Stick and ran away because others made fun of him, relayed, when asked, "what stands out most when you think about that?", "I don't know. I just feel bad for him. I don't like see to people do that." Tammy's response was similar to the previous comments denoting her "biggest problem" as being when people make fun of others with "a disability or if they were different." Tammy went on to talk about how it bothered her a lot, and, "It just bothered me because like not everybody, nobody is the same as anybody else. It's just that those kids had different, had more obvious [disabilities]." She continued, "That was a big thing too at my school, taunting." She recalled how there were some students at her school who had problems "like walking or whatever" and that other students would make fun of them, but never directly to them and how she thought that was "ridiculous." She later reported that even though these things were whispered, the person that was being made fun of still heard what was said. Tammy defined students with disabilities as those who had problems walking or something wrong with their arm, face or even if they were cross-eyed. She talked about how a boy who "had a problem with his arm and the way he walked" was mocked by others who would imitate the way he walked and "the way his arm was." Her denouncing continued:

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I mean there is something wrong with everybody; nobody is, not everybody just is

perfect all the time, like, people get sick or people, like, break their legs or people

get paralyzed, like, and that's why I never understood that because, like, as soon

as you make fun of that person, like, you could get hit by a bus and never be able

to walk again and people are going to make fun of you. I just never understood

that.

Tammy's denouncing of the actions and comments of those who picked on students with

"disabilities" occurred within the interview, as did the comments of the previous

denouncers. Tammy's reflecting on the fact that something could happen to anyone

which could lead to them being in a position where they are made fun of is worth noting

given its empathic quality. It was also noted in at least one of the previous examples of a

student defending another student, that the student's friends who made comments about

another student stopped after the student told them that she did not like them making fun

of others, or at least those comments stopped in her presence.

<center>Student Views of Prevention</center>

In the previous section brief mention was made of those who defended victims of

bullying or denounced the bullying of students in special education, or who had

psychological problems, or were perceived as having psychological or emotional

problems. Students who are willing to defend victims or denounce bullying could assist

in preventing bullying from occurring. The defending of victims and/or denouncing of

bullying are part of what will be defined as peer and friend influence in preventing

bullying. In addition to peer and friend influence on preventing bullying, other categories

emerged during the analysis of the interview data. Participants were asked if there was

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any way to prevent bullying in schools. Some participants believed that nothing can be done to prevent bullying, with some believing that it is a fact of life. Other possible methods of prevention mentioned within the interviews included: stricter rules about bullying, teachers being more vigilant, victims taking a stand, classes on anger management and/or training in dealing with diversity, and opportunities for working together in the classroom. While it was very limited, there was also discussion of religious beliefs and values as playing a role in preventing bullying. Even though some students believed that schools could assist in preventing bullying, as mentioned, there were some students who believed that nothing could be done to prevent bullying.

Nothing Can Be Done

In close to half of the interviews, the participants expressed that they felt that nothing could be done to prevent bullying. While some participants stated directly that nothing could be done, others stated that bullying was a fact of life. Nick's comments are representative of many of those made by participants regarding the possibility of preventing bullying. Nick noted:

> You can't stop the way kids act and you can't prevent the things that happen at someone's home. You can't prevent the ideas that come into kids' heads. It's always going to happen. You can put as many rules as you want down. You can say, hey, you guys do this and you are out of school. Kids don't care. They are not going to listen. I mean we have all of these laws about underage drinking. It doesn't stop people. You know they get citations; they go to jail for this or that and then they come back out and do it again. It's not going to stop kids either.

As noted, Nick's comments were very similar to many other comments participants made about bullying. The overall tone and theme of the comments was that bullying is always going to happen and there is nothing that can be done about it. Ken talked about seeing an incident of someone making fun of another and that he didn't know how that could be stopped "because you can't really make people get along with each other." Olivia had a similar take on things as she relayed that she thought it was always going to happen. She followed up with, "I think people will always find something they don't like about someone else to pick on them about." While these participants discussed how bullying will continue, some participants went further to explain why they felt the bullying would continue.

A later section will address why some participants believe bullying occurs; however, it is worth noting that some participants stated, in their discussions as to whether or not bullying could be prevented, why they felt that it is unlikely that bullying will be reduced. Mary expressed her belief that bullying will always occur in schools, but she went on to explain why she thought it will continue, which some of the other participants did as well, Mary stated:

> I don't know honestly, like, I think it's just something that's always going to be there. For some it's, like, natural instinct; they don't even mean to do it and they just do it, like, I think a lot of times when you get to be older, like, in the high school level I think a lot of people do it because of self-esteem. I think it makes their self-esteem higher or something. And so you are always going to have people that are like that and so I think you will always have bullying somewhere in school at least.

Mary attributed the bullying that some students did to "self-esteem" and noted that there will always be people "like that." Lucy made a comparable assertion:

> I think bullying is natural for some people but some people are just, I think, prone to bullying because of other things they stem from, like, for instance jealousy or insecurity. I don't think there's a way to get around that and try to make people feel more secure or feel more confident I guess is a way to slow down bullying that's already started, but I don't think there is way to prevent it.

As some participants noted that bullying can not be reduced, others went on to explain why it can not be reduced. Both Mary and Lucy attributed psychological problems or needs as the reason that bullying will continue. Many of the participants also suggested that bullying has always been around so it will continue to be. Like some others, Hanna referred to the history of the phenomena of bullying as she responded to the inquiry as to, "Is there anything that can be done to reduce bullying…?" She stated, "Bullying I don't really think so. I think it's kind of, that's something that's hard to change because it seems like it's always been around and it always will be." Hanna noted that it's hard to change the fact that bullying occurs, but she stopped short of suggesting that it is impossible to change it. This was implied when she went on to mention that maybe stricter rules would help reduce bullying. So while many of those interviewed believed that there is nothing that can be done to reduce bullying, some believed that there are things that can be done to reduce bullying, one of which is creating stricter rules.

Stricter Rules

A quarter of those interviewed believed, like Hanna, that stricter rules and/or enforcement of the rules would assist in the reduction of bullying in school. Whereas

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Hanna said that maybe rules would reduce bullying, after she had said she didn't think there was anything that can be done about it, Ephraim reversed his thoughts on reducing bullying by noting, "Ah, they can make rules a lot stricter, but there is nothing; I don't think anything can be done." Several others suggested that by creating stricter rules, and enforcing rules, bullying may be able to be reduced, but some participants still maintained that bullying in schools will never be reduced.

Some of the participants not only suggested that stricter rules would aid in reducing bullying, they even gave examples as to what kind of strict rules could be set in place. As Fay noted:

I think, that is, you have, like, stricter rules that say that if you get in a fight in school, you are going to be expelled instead of being, like, well you are going to be expelled, but we will just suspend you for a couple of days.

Similarly Rhonda stated, "Ah, yeah I suppose there could be stricter punishment if the teachers or whatnot hear of different things; maybe there [should] be more to the punishment than just saying, you know, you need to stop or whatnot." Gloria echoed this comment noting, "I guess the administration could take more [of a] part and not be so lenient to the ones who are always being seen there and trying not [to] let them be bullied on." Like these participants, others noted the need for stricter rules, but they also mentioned the need for these rules to be enforced.

Rules that are not enforced do not assist in the reduction of bullying, as some of those interviewed suggested. When asked if anything can be done to reduce bullying, Darla replied:

I think they can enforce rules. I mean, if you are going to take the time to write up

rules, then you need to enforce them because some kids don't go home to parents

that are going to teach them right and wrong. So, it's not necessarily a teacher's or

a school's job to teach them right and wrong, but it is the job, if they are going to

create a right and wrong they need to make sure they say this is the right or

wrong. So, if they don't enforce it then they are just going to think they can get

away with anything. So, I think that would probably be the best way.

Darla's idea was that students need to know right from wrong and that while the school's

job is not to teach right and wrong because it is the parents' job, if the school is going to

attempt to denote right from wrong it also needs to be clear about what they mean by

right and wrong, and they need to be willing to enforce their definition of right and

wrong. Gloria's answer to what can be done to reduce bullying also looked to the

enforcement of rules, as mentioned above. Hanna also felt that there needed to be

enforcement of the rules that were already in place, but she went a step further noting that

it was difficult for teachers to monitor bullying in schools. She noted:

I guess you could make students more, like, in school you could enforce stricter

rules; if there is bullying going on they would get a detention or something like

that, but it's kind of hard, especially for teachers, I think, to see this bullying going

on because usually it goes on outside the classroom like during lunch or before or

after school. So, I think it's kind of hard to kind of restrict it or make it not

happen.

Hanna's pointing to the difficulty teachers had monitoring students and bullying, is representative of the comments other participants made regarding the need for teachers to be more aware of what was going on around them.

Teacher Awareness

In twelve of the forty-one interviews, participants mentioned something about teachers needing to be more aware of bullying and other activities in schools or how the teachers' ability to monitor students assisted in the reduction of activities such as bullying. As Hanna mentioned, in relation to reducing bullying, it was harder for teachers to see bullying when it occurred outside the classroom, during lunch, or before or after school. Hanna referred to what Astor et al. (2001) called "undesignated spaces," which refers to spaces within the school where there is no supervision. Paul shared a similar impression on how to reduce bullying in schools:

> Yeah. I think that the only way to really do that is to increase the supervision in the schools. For instance, cafeteria, I mean if there were more administrators looking around and monitoring, Clive probably wouldn't have come up and grabbed my cookies and hit me in the face if there would have been an administrator 100 feet away just watching. Also, come to think about it, another instance from middle school, everybody would rush into lunch. … for the first few minutes before the door was open there was no supervision and whoever was bigger or more popular, whatever, would always cut in front of everybody in the line and it would always make me so mad because there was nothing at all I could do about it…. In elementary school, you know, at recess if there had been a teacher around, you know, not necessarily just watching to see if anybody hit

something, but just being aware of how the kids are communicating and being

aware of what's said, you know, and listening to the conversations and listening to

see what kind of hurtful things come out of somebody's mouth. I think the teacher

should be more aware of the kid's feelings and how people are being accepted by

others in the class. In high school, same thing just more supervision.

Both Hanna and Paul discussed the need for more supervision during lunch, and Hanna

even mentioned the need for more supervision before and after school.

One participant relayed an incident where there was supervision after school

where a coach intervened in an incident of bullying. Quinn discussed how football

players on his team would get harassed if they would "fake injuries" and then they would

get to sit out of practice. In this incident the student sitting out was called names and

everyone would "haggle him and… I guess call him names and just more or less make

fun of him the entire time." Quinn went on to note, "He lost his temper to a certain point

where he just left the practice field and went on home, but the coach handled it what I

thought was appropriately." When asked what the coach did, he replied:

They, after practice, held a meeting and put the captains in charge of calling the

kid and apologizing from the team's perspective and just promised him it would

never happen and told the, the coaches told the team if any more incidences like

that were to happen then the kids will be punished accordingly.

Quinn said that the players on the team felt that this student was faking the injury, since

they had seen him in gym class, where his ankle seemed to be fine. This incident that

Quinn relayed was not unique to the school. Quinn shared this example of how

supervision during an after school activity was monitored and handled effectively by the

coach. He also noted that verbal bullying was difficult to address in his school since it would be one student's word against another, but that physical bullying was not tolerated if it was reported. He went on to assert, in regards to the implied low amount of bullying in his school, that:

> I think more adults around it at school because I think that's where most of it would happen. We had, I guess, one faculty member for every 15 students you know. In public school, sometimes it's one to every fifty; whatever it is. So, if you have more faculty, I guess it's a lot easier to stop or prevent than it would be otherwise.

With the previous participants suggesting that teachers being aware of bullying in their schools would lead to a reduction in bullying, Quinn shared the same opinion explaining a specific example and then went on to discuss the influence that having a lower student to teacher ratio would have on reducing bullying. Quinn was not alone in his assertion that teachers needed to be vigilant in monitoring students noting his personal experience. Olivia, who attended a public school, said that, "It was a really small high school. The teachers kept a pretty good watch over everything. They would stand out in the halls during, you know, when we were going from one class to another." She went on to note, "That minimized things, but it still happened." Olivia pointed out that teacher presence helped reduce bullying but not eliminate it. The students above believed that if teachers were more aware there would be a reduction in incidents of bullying. Other students stated the same things directly, and in some cases indirectly, by sharing examples of how their schools were monitored by teachers and that they felt this teacher monitoring helped reduce bullying. These participants recalled the positive effects of teachers being more

vigilant, but other participants noted some other actions, or inactions, taken by teachers that did not assist in reducing bullying.

Three participants discussed what their perceptions were as far as the role teachers play in reducing bullying. Whereas the participants above saw the teachers' role as monitoring students and thereby reducing bullying, these participants saw the teachers as ignoring bullying, in some cases. Harry noted, after stating that to reduce bullying there could be "better punishment, better supervision," that "A lot of teachers just ignore it or turn a blind eye to it." Tammy made a similar comment by stating, "I think that a teacher should be responsible for paying attention to what's going on. They don't at all. I don't know. It's hard to gauge how well teachers pay attention and how much they care." Amy went beyond questioning whether or not teachers cared to commenting on why teachers in her example didn't do anything about bullying. Amy stated:

> I feel like teachers really do it and don't do anything in situations, like in 8th grade because they are blinded by the front that that person does. Like Rachel, everybody loved her, all the teachers loved her. She was like president of the 8th grade class, she was in all that stuff, and she was so mean to everybody, like all the kids she was so mean to. It's just funny because the teachers were blinded by the fact that she was so nice to them that they don't see that she's so mean to people. And you know it happens the same way with guys I am sure, probably.

These three participants believed that teachers ignored bullying when it occurred, which combined with the previous section denoting how the participants believed that teachers being more aware of what was taking place around them would reduce bullying, suggests

that all of these participants believed that teachers are in a position to assist in reducing

bullying if they are aware it is happening and if teachers do not ignore it.

Taking a Stand

While the previous sections addressed the role that schools and teachers could

play in reducing bullying, this section will address the role that the victim can play in

reducing bullying. Several of those interviewed mentioned that they saw a reduction in

bullying when either they stood up to someone bullying them, or when they saw someone

who was being bullied stand up for themselves, or they believe that bullying will be

reduced if victims stand up for themselves.

Seven participants discussed how they stood up for themselves when they were

being bullied and how that helped reduce, and in some cases stop, the bullying they were

experiencing. The participants described three different ways they stood up for

themselves: physically, saying something to the bully, or ignoring the bully. Frank

recalled how he stood up physically to his friend who was picking on him, but he waited

until his sisters were not around. He recalled:

> …The only time I ever did lose it, whenever they won a round and I actually
>
> challenged one of them, my best friend, I challenged him to like a fight or
>
> whatever. That was a main thing. That's when it stopped because I had had
>
> enough, my sisters weren't around and there was nothing, you know, that was
>
> holding back so I just said, "You know that's it, I am tired of it…." Well, the one
>
> I challenged he likes, it was one of those where everybody just stops like, crap
>
> what do we do now, because the older one wasn't around, and my friend was
>
> bullying me, and I guess he was trying to get other people to start too, and so I

wasn't going to let it get any farther. I challenged him like, I threw my stuff down.

I was like, that's it; I am tired of it. Let's do something. And then he just, like he

came up and knew I wasn't kidding around and did whatever like walked off.

Frank described how his friend who was picking on him walked away when he stood up

to him. Frank's was the only incident recalled by the participants where they themselves

stood up against the bully utilizing violence, or the threat of violence. Quinn took a

similar approach to reducing bullying, but without getting physical with another student.

He shared:

Ah, when I was younger I was made fun of for being, I was fat when I was

younger so I always made fun of for that and teased about that, but I don't know, I

guess I took that motivation to you know, most of it was baby fat, but to get

myself in shape to where if somebody were to, you know, I guess try to bully me

again then I would stand up to it with confidence.

Quinn's approach, using the bullying to motivate himself to get into shape, not only

eliminated the reason he thought he was getting picked on, it provided him with

confidence that he had not had before he got in shape. His confidence was gained by his

belief in his newly acquired ability to stand up for himself. While neither one of these

participants noted any actual physical encounter, they felt they could engage others if

needed, and were willing to demonstrate that ability when needed. Other participants took

a less confrontational approach.

One participant recalled his experience being bullied and how he would retaliate

by saying something back to the individual picking on him. Manny ended his brief

discussion of how to prevent bullying by summarizing, "I found the only way to deal

with it is to say something back and show you are not going to take it." Frank and Manny took more direct approaches to reducing the bullying that was occurring to them than those who ignored the bully.

Those who ignored the person bullying them did so in different ways. Veronica discussed how her friends would pick on one girl who she defined as "kind of tomboyish." She discussed how other girls "would just beat her up in the bathrooms or at her locker for no apparent reason." She believed it was because the girl was "tomboyish." She talked about how she would try to be nice to the girl but that then she too would get picked on if she was nice to the girl. She also said:

> Surprisingly I stayed positive about it. My friends noticed that, and she would come up to me and say stuff in my face, and I would smile at her. I knew that made her even more mad instead of you know turning around and acting the same way and acting as immaturely as she was. I would just smile and let it go because I knew that she was jealous. And I had heard from other friends that she had been bullied in the past…

So Veronica started out trying to talk to the girl but then ended up getting picked on by the girl and having to ignore what the girl was saying. Wendy also talked about how she would ignore bullying in school and during an extracurricular activity. She noted, in reference to bullying, "And it occurred in school as much as on the field. On the field you pretty much, at practice you ignored them." Lucy went beyond just explaining how she ignored and confronted the bully, as she shared the outcome of her responses. When asked if she was ever bullied, she replied, "Ah, this one guy, Stan, kept on making fun of me throughout the three years of high school, but after a while I just told him to shut up

and ignored his stupid comments and it resolved itself." These participants had some

success with standing up to the bully as a way of reducing bullying.

In some cases participants discussed how they or others would stand up for

someone, which would have the effect of reducing bullying. Sometimes no one needed to

really stand up for another person, the fact that the person had friends or family members

who would stand up for them seemed to keep them from being the target of bullying.

Oscar was one such participant who believed he was spared being bullied because he had

friends. He noted:

> I guess because I had so many friends I never did get singled out or no one did
>
> pick on me. And if they did, they knew that like other people would be behind me
>
> so I guess they didn't do it.

While Oscar pointed out the significance of having friends as a factor in reducing

bullying, Noel implied this when she discussed her friends and those who get bullied.

Noel said:

> Ah, like, I feel like the people who are bullied, like, the victims should try to, like,
>
> not really get together and do something about it, but should try to speak up, but
>
> it's hard when you don't have friends and stuff, I guess, or like [your] situation,
>
> like if you wanted to ignore it.

Later in the interview after discussing her thoughts she relayed the following, in regards

to her friends and their reaction to bullying:

> I love my friends. We try to stick up for people when we can and each other and
>
> sometimes it's hard to though. So, I feel like it's the same. Some of my
>
> acquaintances and stuff, like, I have to kind of be friends with groups and

organizations and stuff, they would probably think a little bit differently, but I

don't have friends that bully. I am not friends with those types of people.

Noel discussed friends in two important contexts. First, she implied that if those who are

bullied had friends that might help reduce bullying. Second, she discussed how she and

her friends stood up for others and each other. She further noted that she would not be

friends with people who bully. In these cases the people taking the stand, either directly

or indirectly, were friends of the victim, or potential victim, or they were just a group of

friends who may have stopped people from picking on others.

Two participants relayed stories of how siblings looked after each other and

helped reduce the chance of them getting bullied. When asked if she was ever bullied in

school, Olivia said that she had not. She went on to explain that she had "a bunch of older

siblings." She also shared that even when they graduated they made sure she was looked

after. She recalled:

And they were like the jocks, you know, they were really, really good at sports so

I was never bullied. They looked out for me a lot. When they left high school and

graduated they would be like look out for my little sister; don't let anything

happen to her.

Nick, whose brother befriended the girl that others thought was suicidal, relayed a similar

tone of support and defending that Noel's siblings did for her. Nick talked about how his

brother had hidden in some trees from some other kids. When asked if he ever bullied,

Nick replied, "Unless you consider my stepping in for my brother to make sure he wasn't

hurt, no" When asked what he told the other kids Nick said, "I was just like you need to

make sure you leave my brother alone. He's not doing anything. He's just being

supportive, and if you pick on my brother I will step in and make sure he's not harmed."
Nick went on to say that even though his brother could be annoying he would still make
sure that his brother wasn't hurt. He also talked about how his friends would look after
his brother because he was also like their brother because all of the other kids would hang
out at Nick and his brother's house because as he put it, "everyone pretty much lives at
my house. I live minutes away from the school." Olivia had her siblings and their friends
who would look after her, and Nick and his friends looked after Nick's brother. These
siblings and their friends provided a way to reduce bullying for their specific sibling and
those previously mentioned provided support in reducing the bullying that occurred to
friends or other people.

Some participants relayed, without personal experience, that they felt that
bullying could be reduced if the victim takes a stand. Nick, who above discussed how he
looked out for his brother, when asked what advice he would give high school students,
stated:

> If you are going to be a bully, take it somewhere else. Don't take it in school. If
> you are getting bullied or if someone is giving you a hard time, just don't let it
> bother you. I mean if somebody wants to go into [that], just ignore it; who cares?

He went on to say that the person who walks away is "obviously…the better person."
Noel gave similar advice to kids in school by stating:

> …people who do get bullied, like, I wish I could tell them just to, like, be strong
> and let it roll off their backs kind of, but if it is hurting them a lot to, like, say
> something about it and do something about because I think if victims did more
> about it then there wouldn't be the problem, you know, because the bullies are

singling those people out because they think they are weaker and they can't do

that without them doing anything back so.

Two other participants had similar advice, that victims should ignore what the bully says

and walk away. The opinion of some of those interviewed was, with the support of

friends, others in school, siblings, and the victim's own ability to stand up to bullies,

bullying can be reduced.

Working Together

In the analysis it was discovered that close to one-fifth of those interviewed

expressed the idea that students working together or in close community with each other

may assist in reducing bullying, which is similarly suggested by Aronson (2000) in

Nobody Left to Hate: Teaching Compassion After Columbine. The theme that ran through

those interviews placed in the category of working together was overall closeness in the

school community. While one participant didn't come out and mention close community

or working together as a way to reduce bullying, they did mention what they felt is

needed to reduce bullying, even though they also said they thought that "kids are going to

always bully I think." They said that bullying can be reduced by making "them aware of

what they are doing to each other and how to stop it." It is this idea of making students

aware of what they are doing that seems to be at the heart of reducing bullying through

having students work together or developing community.

While Veronica didn't say that working together would reduce bullying, she did

note that she did get along with many students. She stated:

… in middle school, I loved going to school. We had a tight, close group of

friends. So, going to school was like going to a party; we had fun all the time. So,

when I would get there I would be anxious to see you know what happened and

what my friends did last night, or when I left I would normally go to cheerleading

practice so I would be excited about that.

The implication from Veronica's recollection is that she was not bullied and that she had

a close group of friends, and hence she enjoyed going to school on a daily basis. While

Veronica implied that having close relationships in school not only made school pleasant

but also may aid in reducing bullying, Frank pointed out not only that being close in

school may assist in reducing bullying but he explained why he believed this to be the

case. He noted:

… we were so close, I mean, even teachers said this is the closest any class has

been because everyone knew everyone, so I guess it was harder to make fun of

someone really, to really bully someone because everyone knew someone

somehow, and you would be insulting someone's friend that was your friend and

so that was kind of cool.

In this example the closeness of a 100 student class was seen by the participant as playing

a significant role in reducing bullying, but another participant shared how she felt

community was created in her schooling experience.

Darla, in discussing her after school activities and job, discussed how it was easier

to connect to others outside of the classroom. She noted:

It's so much easier when you get to know people, and it's so much easier to

connect with people on different levels. Like in school it just feels like the

classrooms are so big that it's difficult to make friends or to get to know anybody

at all because there is so much work that has to be done that you don't have, I

guess, that social time. I guess some people create it, but I was pretty focused on

my work, so, but I felt like the clubs were so much easier to get to know people

and the smaller clubs even more so because you get more intimate time to talk to

people.

She also mentioned how she liked working and that it was "fun." She was also one of the

ones mentioned above who said that they believed that nothing could be done to reduce

bullying. Of course what she was saying here is not that this will reduce bullying but that

these places/activities after school were easier than the classroom to "connect with people

on different levels," which seemed to be what some of these participants were suggesting

assisted in reducing bullying.

One such participant, Nick, who suggested that a tight school community helped

reduce bullying said, "We have a very tight community, very strong bond between

everyone in the school and then somebody starts throwing out fighting words and

everybody came together to say, hey, you know, this doesn't happen at this school." Nick

attended a private Catholic school which he estimated as having 240 students. He even

went on to say that "if there was a problem between two individuals" and the school

found out they would deal with it so as to not "break the community" at his school. Oscar

also mentioned the positive interactions he had at his school. He talked about how he

thought that all his teachers were "really nice and caring" and how that made it a "good

atmosphere." He further recalled, "That was across the board. I had a good environment,

like, since preschool; with all my friends and teachers and just, like, everyone was so nice

to me and stuff. It was good." Oscar also talked about how even on the bus there were no

incidents of bullying, since they all lived around each other and had played together.

Oscar also mentioned how because everyone knew everyone else, similar to what was discussed above, those who might get picked on in other schools would not get picked on at his school. He recalled:

> Even like the people you would call nerds, they didn't get bullied much in our school because they all stuck together and, like, they would have, like, our school is so joined that people from every, like, stereotypical, like, category knew other people so it was like there wasn't that big of a, like, differences between groups of people.

This was his response to the question of who got bullied in his school. He did add that "the way you acted and the way you dressed depended on if you got bullied or not." So while Oscar did give an example of who was bullied at his school, he also noted that there may have been some reluctance to bully at his particular school because of the sense of community. Randy also mentioned how, during his junior and senior years, students seemed to get along better, even if there had been some incidents of bullying in elementary and middle school and the early years of high school. He stated:

> …one of the coolest things about my class in my high school was that by junior and senior year everyone put everything aside and, granted, no one really, everyone still had their cliques when they would hang out after school or you know a party if they went to. You still had your specific groups of people, but during school everyone respected everyone and everyone got along with everyone. Granted they may not hang out all the time. There was just that level of respect across the whole class.

Randy asserted that students did bully in their early years of school, but that they realized that they were wrong to do it. In the above accounts that participants recalled, many mentioned how tight their class was or how they all got along. These dynamics, both in school and extracurricular activities, represent an ability of students to get along and have an environment absent of bullying. This ability of getting along led to what they defined as a tight group or class, which is to say their community worked together. This working together was obvious to the participants.

Teaching/Promoting Diversity

One of the ways to enable students to work together is to promote diversity. In order for students to be able to work together, students must be accepting of diversity. As those participants above noted, their schools, classes, and activities provided time for them to interact and work with other students. Analysis of the interview data provided many themes that have been addressed relating to ways to reduce bullying in schools. One of the themes that emerged within the data relating to reducing bullying was that of the teaching about and promoting differences/diversity. Twelve participants mentioned addressing diversity in schools. Some participants directly addressed the need for some sort of diversity education or training, while others shared their experiences with classes and schools that were diverse and because of that, they believed, bullying was minimal if it existed at all. In addition a couple of participants even noted their experiences in college as having an impact on their acceptance of others from different backgrounds.

One participant who mentioned the need for teaching about diversity as a way to reduce bullying was Ben. When asked if there is anything that can be done to reduce bullying, Ben stated:

I think if we teach more about differences in people at younger ages I think that

would help a lot because, like I said before, a lot of what I have learned about

other people I have learned in college when I [am] fully enmeshed in that

diversity, when I am forced to work with people of different colors, of different

races, religions, you know.

Ben believed that teaching people about diversity will reduce bullying. He also said that

while in college he was surrounded by diversity, which helped him learn about others.

Another participant, Olivia, noted that she realized during the interview that there is not a

lot of bullying in college. She noted:

I mean, now that I do think about it, I don't see bullying here in college at all. I

guess they are just more of the same people. They are not as segregated like the

smarter people are not segregated into nerds being nerds just because there's a lot

of them; I don't know.

Olivia is not saying that there is more diversity, but almost the opposite, she is saying that

there are more people who are alike and therefore they do not get bullied, since there are

more of them. While these participants mentioned college in some relation to bullying,

most did not, but there was agreement that schools could teach or "show" diversity to

assist in eliminating bullying. Beth shared what she thought would be an effective way to

aid in reducing bullying. She noted:

So, I think if the school would have taken the fact to show that differences are

okay more than they did. They touched on it somewhat throughout my high

school career, but not enough to make an impact on anybody that that would have

opened eyes to other people and shown that, you know, there is difference,

because a lot of people don't believe that there is a life outside of [a small town in] Virginia, and so I think if they would have shown that and, you know, differences are okay, then I think bullying wouldn't have been as big as it was or picking out differences wouldn't have been as big as it was.

Beth asserted clearly that making students aware of diversity would have aided in preventing bullying at her school. Making students aware of diversity in school is a general suggestion, but one participant more clearly stated how this increased awareness of diversity could occur.

Sue, who talked about how she was new to her school, and how a lot of the students hung out together since they were younger, stated in response to whether there was anything that could be done to reduce bullying:

I think schools could do a better job of trying to intermix people. I think that, like, I know when I moved to Virginia and hung out with these people that had been friends since kindergarten, like, why are you only friends with those people since kindergarten?

Sue not only questioned why these students hung out with the same students, she also wondered why students' schedules were not changed so that they could meet other students different from themselves, which she implied could assist in reducing bullying. She stated:

I don't know why schools don't do a better job of really trying to integrate kids. I know kids who had the same high school schedules pretty much for all four years, and why isn't it to where kids are, especially in, like, elective classes why aren't kids from certain, because there are, like, obviously with AP classes you are going

to be in the same classes as other kids and you are going to be in classes with kids who (are smart enough to) handle those classes, but for things like PE why are you still in the same classes with the kids as the AP kids? Why aren't you with kids from other classes and why aren't you getting to know other people?

Sue followed up with:

I think schools could do a better job at that and when kids, I think that if kids were more likely to meet new people and see, like, yeah, he wears this kind of clothing, but he's not, that doesn't make him any different than you and me. Then I think that bullying would be reduced because I think they would be more comfortable and know more and wouldn't be so unsure of another person, and I think that's what kind of starts bullying is you don't know about them or you are kind of insecure about yourself and, like, you are not sure, and if you are not sure about something you are not as easy to accept it.

Sue painted an interesting picture of how she believed that getting students exposed to other students, who they are not in class with, would help in reducing bullying. Sue's impression that students who are exposed to different students will be less likely to bully was backed up by one other participant who talked about how he was picked on for the way he dressed "and looks and stuff" at one school, which happened to be in the college town where the interview occurred, but that when he moved he was not picked on because there was more diversity because there were many different kinds of students and their parents worked on the military base. The base was located in a southern state. In talking about his experiences in the college town and the school near the military base, he noted, "And then I moved on to [an Army base], which was way more diverse. Everyone

was small group and you really didn't find any bullying or making fun of." The participants described above believed that exposing students to diversity or having diversity helped reduce bullying.

Within the discussions of what could reduce bullying in schools, four participants made some reference to some type of diversity education. The references to diversity education were brief and lacked detail, but they are worth noting. Connie, who said that she felt that bullying will "always be a part of school," went on to say, "but I think you can be, I think the effects can reduced by people, like diversity education. I am sure something like based on that." She did continue by saying that there will always be students who feel they have to bully to get "the power trip that they want." Jack didn't mention the term diversity, but he did say that what could be done to reduce bullying is to "Teach tolerance and peace I suppose; perhaps, but I don't know what it is. I feel like something can be done, but I don't know what." Harry made a similarly general comment stating, "Ah, I guess we can go back through the whole universal, um, promoting acceptance of diversity and things like that would probably help." He was one of the participants who also talked about punishment, supervision, and teachers turning "a blind eye to it." Jan, while not defining what she meant by "classes," noted that there could be classes. She went on to say that she thinks that "a lot of times students just disregard that kind of stuff." These participants did not provide much detail in what they meant by "classes" or "diversity education," but things like "promoting acceptance of diversity" and teaching "tolerance and peace," while some were difficult to define, are still concepts that most people have a basic understanding of. Two participants did discuss things that might be helpful in making people aware of bullying.

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Wendy made reference to the movie *Mean Girls* (2004), which is loosely based on the book *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (2002) by Rosalind Wiseman. Wendy did not suggest this resource as a way to promote diversity, but she implied that it is a way to make teachers aware of the bullying that girls do, since she believed people, who would include teachers, tend to confine bullying to males, especially the role of the bully. Wendy stated:

> I thought the movie Mean Girls was really interesting because the people, I was like, yeah its boys bullying; the boys are the bully, but that really brought out that, no, females are big on bullying. And I think just making people aware of it kind of helped in just like, yeah, that was really extreme, but the behavior is similar across, like in this group of people that you see something like this happening in your life.

Wendy saw *Mean Girls* as a resource to show that girls bully as much as boys, even though people tend to see bullying as a problem for males. While this movie could be one resource, another participant mentioned participating in after-school activities as another possible resource, particularly cheerleading. Veronica talked about being stressed in school because of all the work she had to do and how busy she was and that her activities after school provided something she didn't find during the school day. Veronica noted, when asked how these activities compared to school:

> Ah, I think that they helped me a lot with learning how to deal with people that are different from you. So, I was more against bullying because I think that what causes bullying a lot is differences in people not being acceptable to them. Like not accepting.

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Veronica saw her after-school programs teaching her how to deal with different people, whereas Wendy viewed a movie as a way of assisting people in understanding who bullies in school. These specific examples in two different mediums both addressed how to deal with diversity through awareness. There was one other suggestion that one student implied and another stated forthright. This suggestion was religion.

The other categories and sub-categories within this results section represent the expressions of more than a couple of people; they represent the comments, feelings, and thoughts of a significant number of individuals responding to the question or discussing a point. Religion as a way of reducing bullying was only mentioned, directly or indirectly, by two participants. Jack, after discussing an incident of bullying he recalled, noted that that was the only experience that stood out in his mind. He followed up noting, "I went to a small private Christian school. My graduating class was like 68 or 67 I think. And the Christian thing sort of made it much less conducive to bullying." While that was all Jack said about the impact religious beliefs had on his school, it is also important to note the size of the school. Ian, on the other hand, was more outspoken about what he believed people needed to help reduce bullying. Ian started his discussion of how to reduce bullying by saying, "I think it starts at the home. If you try to intercept them at school, it's like trying to kill a tumor with radiation." He said that it all started at home and that society is "moving so fast…." He continued, stating:

> There doesn't seem to be a natural family unit anymore. It's not actually tied together. It's like ships passing in the night. Like an aircraft carrier and launching planes and then forgetting where they are and not caring. So, if we, I think, if we can get the family back together and reduce these high divorce rates. We start

going back to church. I am talking about, you know, the… guys who beat their little tambourines and go off and kill themselves in the jungle, but Biblical Jesus belief churches I think it would be a whole lot better.

He went on to admit that he was biased because he was Christian. He also said that taking away the "religious part of it" the family is dying and there are divorces, abortions, gays, etc. He further explained:

You have never heard of high-end bullying like school shootings back in my mom's time. I mean the man, he worked at a two-bit job; he took three jobs if he had to, and he didn't make much money, but he was on time. He stayed with his family. He came back home when he could. He talked to his kids. He played with his kids. He was a man, a real man; not a bread winner. I mean he was the ideal. I mean we have lost the ideal, we have almost low[ered] our souls in the quest for money and power and spiritual fulfillment trying to fill something in ourselves we can't quite fill.

Ian admitted at one point that "It's just a rambling thought." He then used the metaphor of the cell describing the family as the nucleus. Ian's was the most in-depth discussion of religious beliefs and/or values as a way of reducing bullying. Jack's assertion was more general, whereas Ian plunged into detail, mostly focused on the family.

Prevention was a subject many of the participants shared their thoughts on. Their impressions as to what can be done to reduce bullying included: stricter rules, teachers being more aware of bullying incidents, victims taking a stand, students working together, diversity education, and religious values. While many suggested ways to assist in reducing bullying, some believed that there was nothing that could be done and

therefore it will always occur. Definitions, the targets of bullying, and prevention were explored above, but many questions remain. Do students regret bullying others? If so, at what point? Why do some students bully and others do not? What kind of advice and/or insight do participants who have experienced or witnessed bullying have for current students? These questions will be addressed in the next section.

<div align="center">Regrets, Reflections, and Revisiting</div>

During the interviews, participants were asked about their experiences with bullying, whether they were ever a victim or bully, or if they witnessed bullying. Participants relayed their experiences through discussion of their thoughts on students who bully others, their thoughts on their own experiences being bullied or doing the bullying, and even advice they might have for current K-12 students. From analyzing the responses of the participants, several themes emerged. The themes that were selected represent important insight into why students bully and what other students think about them, what some who bully think about themselves, and what some would like to relay to students currently in school.

Regrets

A little fewer than half of the participants mentioned something about either regrets they had for bullying others or run-ins with past bullies. And while the number of participants who had regrets that fit within certain categories was rather small, they are worth noting, if only because data are lacking that represent the bullies' reflections on their actions. The regrets that participants had for their actions or the experiences participants had with past bullies were subcategorized into three different types of confrontation: those who were confronted by the victim, those who had family or friends

who were bullied, and those who were impacted in some way by the bullying they did. In addition, close to a fifth of the participants discussed how they thought back on the incident(s) of bullying that occurred.

Some of those who bullied during their K-12 schooling experience had regrets when confronted by the victim of their bullying. Seven participants recalled either being confronted, even if in passing, by people they bullied, and others, who were bullied, talked about how they confronted people that bullied them. Not all bullies showed remorse, but some did. Caleb talked about how he was confronted by a victim of his bullying. He noted:

> And, you know, she was walking with a couple of girls and the girls was like, oh, he was so mean to her. I didn't realize what I said to this girl in third grade would still register in her mind in 11th grade and she thought I was a bad person. So, I don't think bullies really recollect the future implementations that their bullying has.

Caleb didn't want the girls who saw him to think he was "a bad person," but he went further noting that bullies did not think about the consequences of their actions, which implied that he too did not think about the future implications of his actions.

A victim of bullying, Beth, talked about how in third grade other students made fun of her name and said deviations of it that were not flattering and would cause her to get upset, even to the point of crying to her mom when she got home from school. Plus, she had to deal with moving to a southern town, where she and her mom were made fun of for having a northern accent. The students who called her names ended up becoming

her friends in high school. When prompted about the students who called her names becoming her friends, she stated:

> Yeah, yeah. Isn't it, it's weird. We laugh about it now and they, they are apologetic. They are like, when I was in third grade I didn't know what I was thinking you know. I am sorry and all of that, and I forgive them. I don't hold, it didn't really set into me, set in stone until now, but so I laugh about it, too, and we laugh about it, and we have gotten over it, but I just remember I would come home, and it would just make me so mad.

Beth received apologies from her friends for their past actions and she was forgiving, and Caleb felt regret for what he had done to the girl who was his victim in third grade. One victim confronted, or as she says, "kind of confronted" her tormentor with different reactions than those above. Sue moved from Korea to Massachusetts and then to Virginia. She was picked on when she moved to Virginia by a group of girls. She shared her experience confronting the girls, when prompted to do so. She said:

> Well, I did confront, kind of confronted them, but not really. I confronted my best friend, but I never really confronted the group of girls, but in high school that one girl who had the stuff in her profile, I did confront her that one time and then later on, like, I told her I was like, you made my life a living hell because I was close enough but not really close at all, but close enough to say that to her without feeling like it was going to start.

When asked what the girl's reaction was, Sue replied, "Her reaction was like, she was like really it was not that big a deal. I was like oh, yeah. Wasn't that big of a deal." Sue implied that while it might not have been a "big deal" to the girl doing the bullying, it

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was to her. Another female participant stated that she still stayed in touch with the boys who apologized to her for picking on her in middle school but that she does not keep in touch with anyone else. There were three participants who also felt regret when confronted by their victims, but their regret came later in non-face-to-face contact.

Three participants reflected on how they picked on their victim in school, only after confronted indirectly by the victim. One participant initially was confronted indirectly but then he chose to confront his victim to see if what people called him was painful. One of the participants discussed how she thought about her victim while watching a video in which the victim appeared. Fay described how her friends would pick on this girl and that she followed along by also picking on the girl and that one day she finally realized what she was doing. She described the situation as follows:

> I think my roommate and I were watching our senior video and we saw her, and I was like wow, I used to be mean to her, and I feel bad now because she might not even think anything of it, because in the past five years I have talked with her a couple of times and been nice to her, but so she might not even think anything of it, but it kind of bothers me you know.

Fay's response "it kind of bothers me" signified that she has some regret over what she did to the other girl. Dan shared how one Ukrainian student got picked on in school by others who made fun of his looks, weight, and his name. When asked if he also picked on him, Dan said that he did not and that their lockers were next to each others' and that he didn't have a problem with the other student. Even though he did not pick on the other student, Dan was confronted by the victim of others' bullying, which had an interesting

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impact on Dan. He noted, in discussing whether or not he thought about the events recently:

> And that same kid, that Ukrainian kid, I just got a thing from him the other day on face book where you know you request people to be your friends and he requested me to be his friend and that's the only thing that made me think about, you know, people being picked on and all in school was just from getting it, I think, from him.

When asked how he felt about getting this contact from this student who got bullied in school, Dan replied:

> Ah, I don't know. I was surprised that he would, like, you know, face book me since we weren't friends at all, but I was kind of glad that he did; that he would think of me, like, he would want to be friends with me. That was kind of a good feeling.

When asked what made it a "good feeling" he responded with, "Ah, I don't know; just, I guess he got picked on so much that if he wanted to be friends with me that I guess he, I don't know respected me or looked up to me or something like that."

Dan's positive feelings from being "face booked" by this student who used to get picked on can be an indication that some students, even though they are not the ones doing the bullying, may have some regret that that happened to another student. There was one case in which the participant didn't even know he was contributing to the bullying.

Frank described a situation when he and others would refer to this one student as Dough Boy. He never thought it was meant to be something mean, but after his father

questioned his use of the nickname for his friend and Frank's asking his friend about the name, there was some regret and ceasing of the name being used. Frank described the scenario as follows:

> There was a kid I used to know, Chris, I don't remember his last name, he was a heavier set kid, and he used to have this nickname. It didn't, like for the longest time it had never dawned on me because of ignorance that we used to call him Dough Boy. He was fine with it, it seemed like he was fine with it, and he used to joke around about it. I didn't even know his name, hey Dough Boy, you know I thought it was his nickname, and then I guess I told my dad, hey I am inviting my friend Dough Boy over, and he was like who is that? I was like, oh, he's Chris. And he asked, like, why do you call him that? I don't know; it's his nickname. He asked if he was heavier set, and I was like yeah. It was like, well, Dough Boy is actually an insult. And I was like, oh, he is fine with it or whatever, and he said maybe you should ask him. And I went over to his house and asked him. Whenever I asked him, like it, something you could tell an expression on his face changed like, yeah, you know, I don't really like that. He didn't say, it was just like you could tell he wasn't all right with it and that was my first time like, wow, you know. Because that was like my first time bullying or picking on someone even not intentionally. And ever since I have been careful with nicknames around people unless I know they are completely okay with it or they told me that's their nickname, you know.

Frank's being confronted by his dad as to the intent and meaning of the nickname "Dough Boy" and then Frank's following up with the boy by asking him his feelings

about the name provided an opportunity for Frank to address his own bullying, even if unintentional. While Frank's bullying was unintentional, his regret was not, since he was confronted about his bullying by his father directly and then nonverbally by his friend and victim. Whereas one type of regret is based on direct confrontation, another derives from a source other than the victim.

Some participants who had previously bullied others felt regret when a family member or friend experienced bullying as the victim. The bullying may have been similar or different from that which the older sibling, relative, or friend administered to their victim, but nonetheless its impact was perceived by the former bully to be similar enough to warrant regret for their past actions. It should be noted that this type of regret regarding family and friends is closely related to another type of regret: the impact of the bullying on the bully, and sometimes even the impact on the victim. When the bully's younger relatives or friends are bullied they may think back on their own bullying and the impact it may have had on their victim.

While there were only two participants who discussed family or friends getting bullied, the impression that this regret made on them was worth noting. Ben discussed that when he was in eighth grade, he and other eighth graders were picked up at their bus stops the last day of school and paddled and then taken to a party and the juniors and seniors "usually got them drunk too." He said that this was a tradition at his school and that the juniors and seniors were usually the ones initiating the eighth graders, or soon to be freshmen. He said that the police would usually get involved and that they would usually catch two or three guys. The police would warn students that if they got caught doing this they would be "prosecuted with assault, and it will be a first degree

misdemeanor…" Ben discussed his thoughts about these activities as he talked about family members. When asked if he ever "thought about these things since leaving high school," he stated:

> I actually think about it quite often because I have got a lot of younger cousins that go to the same school that I, the same schools that I went to and everything. And nothing has really changed to prevent bullying since I left, and I know how hurtful it can be, and I know that the cousins that are in middle school and high school now, they are athletes and they are the smarter people in the class. So, I know they are probably getting bullied more than I did by my group of friends, like my main group of friends that I hung out with…

When this was followed up with a question asking if he thought about this event when he thought about his cousins, Ben replied:

> Yeah. Like thinking about people that I know that will be affected by it. I don't think about it a lot like when I am here at school, but when I am home and working for the school doing the things I do up there, I do think about it a lot.

Ben also stated that he did not paddle or get drunk with the eighth graders. A little later in the interview he did say that sometimes he was at parties where it was happening. Eventually he also said that the juniors and senior who beat you during the last day of your eighth grade year would sometimes end up being your closest friends and you would learn a lot about each other; furthermore, he also said that it was difficult the day it was happening, but that it was also a "good experience" because he "got to know a lot more people that way…." Even though Ben did not participate in these activities directly, he did witness them at parties, thereby becoming an "onlooker," and he seemed to at least

think about the impact these incidents could have on others, especially family currently attending the high school he graduated from.

Ephraim was another participant who had family and/or friends experience the same, or similar, bullying to what he subjected others to. Ephraim shared how he was picked on by others when he was smaller than them, but then how he grew and started bullying others. He even discussed how in sports kids would pick on each other and that eventually his younger brother got bullied the same way Ephraim bullied others. Ephraim discussed how he thought about the incidents of bullying he took part in while he was in school and how he "didn't think [he] could be that mean." When asked what made him feel like what he did was mean, he stated:

> Just seeing how the kid felt and seeing them picked on. Like my brother, he's a pretty small guy, and he was picked on by other guys on the team. He would tell me how much he hated it and come home crying and stuff after practice and see how much effect it has on someone.

Both Ephraim and Ben were concerned for their little brother and cousins respectively and the bullying they were, or might be, subjected to. Both of these participants shared regrets they had about participating in bullying, whether knowingly or unknowingly, and their new perspective on bullying. Ephraim said he couldn't believe he acted like that and Ben noted that he eventually thought about how the kids he and his friends picked on were not "as different from me as I thought they were." He continued:

> … and I think that now I feel bad for them because I am that different and they probably could have made fun of me for the same differences just because they, they were looking at it from a different aspect than I was.

So while both of these examples experienced regret when family and friends became victims of bullying, they also represent how some participants thought back on what they did in school and how their views on what they did changed. Absent of the influence of family and/or friends and the regret they inspired, another type of regret emerged, that of realizing the impact of their actions.

This final type of regret occurred when a person who did the bullying was directly influenced by the impact, whether perceived or actual, that the victim experienced or that the bully speculated that the victim had or will experience. In addition to the one item that was coded for "Impact," those that were coded for "Thinking Back/Looking Back" were also considered in this category, as some of them also suggested some type of regret felt by the person who did the bullying. While those comments that were coded "Thinking Back/Looking Back" revealed some regret, one interview stood out not only as the only example of regret because of the impact it had on the bully, but also as an example of the harsh reality that is sometimes experienced by those who are the victims of others' attacks.

Mary talked about an incident that occurred on the bus on the way to and from school. She talked about when she first got to this private K-8 school and other students were picking on this one girl by calling her names. Mary was in fourth grade when this took place, as she recalled:

I came in in fourth grade, and so I know the [teasing] had been going on before then so I don't know why it started and how it started. She seemed like a really nice girl to me and she was actually really, really good with kids. She just seemed really nice and you know coming into a new school you want to make friends. So,

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I mean, kind of just go with the crowd, and I was like, okay, you know, that's fine

and just, it was every morning on the bus and every afternoon just like brutal; they

would say sexual stuff to her and it was horrible and she always fought back and

she held her head high, but I mean you could tell she was getting sick of it and it

really hurt her and this was really hard because she left after eighth grade and the

bullying went on all through until the end when she left and about a year later we

find out like on the news, whatever, and through school that her father shot and

killed her mother and her in their sleep and then killed himself. I don't know, it's

just really bad because we left like, we felt like we made her life, like, such hell

through all those years and then we never really got to say sorry and just it was

really bad.

When asked what students on the bus would call her, Mary stated, "I don't really

remember. They would make fun of things she would say and be like you are a lesbian;

you, I mean horrible stuff. I don't even remember the specifics." Mary talked about how

they found out about the girl being murdered by her father on the news and then the next

day at school when everyone who knew her was called together for a meeting and told

what had happened. Mary then discussed her, her friends' and others' on the bus

reactions. She said:

Well, the people that were on the bus, like, there were four of us that were, like, in

my group that were left from the bus and me and my friend, Callie, we were

pretty devastated about it because we felt really bad because we had done all that

stuff to her. I mean, I guess maybe it was selfish why we were so hurt, but at the

same time we genuinely felt bad. And I guess this made me really mad, one of the

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boys just kind of laughed and was like that's funny, and I guess that's his way of

dealing with it I am sure. I don't think it was funny, but I mean being a guy; guys

are weird like that….

Mary discussed how she thought that laughing at this tragedy was the way some boys

dealt with things. She went on to say, "I just couldn't believe it and that still like, I don't

know; it's something I will always carry with me." Mary's experience with bullying

someone who ended up being killed by her own father seemed to haunt Mary, even many

years after the event that happened when she was in fourth grade.

The impact Mary's actions, or inaction, and witnessing others' actions had on her

is not fully known, but as she noted, it is a significant event in Mary's life. As mentioned

above, Ephraim and Ben both had regrets because they witnessed their family

experiencing the same thing and/or they worried they would experience the same thing,

but they, as mentioned, also felt an impact from the bullying they engaged in. As noted,

Ephraim said he couldn't believe he acted like that. Ben talked about how he finally came

to the realization that the kids he and his friends picked on were not "as different from me

as I thought they were." Ben even talked about how they could have picked on him for

the same things he picked on them for. Others had similar reflections on their prior

actions.

Lucy reflected on the bullying that she witnessed and engaged in and how she

would feel. Lucy noted:

Looking back on it a lot of the things that we bullied about were really petty, and

if I had been the source of spreading those rumors or even starting the bullying, I

would regret it now. And I think talking to girls that bullied more than I did in

high school, I haven't even developed a certain what the definition of bullying is in my head yet, the girls who probably picked the most fun and spread the most rumors.

Lucy also seemed to be saying that those who "picked the most fun and spread the most rumors" were those who are bullying, which begged the question, was she saying this to exclude herself from that list? When one participant described how he retaliated against another student who would push him out of the seat on the bus, he told how he and his friends would call him names and "throw cartons of milk out of the bus window in his driveway." He also noted, after sharing what he did, "It was pretty mean when I think about it." Another person said that sometimes they felt bad for the bullying they did, but sometimes they felt the victim deserved it. She went on to say that she, "usually end[ed] up coming around." Another participant, Darla, reflected back on how she witnessed a girl being bullied for not fitting in and being considered a "nerd." She said she felt sorry for the girl and that the girl didn't know she was being made fun of and once she did find out Darla said, "I hurt really bad for her." When asked if she ever stood up for the girl, Darla noted her regret stating, "…so honestly I didn't ever stick up for her. I should have. There are things where you look back on and you are like, man, I should have done something." Even this witness to bullying felt regrets for her inaction, and these regrets produced an impact.

While there were limited examples of the last two types of regret, overall there were many examples of regret felt by those engaged in bullying. Seven participants felt regret when confronted by the victim; this, combined with the other subcategories,

creates a picture that demonstrates that some who bully or witness bullying do regret their actions or inactions.

Reflections

During the course of the interviews, participants were asked why they thought some students bullied, or to describe those who bullied at their schools, or they volunteered their insights. Some offered reasons for why others bullied, while some offered reasons why they bullied. Participants' reasons, justifications, and explanations for why anyone bullies encompassed a wide breadth of possibilities, but those that occurred most often included: the bully was insecure, the bully had a difficult family situation, the bully was different or disliked others who were different, the bully just wanted to scare or intimidate people, and the bully had behavior problems and/or was just mean. Some of the less recurring, but possibly important themes that emerged as to why people bullied included: it's natural, the bully is trying to fit in, and the bully was formerly a victim of bullying. These later themes are not addressed, since they occurred less often in the interviews. They are worth mentioning, if only to bring to the surface other possible explanations that were discussed.

Insecurity. Twenty-one of the 41 interviews that were conducted made some reference to insecurity as a reason some people bully. Within the category of insecurity, there were various reflections on insecurity that reflected a general insecurity/ dissatisfaction with self, a sense of something to prove, a desire to fit into a certain group or clique as a way to deal with insecurity, or insecurity over not fitting into a certain group or clique. In response to the question of why people bully, many of the participants echoed the common sentiment of the statement, "I think it is because of insecurity or

jealousy or I mean in a, I mean I am sure it could be from what people think of as hate, but I think it stems from insecurity and jealousy." One of the participants even compared bullying to another issue that touches the lives of adolescents; he noted, "I have seen it with drugs with other kids you know trying to get other kids to pull them down with them I guess just from their insecurity." He continued, noting yet another issue that resonates through adolescence:

> I just think it comes down to the kids being insecure about themselves and you know especially the kids who would drink in excessive amounts and they didn't want to go down by themselves and it makes them feel comfortable if somebody else is doing it with them. That's just the way I thought about it.

In addition, a sentiment that ran through many of the interviews was similar to what one participant stated, "it's them dealing with their insecurities and taking their anger out on some other kid who, I just feel somebody who is making fun of somebody constantly it's them trying to make themselves feel better about themselves." These two examples of insecurity represent a sample of those participants who believed that bullying resulted from a general sense of insecurity on the part of the bully. This last example not only attributed bullying to insecurity, it also attributed drug use and excessive drinking to insecurity. While some participants mentioned insecurity directly as a reason some people bully, others made a less direct reference to insecurity. Jack even made direct reference to insecurity being a reason people bully and then noted, "If you feel like there is something you are not getting; like if you feel you have something to prove to make people believe you about something, that might be a reason for it." Others also discussed "something to prove" as a reason for bullying without direct connection to insecurity.

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One participant stated, when asked if they could say something about those who bully at their school, "They just wanted something or felt like lower than the other person because they didn't have that or they weren't as smart. I think that's what it is." She continued by asserting that the person doing the bullying wants something that the person being bullied has. Yvonne discussed her impressions of middle school boys and her ex-boyfriend. She noted, "like the middle school guys; they just feel like they have to prove something and my ex-boyfriend he had a really low self-esteem and he always felt the need to pick on someone or say mean things to people." She continued by telling how she even said something to her boyfriend about it and how he got mad at her for saying something and that she believes that "a lot of guys feel they have to prove something to people and they do that by making fun of people to put them down and raise them up." General insecurity and a sense of "something to prove" were two of the reasons some felt bullies bullied.

There was also some mention of insecurity being caused by groups or cliques. This insecurity either stemmed from people not being part of a clique, or from people who were in a clique trying to maintain their membership through attacking others. Katie asserted:

> I guess maybe a lot of people felt inferior to like clique groups because there are a
> lot of cliques in high school and they are like oh, I am better than you type thing
> and kind of talk poorly about people that weren't involved in the group type thing.

One participant, Mary, discussed how she believed that students bullied at her all-girls school because they were "jealous of something or maybe they looked different from what you are wearing. Mostly though because you are jealous of something or other. I

think that's how it is with girls." When asked about who bullied at her school Mary

noted, "I would say they were mostly from the popular clique and better than other

people. I really think that they were just insecure. I don't know."

Sue saw bullying as the result of insecurity and the bully's connection to a group,

as she noted:

I think the main thing it has to do with is insecurity. I think someone gets insecure

and so then they put themselves in a group, and to feel part of that group it's

easier to pick on someone else or bully someone else or make someone else stand

out so you yourself don't stand out.

Again the motive ascribed to the bully's actions was insecurity, but that insecurity had

some connection to a group, whether it was a clique the bully was not a part of or a clique

that the bully was a part of and that seemed to require some sort of justification for

participation in that clique, namely bullying someone. Insecurity was discussed by 21 of

the 41 participants as a reason that students bullied others in school. The other themes

that emerged were only cited by about a quarter of the participants, but they are still

important and provide a glimpse of what factors the participants attributed to causing

others to bully.

Difficult family situations. In many of the interviews participants speculated as to

why other students bully. Within ten of the 41 interviews, participants made some

mention, if even briefly, of some type of family strife or situation that may have

contributed to the student's disposition, thereby propelling them towards becoming a

bully and/or engaging in bullying. While the data are limited, three themes emerged

under the heading of "difficult family situation" as a reason for bullying. Participants

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mentioned the role of the father in possibly sparking an interest, need, or desire for the student to bully. They also mentioned a difficult home environment, which in two cases involved criminal activity on the part of one or more family members. The last theme was difficult to classify, but it is worth mentioning, which is the idea that the bully felt a sense of entitlement based on some perceived status. Even though some participants were specific in their descriptions of how a person's family could have an influence on whether or not they bully, some participants made general statements asserting that some type of family issue caused the child to engage in bullying. A couple of participants stated general comments that can be represented by the statement, "It was a horrible family. They had a really bad family life so, like, I guess they were taking it out on people. I don't know, but I hated that family." Besides just blaming the family, some participants gave details as to how and why the family had a role in the bullying.

Two of the ten responses that mentioned family specifically mentioned the father as a possible reason that the student bullied. One participant, Paul, recalled how his mother said that kids bully because they were "unsure of themselves" and they needed to make others feel inferior. He went on to note:

> I can't really think of any other explanation or just that they have been really treated badly at home. I don't know; have an abusive parent or get yelled at a lot or their parents have a lot of high expectations that they just don't have anybody else to take their aggressions out on. They just come to school and pick on anybody they can find.

Paul went on to mention the role the father may play in bullying noting:

They all seemed like not the warmest dads, like, just kind of, not very, they don't

seem very supportive. I think they all work a lot and don't have a lot of time at

home to spend with their family. I think that might be a pretty big contributing

factor.

This particular mention of the father as a contributing factor had as the rationale the fact

that the dads seemed to be less supportive, warm, or that they worked a lot away from the

home. Fay noted a different reasoning for the father being a possible cause of bullying;

she noted, "It's usually just people, like maybe someone has a dad and someone thinks

it's funny to pick on them and stuff." Besides the father being a foundation for bullying,

from the perspective of two participants, two other participants made reference to

criminal activity within the family being a possible motivator or cause of bullying.

As with fathers being some sort of influence, or reason, as to why some people

bully, a couple of participants suggested that the bully's family situation may have led the

student to bully. These two responses were clarified more than those who made general

comments as to the family's influence on the bully, as described by the following

participants. In response to why people bully, Emma stated, "Family situation. Death in

the family and then some family members ended up in jail and then he just wasn't dealing

well with that." Yvonne noted, with a little more detail, how she believed that another

person's bullying stemmed from a family situation that was more tragic. Yvonne noted,

"I know he has a shaky family. His mom died; his step dad shot her. So, he kind of has

like a messed up background I guess." Both Yvonne's and Emma's statements pointed to

family issues, that included interaction with law enforcement, and in the latter criminal

activity that led to death and jail time. While only two participants mentioned illegal

activities or jail time of a family member of the bully as possible reasons for bullying, they are worth mentioning.

Within the discussion of family situations as being a possible explanation for bullying, in some participants' minds, two participants made comments, that while not recurrent in the interviews, are worth mentioning if only for their uniqueness. Both of the responses could be classified under "spoiled" as the family situation that fueled bullying, but one also went into a discussion of race and privilege. Wendy, when asked "Can you tell me something about who bullied others in your school?" replied, "The one girl who was the main bully for me she was [a spoiled, single child]." When asked for clarification as to "single child" she said, "She was the only child." Ian, when asked to describe who bullies, said, "They are actually kind of pitiable. Usually I like to think it's not usually their fault. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." He followed up, when prompted, with:

> I think it's a domestic violence type thing. They come from low socioeconomic backgrounds; their parents don't have the education to teach them what's right and not right; substance abuse -- talking about alcohol as well as cigarettes and drugs type of thing making their parents go crazy; and they see it, if they don't see it, they hear it, but at least they feel the tension in the family.

He continued by saying that the children who experienced this kind of family needed an outlet for these "negative feelings" and that they were:

> … probably getting slapped around by their dad or mom or older sister, they think that's what is natural and good and right and accepted. So, they slap around somebody else. So, the only person they have power over is a younger brother or

sister or someone at school. So, it's a cycle, it's a progression and unless you break

them from it very forcefully they are going to go on to do the same thing,

procreate, have five more kids and do the exact same thing.

He also said that he thinks it's a cry for help signifying what the parents are doing at

home. He went on to say that the bullies were mostly the "wealthy, the ones whose

parents weren't ever at home," which contradicted his above assertion that the bully was

usually from a family from "low socioeconomic backgrounds." He also suggested that

the bully was usually raised by an older brother or nanny since the parents were never

home. Further, he went on to say that the bullies always got what they wanted and that

they were "always white. They were always, always, always white." It should be noted

that he was talking about those who bullied him, in this last comment, but that early

comments were of a more general nature. These comments from two participants lend

themselves to an issue of self-perceived entitlement on the part of the person doing the

bullying, whether because they were spoiled or because they were wealthy and white.

Differences. Previously a detailed discussion of who gets bullied suggested that in

some cases those who get bullied are the target because they are different. This

characteristic of being different was also seen by some participants as a possible reason

people bully in school. Similar to the previous discussion, race was mentioned; though

briefly and by two participants, it is worth mentioning. Ian, who was quoted above also

stated, "I think it was mostly fear. First of all I was black, and I was tall, and they were

Anglo and they weren't tall. I was poor and they were rich." He went on to state, "And I

was the exact opposite of them and humans naturally fear stuff from what I have been

able to understand. If it's something new, they automatically treat it as a threat before

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[they] treat it [something new] as a friend." Ian believed that those who bullied were different from those they bullied, and that that difference was part of the reason that the bullying occurred. Ben, a white male, also discussed race when discussing the bully. He noted:

> Because of the different, because of differences first and a lot of, when I was younger I didn't know why, why [Zack] was black. And I thought that was, when I was a kid I thought that was weird that somebody had a different color skin than me. And I think that could have [been] like bullying in some instances.

He further illustrated that difference is a factor in bullying when he noted:

> I think that is a lot of the stuff that bullying focuses on, and if we can't have individuals, I think the only way we can eliminate bullying is if there is no individuality between people because that's what bullying in my experience is focused on is individuality of somebody.

While it seemed his discussion may have focused on the difference in the victim, there is also a reference to why he or others may have bullied, because of their difficulty dealing with people who are different, specifically race.

Again, within the discussion of the data on those who were the victims of bullying, it was noted that those who were different, or maybe even seen as outcasts, were those who bullied, and as has been shown above, there were a couple of incidents where participants named those who bullied as someone who might have seemed different. When asked why a particular person bullied, Ken suggested, "I don't know he was always kind of, I guess we grew up he was always kind of left out, I guess. He wasn't part of, like, everybody would come together and nobody really liked him." When asked

why nobody liked the boy he was discussing, Ken replied, "He was not very nice to anybody." Lance discussed how he and his friends bullied someone for being negative. When asked why he and his friends bullied this kid Lance recalled:

> … basically him complaining about things persistently and being very negative. He never really was happy about something. He was always complaining. After a while you can only hear somebody complain so much, and I guess the group dynamic just said we are tired of this person so we are not going to tolerate them. The lack of tolerance leads to bullying and stuff like that.

Lance also talked about how the person he bullied would push him, Lance, out of his seat on the bus and how they had a physical altercation. Lance asserted in his last sentence that "The lack of tolerance leads to bullying and stuff like that." This observation by Lance echoes what showed up in some of the other interviews, that people bully those who are different. It is the lack of tolerance on the part of the bully towards those who are different that funnels them towards bullying. These two previously mentioned interviews demonstrate, at least to a small extent, that some participants believe that bullies may bully because they are different.

Desire to scare or intimidate. Ten of the 41 participants interviewed believed that bullies engaged in bullying in order to scare or intimidate other students in school. The responses by the participants fell under the following themes: lust for power/dominance and to feel superior. These two themes were mentioned by four to five participants. There is little distinction between these two themes, but their categorization into separate entries allows for deeper comparison.

When discussing why people bully, Gideon asserted, "Maybe to try to exert their dominance? Maybe that's why I guess. Maybe they wanted to prove that they are top dog and that's why, and I guess they pick the weakest target because they know they are weak themselves." Gideon's response that bullies bullied because they were trying to be "top dog" was similar to a response that simply stated that bullies bully because of a "lust for power." Gloria talked about bullying she did in school and speculated on the reasons she and her friends bullied. Gloria stated:

> I guess because, yeah, like, you feel like you are better than other people and so since you are you feel like you have the higher power and you should, like, show where you stand at your school and show who you are and not let other people, like, try and, like, walk all over you and for you to not walk, for you to not have people walk over you, you have got to be the one walking all over them. And it's just like, I guess, survival at our school like if you don't fit in then you are going to, like, be the one that's being picked on.

While there was a difference in phrasing, they still explicitly pointed to the bully's actions being based on some sense of power or dominance in their schools. Similar to lust for power or dominance, a desire to feel superior was another reason some participants believed that some people bully.

A desire to feel superior was another theme that emerged in the data as a possible explanation for bullying. One participant put it this way, "Yeah, just like, oh, I am better than you; you are like superior and inferior type thing. Kind of belittle them." When asked if there were any particular reasons for bullying someone, Manny stated, "Probably bullying the reason you do it is to make yourself feel more superior or something…" In

both responses the specific term "superior" was mentioned as a reason that one may

bully. The following example does not use the term superior, but it is superiority that the

bully seeks. When asked, "What are your thoughts about kids who bully other folks in

school?" Harry replied, "I think the main motive behind them is they just want to get,

like, attention; they want to make other guys think they are tough and macho guys and

things like that." Wanting other "guys" to think that you are "tough and macho" is an

issue of wanting to be thought of as superior. This lust for power, a desire to feel

superior, and to scare and intimidate people, were reasons given by some participants as

to why some people bully.

Behavior problem or meanness. Nine of the 41 participants interviewed gave as a

possible explanation why some students bully the fact that some students have behavior

problems and some are just mean. These assertions ranged from a comment made in

passing or as an addition to another comment to the singular explanation for someone

bullying. The subcategories that emerged within this category are: generic meanness,

behavior problems, and risky behavior.

In classifying participants' responses as "generic meanness," an attempt is being

made to report and address statements made either in passing or as a full explanation by

some participants as to why some students bully. Within her description of someone who

bullied, Noel recalled specific incidents where she reached out to the bully without

success and attributed her lack of success to the bully being mean. She recalled:

> Since I had a couple of friends that would talk to them that were friends with them
>
> sometimes, like, I interacted with them and sometimes I would try to have
>
> conversations with these people and they don't listen to you; they don't care what

you are thinking really, like, or what you are saying. It doesn't matter. They were

just really, like, mean people, like, they didn't care about other people's feelings

and stuff.

Other comments that were made by participants in regards to meanness were general, but

offer an understanding as to how these participants perceived those who bullied. One

participant, when asked why one girl got picked on, replied that the kids were just being

mean to her. Comments from other participants included, "I think everybody can get

bullied in their own right just because kids are cruel," and "He was just a very mean

spirited kid and what led him to do it, I have no idea." Other participants echoed these

same comments related to some kids just being mean. One went on to add, "I know one

of them just has always been a jerk. He's always been mean to people. He's always made

fun of people."

Besides attributing the bullying that some kids do to just being mean, a couple of

participants also suggested that those who bullied had some sort of behavior problem.

Yvonne noted, when asked to tell something about those who bullied in her school, "I

know one of the kids has like behavioral problems; like he's on medicine for it." This was

also one of the bullies who was mentioned by Yvonne to have had issues within the

family, which she also felt may have contributed to this student bullying others. Veronica

also believed that students who were behavior problems participated in some of the

bullying that occurred in schools, but she did not call them behavior problems, even

though her description denoted such a classification. She noted, "Sometimes I guess the

people that would bully others would be the ones that seem to get in trouble more you

know?" She also added, "I guess it was the kids who felt like they kept getting in trouble.

Felt the need to I guess make themselves feel better by making fun of someone else. I don't think it seemed to work." In both statements Veronica mentioned those who bullied getting in trouble, which denotes a behavior problem. Another participant, Patrice, took another strategy in defining students with behavior problems and asserting that those who bullied fell into this category. Patrice, when asked to tell about those who bullied in her school, said:

> I think it was the kids we had, what do they call it, they weren't special, but anyone that had behavior problems. I think they [weren't] allowed to eat lunch with us. They would bully somebody or I don't think the athletes were. Maybe it was just the kids with behavioral problems. Yeah.

She went on to note:

> Like the kids that were, they weren't special, but they had special classes… Those kids… Maybe the kids that are not academically inclined. Something simple like that.

Those that were described as having behavior problems, which was seen as a possible reason why some bullied, included those who were in trouble a lot, those in "special classes," and the one on medication. Another factor that at least two participants mentioned as a potential reason why some students bullied is engagement in risky behavior.

Risky behavior. The two participants whose responses are classified as "risky behavior" mentioned drinking and smoking as two of the criteria that fall under "risky behavior." One participant mentioned the term "risky behavior" while the other participant's description met the same criteria; it also went further into a description of

the participant's idea of who bullied, but it did not use the term "risky behavior." Even beyond the criteria of "risky behavior" set out by one participant, the actions described by the other participant were what would constitute "risky behavior" by most authorities. Darla, who used the term "risky behavior" stated:

> …I guess those kids that sometimes you look at and you wonder what kind of risky behavior they deal with or do. A lot of those kids seem to be the ones that bully a lot. The ones that smoke under age, drink under age, stuff like that.

Oscar, another participant, similarly stated, when asked to talk about those who bullied at his school:

> Well, they were mostly like people who like smoked or did drugs and, like, they, like, I guess they all wore like baggy, big baggy clothes and stuff especially in high school and middle school and they are the ones who probably didn't get good grades. They got in fights with teachers a lot and stuff. I am not, like, trying to be stereotypical, but it's just what I saw and what I witnessed.

These excerpts from the recollections of the participants, while representing only two participants, demonstrate strong perceptions about those who engaged in the behaviors mentioned and those who bullied and a possible connection between the two, if only in the perceptions of the participants. Having addressed regrets and reflections in relation to bullying, it is important to explore the revisiting that some participants did in recalling their incidents of bullying as victim, bully, or witness. This opportunity for the participants to revisit their experiences allowed them the chance to share any advice they might have regarding bullying.

Revisiting

Participants sometimes offered advice they might have for students in K-12 schools related to bullying. This advice was gleaned mostly from their responses to the question: "What advice would you give current K-12 students in regards to bullying?" or questions similarly stated. While the prompt for advice for current students was inserted into the interview protocol late in the data collection phase, it was added after several participants offered advice either implicitly or explicitly in their answers to other questions. These data, while collected in response to another question, were included in the analysis and placed into the category of "Reflection" which was re-titled "Advice" along with the data that were sorted originally as "Advice."

The subcategories that emerged within the category of "Advice" were so limited and overlapping that it is impossible to represent any given subcategory in a sufficient manner. Because some of the participants noted various pieces of advice, to separate them into different categories would be to decontextualize and misrepresent them. Even though the responses of the participants were not easily categorized, they offer an insight that, while given after the events and after time has elapsed so as to provide some mature reflection, represent meaningful insights into the reflection process of adolescents. Avoiding bullies, going to adults, taking a stand, wearing the right clothes, and being your own person are the themes that emerged in regards to advice and reflection. While the responses are limited in each of these categories, they provide a glimpse of the reflections of the participants on what others may do to prevent being bullied or what to do when they are bullied. In addition, there is even advice for those who bully.

Avoiding bullies. One of the pieces of advice that a couple of participants either stated directly or implied was to avoid bullies. Amy stated, "So, I think that, like, in advice I would say don't take part in it, but try to avoid it by getting whatever is they are making fun of you away from." Amy's suggestion to "avoid it" was straight forward, but the remainder of the statement was more difficult to follow. Given Amy's reflections earlier in her interview, it seems that she was suggesting that by getting the right clothes one might be able to avoid being bullied. It is also possible that Amy was suggesting that students just needed to get closer to whatever or whoever it was that was the target of bullying. Another participant, Gloria, provided advice that fell within a couple of the subcategories. When asked what advice she would give students, she noted, "Just try not to get in anyone's way and if, like, it really gets, like, hard for you then you should go see like a counselor and administration and tell them, like, they are going to, if you are really, like, upset about something then they are going to, like, try and help you and watch over you." Gloria's advice first consisted of avoiding people, perhaps bullies, but then she quickly mentioned the idea presented in the next subcategory, getting help from adults.

Going to adults. As Gloria mentioned in the quote above, when avoiding people does not work, one can go see a counselor or tell the administration. Jan also provided a multifaceted solution for bullying that started without intervention by an adult but then led to adult intervention. Jan asserted, "The only thing that you can really do is just to ignore it and if it's really severe I think you should talk to your counselor or principal, that kind of thing." Patrice similarly stated:

You can tell; you can walk away; so just try to be strong and sometimes you have

to walk away and sometimes you have to tell, so don't be afraid to tell if that's the

only way you can go on with your life.

These three examples had telling an adult about an incident of bullying to assist in

stopping bullying as the final, or close to final, strategy to attempt. It is also worth noting

that these three pieces of advice came from female participants.

Taking a stand. Similar to some of the prior advice that was suggested before

participants suggested telling an adult, some advice given by the participants was to

ignore the bully. This idea of ignoring the bully could be seen as also taking a stand. One

example in which the participant talked about ignoring the bully, but it sounded like the

potential victim was taking a stand, is that advice given by Darla. In discussing advice

she would give to current students, she stated:

I would tell them that it's hard for four years and that don't compromise who you

are just because you are afraid you are going to be made fun of because in the

long run it's not going to matter. People, the people that will make fun of you

now, just know that they are not going to make fun of you later because it won't

matter. You are going to go on to bigger and better things.

Darla's advice is supported by research that suggests that bullies have higher rates of

depression (Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998) and that those who engage in violent acts

have lower life-satisfaction (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001). Noel gave similar

advice noting:

I wish I could tell them just to like be strong and let it roll off their backs kind of,

but if it is hurting them a lot to, like, say something about it and do something

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about because I think if victims did more about it then there wouldn't be the

problem, you know, because the bullies are singling those people out because they

think they are weaker and they can't do that without them doing anything back.

Whereas Darla's advice suggested looking to the future and hoping that those doing the

bullying would stop, Noel's advice asked the victim to take an active stand if the non-

active stand of ignoring the bully was difficult and the bullying caused the victim pain.

While the previous advice came from female participants, one male participant suggested

that students "Be big enough to push around whoever is bullying you or find a big

friend." He went on to note how he was happy to fill that role for his friends when they

were being bullied. He also noted how he disliked when bigger kids picked on smaller

kids and how it didn't make sense to him and how he had "no problems intimidating

them." Lance discussed how people could take a stand for themselves or have someone

else take a stand for them. Standing up to the bully either by ignoring them, saying

something, or getting a bigger friend suggests that the victim still has some sort of power

in the relationship, even if it is the power to control the situation by ignoring it. While

this advice denoted control on the part of the victim in standing up for themselves,

another piece of advice suggested that the victim has control to assimilate to reduce

bullying.

Wearing the right clothes. One participant questioned her own advice, but still

chose to share the advice. She had been bullied because of her clothing during her K-12

schooling, so when asked what kind of advice would she give students about bullying,

Amy stated:

Don't take part in it, but it sucks to be bullied so try to wear the right clothes.

That's, like, the worst thing to say because it's really shallow and really stupid,

but, like, when I have a kid, what I am going to do for my kid is I am going to try

to get them just the clothes so they are not going to be like outed because of what

they are wearing.

Even though Amy acknowledged that this advice was "shallow and really stupid" she still

shared her opinion and went on to share how her mom didn't allow her to get a new

wardrobe just to keep from getting picked on.

Being your own person or being strong. While the participant above believed you

need to conform to the people around you, if only in style of dress, another participant

believed that you need to be true to yourself by wearing and doing what you want to do.

Beth asserted:

I would say that you are your own person. Nobody can take that away from you.

Nobody can change that. You think the way you want, you dress the way you

want, you act the way you want. I mean to an extent. You have to follow rules and

different things like that, but for the most part you are your own person and don't

let anybody change that. You have your own story, you are writing your own

book, for example, and if somebody has a problem with it then just say, 'This is

my life and this is what I am going to do.' I am happy wearing a black trench

coat to school everyday even though it's 90 degrees. I am happy, you know,

wearing big cowboy boots and things like that. And so I hope, and I wish that they

would just learn to speak up for their own identity, and I believe that that would

make, that would give them more respect for themselves and also give the class or

their peers more respect for them also.

Beth's advice acknowledged some type of rules, but she also addressed the ability of

everyone to be their own person. Patrice echoed Beth's advice, but she also went on to

suggest some different ways to deal with bullying. While her advice repeated what has

already been noted, she did a nice job of providing an overview or summary of pieces of

advice all under the umbrella of being strong. She noted:

I guess just stay strong. Words can only mean what you make them so sometimes

you have to stand up for yourself; sometimes you have to tell if they are so much

bigger than you and they are scaring you so much that you can't function,

sometimes you have to tell; sometimes you can't jump into it either because of

time or just because you might get in other people's business. So, like I say, try to

be strong and try to get through it and don't be susceptible to it. You can tell; you

can walk away; so just try to be strong and sometimes you have to walk away and

sometimes you have to tell so don't be afraid to tell if that's the only way you can

go on with your life.

Patrice's advice focused on getting on with one's life and moving past bullying. All of

the advice given by the participants allowed the victim of bullying to move on with their

life, so while the methods to achieve this were different, the ultimate goal was the same.

Summary

After analysis the results fell into four major categories: Definitions, Appearance,

Prevention, and Regrets, Reflections, and Revisiting. Within these categories several

subcategories emerged. These categories and subcategories offer insight into a problem

that impacts many people every day, bullying. All of the categories below offer possible answers to the research question: What perceptions do college freshmen have regarding bullying and what are their definitions of the term "bullying?" However, the appropriate category to address first is the category of definitions.

In discussing the results of how college freshman define bullying, several themes emerged. The most common definitions of bullying included both a physical and verbal element. Another subcategory of the definitions' category was emotional bullying, which consisted of students being ignored, rumors being spread, and some not being included in social events. The role of power was another theme that emerged within the data. Power over another student seemed to be linked with the definition that some participants had of bullying. The role of groups in bullying also emerged as a subcategory in some of the interviews. Whether it was a group of on-lookers or a group actively encouraging someone to bully another, groups had an impact on some of the definitions of bullying. Having examined the definitions of bullying, it was time to look at possible causes of bullying. The category that emerged regarding potential reasons for someone being bullied was defined as Appearance.

Appearance became the general category that emerged as a possible explanation as to why some were bullied, or bullied others, and how some described situations where others are bullied. The subcategories that emerged were: weight, size, clothes, and looking/dressing/being different. Over a third of those interviewed mentioned weight as a reason they or others were bullied. Size was given as an explanation in a couple of different ways. First, several participants described those who bullied as bigger than other students. Second, in logical contrast, some participants described those who were the

victims of bullying as smaller. Third, brief mention was made of those who were larger being picked on. A substantial subcategory that emerged was the role of clothes in bullying. Discussion of some being made fun of for having the wrong clothes, clothes from the wrong places, or students fitting in because they have the right clothes was consistently found throughout the data. In 27 of the 41 interviews some mention was made of bullying occurring because of some sort of clothing issue. Difference was also a subcategory that emerged and that was echoed many times within the data. Being different was categorized further as: race, being gay or perceived as gay, being in special education, having an exceptionality, or just being viewed as different by one's peers. Race was an issue that was mentioned in 23 of the 41 interviews. This category, Appearance, consisted of many subcategories, and was followed by the category of Prevention.

The category of Prevention traversed an interesting topic that germinated from a question regarding what the participants believed could be done to reduce or stop bullying. While many of the participants believed nothing could be done to reduce or stop bullying because it is a "way of life," others believed differently. Some of the suggestions, and hence subcategories, that emerged as possible ways to reduce or stop bullying included: peer and friend influence, stricter rules about bullying, the teacher being more vigilant, teaching and promoting diversity, providing opportunities for students to work together, classes on anger management, and victims taking a stand. Some of the suggestions gleaned from the participants' discussions of prevention overlapped with the following category.

The final category that emerged was Regrets, Reflections, and Revisiting. Within this category emerged several themes. Some participants experienced regret for their involvement with bullying during their K12 schooling. Former bullies' experiences with regret denoted the primary source of the regret as either being confronted by their victim, having a friend or relative experience bullying, or experiencing the harsh reality of something happening to their victim, even if not at the hands of the person feeling regret. In reflecting, several participants explored possible reasons some people bully. From insecurity to difficult family situations, and those who engaged in risky behavior to those who were different being the bully, participants attempted to understand why some people bullied. In revisiting, the participants sought to offer advice regarding bullying to current K-12 students. Advice included: avoiding bullies, seeking help from adults, taking a stand, wearing the right clothes, and being your own person. While the themes that emerged within this subcategory were not as supported by the data as previous themes, they offer insight not elsewhere found that offsets the limited number of participants sharing these insights.

The next chapter, the Discussion, will elucidate the connections between some of the results and the literature, revisit the theory of anomie and its usefulness in discussing bullying, explore themes further, and propose further research into this timely and important topic.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter elucidates the connections between some of the results and the literature, revisits the theory of anomie and its usefulness in understanding bullying, explores themes further, addresses limitations of this study, and proposes recommendations for schools and further research into this timely and important topic. In order to address these topics, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the conclusions of this study and how they helped answer the research question. In addition, the conclusions of this study provide a glimpse into bullying in K-12 schools. The second section addresses possible limitations of this study. The third section discusses the implications of this study for schools, while the fourth section suggests implications for future research that may be undertaken to address bullying.

The results of this study provided insights into various aspects of bullying and they confirmed some of what is already known. While the definitions of bullying that emerged in this study are in keeping with prior research, the idea of emotional bullying can be teased out and examined as an entity in its own right. In addition, the results on the role of groups in bullying are consistent with some of what has been found, while at the same time yield new findings that suggest that groups are a major component of bullying, especially relational bullying. Another unique finding was that of the influence of clothing on being bullied. Rarely found in the literature, yet a topic that emerged in many of the interviews, clothing was seen as a very important element in many of the cases of bullying. Research on the effects of a person's clothing on their being bullied is very limited at best (Yoo & Johnson, 2007). General appearance was another topic that was revealed in the interviews. Whether it was a person's size, weight, or clothes, there was

noticeable mention of appearance as a factor in many incidents of bullying that were recalled by the participants. Another topic that emerged is the victimization of those in special education when it comes to bullying. Based on the responses of the participants, some students receiving special education services are the victims of bullying at school. The topics that emerged in the data provide many insights into the phenomena of bullying, but one unique topic that emerged was that of regrets felt by those who bully or witness incidents of bullying.

The results of this study yield timely, informative, and enlightening insight into a topic that has impacted lives everywhere. As this research and the literature demonstrate, bullying is a problem that continues to grow and continues to create environments less than conducive for learning (Woolfolk, 2003). Before moving into detailed interpretation of the results and their implications, it is important to revisit the research question posed within this study. The research question is: What perceptions do college freshmen have regarding bullying and what are their definitions of the term "bullying"? Along with the research question, the theoretical framework is another important element that should be revisited before moving on to the interpretations of the results.

The guiding theoretical framework for this study was anomie as an explanation for bullying as a human social phenomenon. Durkheim's (1979) concept of anomie is defined as resulting from lack of regulation in human activity, or even society's activity as a whole, with constant human suffering occurring because of this lack of regulation. Durkheim (1979) made the case that regulation in society assists in providing morals, and that the relationship between regulation and morals is similar to the role that an organism plays in regards to physical needs, where the former is dependent on the latter to survive.

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Durkheim's theory of anomie was based on the assumption that society is the only authority people will accept and the only power greater than the individual. So, lack of regulation translates to the inability of people to regulate themselves in contexts in which society has somehow lost its ability to regulate individuals. Durkheim further clarified his definition of anomie noting that it is, "a simple negation of true morality…anomie becomes any form of deregulation or lack of cohesion from which society may suffer" (Orru, 1987, p. 107). Further he asserts that man is only "a moral being only because he lives in society, since morality consists in being solidary with a group and varying with this solidarity" (p. 108). The concept of a breakdown in regulation within the confines of society is a plausible explanation for bullying because people bully when they sense a lack of regulation.

One example in which lack of regulation may be connected to increased incidents of bullying would be teachers and students having different definitions of bullying, especially regarding the isolating acts that are related to emotional, relational, and indirect bullying. Teachers and students may define bullying differently, allowing students to get away with acts of bullying that teachers do not recognize as bullying. Lack of regulation may lead to bullying, if only because of lack of clarity in defining bullying or rules or because of ignorance. It is difficult to isolate incidents of emotional, relational, or indirect bullying when the signs and signals are difficult to precisely identify. Emotional, relational, and indirect bullying are not likely to be obvious to teachers and administrators and may be more difficult to understand, thus complicating the process of taking precautions to aid in eliminating this type of bullying. Teachers and administrators

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need to be aware of all types of bullying so that regulation can occur and all acts of bullying can be eliminated.

Emotional, relational, and indirect bullying serve as examples of bullying that may be brought on by anomie. When society is lacking regulation, or even perceived regulation, those who bully may sense this lack of regulation in society and strike out against those they believe are demonstrating this lack of regulation or not "getting with the program." The victim may or may not be aware that they are going against the system or not trying to "fit in," but they become the victim because it is the bully, or bullies, who have difficulty dealing with the lack of regulation, or someone who is different, and feel a need to punish them.

Another example from the data that assists in illustrating the value of Durkheim's theory in explaining bullying is found in peer connections. In some of the data, students who were involved in peer groups or extracurricular activities found themselves less likely to be bullied. It may be that student connections to peer groups and/or the school can serve to provide needed resources to keep bullies at bay. Student connectedness within a peer group reduces isolation for individuals, and as students form relationships with peers, they may develop behaviors and ways of thinking that are in keeping with these groups; thus, individuals can find regulation within peer groups. Connection to a group produces regulation thereby squelching any sense of anomie, unless there is some lack of regulation and cohesion perceived within or outside the group.

There could be cases in which peer connections would not lead to regulation for individuals that might prevent bullying. For instance, if an individual inside or outside the group, or the group itself, lacks regulation and cohesion, there can be the possibility for

anomie to exist, thereby creating the conditions for bullying to take place. One way in which a lack of regulation and cohesion can be expressed is in clothing. Clothing, when not in sync with what the majority or popular crowd is wearing, can be perceived by the majority or popular crowd as a lack of regulation, and therefore can lead to bullying. There were incidents of bullying described by participants expressing what happens when a student did not subscribe to the clothing norms of the other students; the nonconforming students were hit, called names, made fun of, and ostracized.

Anomie can be used to explain the data within this study by noting the lack of regulation that bullies believe exists in society. When definitions of what constitutes bullying are not commonly agreed upon, when students are seen as not fitting into certain groups and are shunned because of that, or when one person's clothing choice does not meet the unwritten criteria of a given group, there is a perceived lack of regulation, thereby empowering the bully with a sense of duty. Some of the data within this study suggested that the bully may be reacting to the perceived lack of regulation around them, thereby justifying their actions.

While some of the data supports the theory of anomie as a possible explanation for bullying, much of the data does not sustain anomie as a theory to explain bullying. Bullying is not only something that is impacted by societal forces; it is sometimes impacted by forces of the individual. The data in this study reveal elements that are specific to the individual which may lead to that individual being the victim of bullying.

Within the data there is support for more of an individual approach for explaining bullying, and in explaining bullying from this more individualistic approach and less of a societal approach, there is a possible solution for victims, and potential victims, of

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bullying. Anomie can only be used to explain some of the bullying that occurred, but awareness of oneself, or lack of such awareness, can be another possible explanation for bullying. Found in the data is the idea that students need to be comfortable with who they are so as to not be bullied; therefore, bullying is more about the individual's identity and less about regulations in society. If the individual is comfortable with herself or himself, they may be less likely to be bullied. If the individual can not be true to herself or himself, then it might be in her or his best interest to go along with the crowd and "wear the right clothes" and do anything else that may be required to fit in. The external regulation that is found in the theory of anomie therefore gives way to more of an internal regulation whereby bullying can be explained by the individual's ability, or lack thereof, to know herself or himself.

Conclusions

In K-12 schooling, students are very likely to experience bullying in one form or another; they may be the victim, bully, or even a witness in the bullying. As was mentioned earlier, bullying is defined in the literature as taunting, rejection, verbal abuse, and physical abuse (Aronson, 2000).There is also usually a continuous element to bullying, whereby the victim suffers the physical and/or verbal harassment on a regular basis. Bullying has also been defined as "direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim" (Banks, 1997, p. 1). More indirect bullying consists of "causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion" (Banks, p. 1). The participants in this study defined bullying as being both physical and verbal. While the definitions that emerged regarding bullying did convey what is already found in the literature, there was

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an element, or kind of bullying, that was not directly mentioned in the literature, emotional bullying. A few participants even mentioned the idea of being isolated or ignored by one's peers as bullying. Another unique aspect of this research was that the definitions were drawn from participants who experienced bullying as victim, bully, or witness.

It seems intuitive that bullying would have an emotional element to it, but some of the participants moved beyond viewing emotional bullying as an element to seeing it as a form of bullying in its own right. While some participants defined bullying simply in terms of physical and verbal bullying, others combined various types of bullying in their definitions of bullying. Some participants went on to specifically mention certain actions that they felt contributed to emotional bullying.

Emotional bullying is difficult to define and address proactively to reduce its occurrence. As Simmons (2002) noted, it is difficult to get assistance with these more relational types of bullying, since officials tend to take it less seriously. They tend to "downplay the problem or blame the victim" (p. 204). She even stated that some see it as just another part of growing up, which is a common response even to physical and verbal bullying. Relational bullying is sometimes defined as indirect verbal bullying, but goes further and is characterized by psychological attacks such as manipulation of relationships and/or humiliation (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Since schools are having difficulty with prevention programs, mainly due to differences in perceptions of students and staff with regards to bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007), it is important to elucidate realms of bullying not previously explored. Students' definitions and perceptions inform teachers and administrators as to what problems students are

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experiencing. From there, it may be possible to implement programs that assist in addressing these issues that students bring to the forefront of our thinking about bullying, since students are the ones experiencing bullying. It is likely that incidents of bullying are occurring that teachers do not witness and therefore have little, if any, knowledge about. The more we expose teachers to the harsh realities of bullying as viewed through students' perspectives, the better teachers will be equipped to reduce incidents of bullying.

Another theme that emerged within the data was the role of groups in bullying. The data suggested that students perceive groups as having an impact on bullying, in that participants believed that the more students who were involved in a bullying incident, the more serious an incident it was. Other roles that groups play in bullying were the acts of groups in isolating students, spreading rumors, and encouraging bullying and providing reinforcement for the bullying by silently witnessing the bullying or encouraging the bullying. Previous research has addressed some of the roles groups play in bullying (Greene, as cited in Alvine, 1994; Sentse, Scholte, Salmivalli & Voeten, 2007). One study noted the different roles group members may play in an incident of bullying. The roles consist of: the "eggers-on," who encourage the bully and the "on-lookers," who stand and watch the bullying and say nothing about the incident (Greene, as cited in Alvine, p. 9). Going beyond these terms used to describe groups associated with incidents of bullying, research has also shown that "bullies tended to affiliate with other aggressive adolescents" (Perren & Hornung, 2005). Perren and Hornung cited research findings indicating that those who are "victimized by their peers are unpopular or even rejected by peers" (p. 52). Findings from other studies have shown that those who bully are more

liked by others who bully (Sentse, et al.). Sentse et al. also stated that few studies have been done that examine the social context of bullying "as defined by the peer group" (p. 1011). Besides the lack of research on the social context of bullying, there has been limited research on groups and their impact in motivating bullies (Greene, as cited in Alvine; Sentse, et al.). The results of the current study did add to understanding the role of groups and bullying.

In this study, only a small number of participants discussed the roles of groups in bullying, but they indicated that this role was significant. They noted that the greater the number of people involved, the more impact a particular incident of bullying had on the victim. The person doing the bullying needed people around him or her for support and encouragement. This idea that bullies need people around in order to bully was a thread that connected many participant recollections of bullying experiences. Bullying is generally a performance that requires both victim and an audience.

Sutton and Smith (1999) noted that bullying is unlikely a dyadic relationship, but one that is "collective in its nature, based in social relationships in the group" (p. 97). They also pointed out research that shows that "peers were present in 85% of bullying episodes" (p. 98) and some students in their study, about one fifth, said that they would possibly join in if they saw someone being bullied. Additional students added to the mix provide support for the bully. Bullying was described by some of their participants as being "all in good fun," which was a justification for a group's tormenting of another student. Even more disturbing, these researchers found that 23% of the children reported that they were "amused by bullying scenarios" (Sutton & Smith, p. 98). Scenarios described by some participants in the current study demonstrated a genuine lack of

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forward thinking as they tormented others, or watched others bullying for fun, only to realize later that they made some students' lives miserable.

Some students view bullying as a fun activity that entertains them, but the victims do not see bullying as anything fun or entertaining. Exclusion, rumors, and ignoring are defined as relational bullying, relational aggression, or indirect bullying. This type of bullying includes psychological attacks in which there is an attempt to manipulate a relationship and/or humiliate someone (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Relational bullying meets the definition of bullying, in that it is ongoing and can be seen as a form of taunting. Bullying described by some participants in this current study included various forms of exclusion, social isolation, and verbal attacks, or any combination thereof, as is noted in much of the recent literature (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Simmons, 2002). These acts of bullying are difficult to detect, since they usually occur secretly and quietly and without the fanfare that usually accompanies a physical altercation. It can be easy for teachers to recognize a student being physically bullied or called derogatory names, but it is more difficult to pick up on this cloaked form of bullying. Even when a person is talking behind someone's back, it is a form of relational bullying that implies an attempt to impact the social relationships of another.

In short, research has, until recently, viewed bullying as an isolated activity. This study and some of the current literature (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Simmons, 2002) noted a social or group element found in incidents of bullying that infect our schools. Although several participants in this study discussed bullying as something that one person does to another, many referred to the

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interactions of people in groups and how they influence various elements of the bullying encounter.

Also revealed in this study was the impact of appearance on who gets bullied. Several participants noted size, weight, looking different, and clothing as reasons for the bullying of some students. The appearance issues, specifically weight and clothing, stand out because: (a) there is little research on both of these topics and their relationship to bullying, and (b) it is significant that differences in appearance and clothing can have such a great impact on the incidents of bullying.

Based on the current study differences in appearance and clothing between students may lead to bullying in many situations. Whether this juxtaposed appearance is large versus small physical stature, thin versus overweight, wearing all black versus wearing various colors, purple hair versus brown hair, or wearing clothes from Target versus clothes from American Eagle, participants were clear in their recollections; people who are different or look different are often the ones who get picked on.

Size and weight were two subthemes that emerged in the data as playing a prominent role in incidents of bullying described by the participants. These physical elements were mentioned as reasons some students were bullied when those elements were not similar to those of other students. So when a student was heavier than other students or bigger or smaller than other students, that person might be bullied. In a couple of cases, the students who were bullied for being overweight lost weight and went on to bully others about their weight or exclude other students, because they, the previous victims, were now part of the in-crowd. It is significant that 30% of the participants noted weight as a factor in who gets bullied, based on their own experiences as the victim,

bully, or witness. These victims of bullying were likely to find themselves the targets of verbal attacks and emotional or relational bullying. There was no mention of physical bullying of students who were overweight in this study. The fact that most of the overweight, bullied participants experienced verbal or emotional bullying makes sense given that people who are bullied because of their weight would have to hear some kind of comment about their weight in order to assess it as an incident of bullying based on their weight. It would also seem true that if a person was picking on an individual or witnessing another person picking on someone for their weight, there must be some kind of verbal comment made regarding the person's weight.

Research that addresses bullying related to weight is limited. The findings of some studies have shown that those students who are perceived as weak, less attractive, overweight, or small tend to be victimized by bullying (Frisen, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). In another study it was found that "weight-related teasing is prevalent among adolescents and occurs across ethnic groups" and that this kind of teasing has become a greater problem (Benas & Gibb, 2006, p. 144). The authors go on to note that "weight-related teasing is significantly related to higher weight concerns and disordered eating behaviors in both overweight and non-overweight individuals, though overweight individuals are more likely to be teased (p. 144). The authors of one longitudinal study found that females who were considered obese had a greater likelihood of negative feelings about their physical appearance, poor self-concept, and depression (Adams & Bukowski, 2008). The researchers in these studies looked at data from teachers, peers, and administrators and their perceptions of who was bullied, or the data were gleaned from a longitudinal data source. The current study includes data from those who actually

bullied others, as well as those who were bullied, who recalled being bullied because of their weight and who recalled bullying another person because of their weight.

A person's weight is something that is not easily hidden or changed, but the garments one wears are easily changeable, hidden, or altered. The topic of clothing as a reason for students being bullied is rarely found in the literature, except for a discussion of teasing brought about by the clothes some students wear (Yoo & Johnson, 2007). This chasm in the research is ironic given the capitalist economy in which we exist. Several participants mentioned clothing as a reason that they fell victim to bullying and others noted how they victimized others because of their clothing or witnessed someone being bullied because of their clothing. The clothing issue ran across geographic, class, age, and race lines. It may be that the implied class one is perceived to occupy is at the root of this problem, with clothing being a badge that represents membership in the desired or undesired group. The clothing issue included brands, store names, how clothes were worn, and colors of clothes. One example of how clothes were worn, which may be viewed as a racial issue, is the wearing of baggy pants below the waist. This style was identified by at least one participant as "ghetto," with the implication being that ghetto meant African American. Other participants used the term "ghetto" to denote a run-down area or school, with the implication being that there was a class difference in that location or school.

In a society where education is to be made accessible to everyone, it is counterproductive for students who have the resources, superficial fashion sense, or over-indulgent parents to dictate the climate of a classroom or school. In this study, some participants saw clothing as ascribing certain characteristics to others, as if all pieces of

clothing were some sort of gang or click affiliation. Groups who sport the "correct fashion" are not accepting of those not donning the proper attire and, as demonstrated by the results of this study, this sometimes fuels bullying.

The impact of clothing on interactions between students in schools has not been addressed in great detail in previous research. Social class has been addressed in the literature regarding bullying. Sweeting and West (2001) found that "being poor was a distinct disadvantage in the peer popularity stakes and pupils were very aware of the financial status of their peers' families" (p. 226). Financial status can, to a great extent, be assessed from what one wears, and that seems to be the implied message in the data. Participants who wore the right clothes from the right stores and wore the right size fit in and were picked on less. Those who did not wear the right clothes may be picked on, excluded from the popular crowd, and generally belittled for their clothing. Acts of bullying related to clothing ranged from being made fun of for wearing the wrong shoes to being punched in the face for wearing all black. Whether it was for financial reasons, personal preference, coming from a different geographical location where the fashions were different, or just not knowing, participants were picked on and bullied for their clothing preferences. Some even noted that once they changed and started wearing the clothes valued by the popular students, they became part of the popular crowd. Some made clothing transitions after being teased about their fashion, some made clothing choices based on perceptions about the clothing of those with whom they wanted to be associated, and others continued to wear what they wanted to wear.

Absent from previous literature on bullying is the topic of regrets. There were some participants who mentioned having regrets for bullying they engaged in or the

torment they caused others. From participants recalling being confronted by past victims, to participants who previously bullied others having a family member suffer from the same treatment they had inflicted on someone else, to the recollection of a participant who realized she made someone's last year of life miserable because of her verbal torments, an unpredictable theme emerged that offers insight into the damaging and unnecessary effects of bullying. These effects were not just on the victim but even on the bully. The types of regrets representing participants' varying experiences after bullying, lend insight into what others might experience as they move beyond the role of bully into the reflective role of mature adult.

This research demonstrates that student perceptions (including those experiencing bullying as victim, bully, and witness) must define bullying and all its related elements. If we are to attempt to stop bullying, we must know what it is to those involved. In addition, the research also shows that students are coming to realize that bullying is not an individual act, but something that tends to be supported by a group's action or inaction. Education on the role of groups in bullying may assist in one person being able to sway a group to change the outcome of a bullying situation. Just as some people egg-on the bully and some stand and watch without intervening in any way, it should be hoped that individuals could have the courage and skills needed to intervene.

While we are familiar with trite expressions like, "Clothes make the man" or "First impressions are important" we must also realize that appearance can make the bully and the victim. Clothing is important, because individual dress can become a stimulus for attacks leveled at those unable to afford certain clothes, those whose tastes differ from the mainstream or "popular crowd," and those for whom clothing and fashion

are not a priority. Appearance, especially weight, may also play a major role in who gets bullied. Nonexistent in the literature, and limited in participants' recollections, regrets for one's participation in incidents of bullying is something that surprisingly showed up in the data, but offers promise for those who have been bullied and hope that one day their attackers will realize the impact of their actions. These findings also bring hope for the bullies as they may be able to reevaluate their past actions and impact on others. Through self-reflection, past tormentors may learn to model decency and courage and assist in stopping the torment that others may experience as they navigate their way through their K-12 schooling.

<div align="center">Limitations of the Research</div>

This study examined the perceptions of 41 college students at a large university. While this number of in-depth interviews provides a generous data source, it does not permit generalization to the larger population. College students do not represent the diversity that is found in most schools, nor do they represent the lived experiences of others whose life trajectory may not lead to higher education.

Besides the generalizability of the study, another limitation of this study is the limited capacity for recall that a person possesses. Since the participants were asked to recall experiences with bullying in their K-12 schooling, it is difficult to know what might have been overlooked because of the limited amount that a person can remember over time and the accuracy of those memories. People sometimes alter their perceptions of past events to explain them or to aid in fitting the present with their idealized version of the past. In short, memory and perceptions of events can be skewed given any set amount of time, but especially given such a time span as twelve years.

In addition, the participants may have wanted to project themselves in particular ways to the interviewer or they may have wanted to protect themselves. It is very possible that some participants may have been bullied more, or have been more engaged in the role of the bully, than they led the researcher to believe. Whether a former bully who tormented peers and caused great anguish, or someone who found themselves at the mercy of a bully on a regular basis but desires not to be perceived as weak or timid, there could have been participants who wished to seem different from what they really were.

Implications for Schools

Students need to develop specific strategies for generating a positive self-concept. Schools can play a major role in developing students' self-concepts. Students who are bullied because of their weight, size, clothes, or any other reason, can, and should, be taught different ways of seeing themselves. When students come to school and fall victim to the negative verbal taunts leveled against them, they have little desire to continue to return to a place where they are demeaned and ridiculed. Teachers can provide opportunities for students to redefine themselves in positive ways.

One way teachers can assist students in developing positive self-concepts is by not allowing verbal bullying to occur. Teachers need to stop students who call other students names. Teachers need to be willing to take a stand against any kind of name calling that occurs in their classrooms. While some might dismiss name calling as "boys will be boys" or "it's part of growing up," students may begin to see the teacher as uncaring and even supporting those who are bullying. When teachers condone name calling, if only by not reprimanding the students calling others names, it may reinforce the victim's negative sense of self.

The curriculum can play a major role in assisting students in developing their self-concept. Through literature students can see characters who are in similar circumstances as their own and read about how those characters deal with the various situations. Students could also read about characters who are like them, which could assist in building a student's positive self-concept, since students would have a character they can identify with. In addition, creative and insightful teachers could pull out characters and situations that are relevant to their students' lives and have the class make comparisons between the characters' situations and their own. This could allow discussion about how to address certain situations, which would benefit all students by showing that they are not alone in what they may be going through, and it would allow students to share possible solutions to various situations.

Another curricular element that will help alleviate bullying is the implementation of a social justice curriculum. Through looking at issues of power, inequality, and injustice, students will see the impact that their actions, and those of others, have on society, the environment, and our relations with other countries. In looking broadly at these issues, they will also be able to focus and apply their new perspective to their immediate surroundings. Students will gain an understanding of what is right through examining what is wrong, and hopefully this will translate to their treatment of others and how they allow themselves to be treated.

Related to social justice is critical literacy. Providing students with a curriculum based on critical literacy will allow students to evaluate the processes, materials, and activities around them. Through critical literacy students learn to evaluate what is printed on a page, stated in a speech, watched on a television, heard on the radio, and talked

about in class. This evaluation takes place in the context of students as individuals and the experiences that shaped them. Students make meaning, and therefore make culture, as they attempt to understand the world around them. They are reflective and thoughtful in their learning activities, as well as other activities. The insights gleaned validate students' personal experiences and the meaning they bring to and derive from those experiences.

Both a social justice curriculum and a critical literacy curriculum can help the student gain an understanding of another's point of view. This alternative point of view is important for many reasons. One reason this perspective is important is that it can prompt students to evaluate things in a new way. Students need this ability in order to see the possible future consequences of their actions. As some participants in this study recalled their experiences as bullies, some also reflected on the regret they felt for engaging in this behavior. It is important to get students to understand that some of what they are engaging in is bullying. In order to understand bullying they must define it and be given examples of the various types of bullying. Being told that calling another student a "fag" is considered bullying in most cases, may aid in reducing that behavior. Some students also believe that they are "just joking around" when they, as a group, pick on someone. Students need to realize that while it may be "joking around" to them, it is interpreted differently by the victim and others. Students need to understand all the nuances of bullying so that they are better able to regulate their own actions.

Professional development focused on different aspects of bullying will assist teachers in understanding the nuances of bullying. Professional development can provide teachers with strategies for addressing bullying in the classroom through curriculum. It can also help teachers learn how to get students to assert themselves when confronted by

a bully. Teachers can also learn about different forms of bullying beyond the physical and verbal forms of bullying. Relational aggression is something many teachers are unfamiliar with, but it is a form of bullying that hinders the learning process for many students. Teachers could also be made aware of the differences between one-on-one bullying and the role groups can play in bullying. Professional development could also elucidate for teachers who the victims of bullying tend to be, so that they can identify these potential victims and provide a safe environment for them. Identifying these potential victims will allow the teacher to monitor them more closely while at the same time encouraging teachers to be proactive in preventing bullying in their classroom.

The definitions of bullying as portrayed by the participants give teachers and administrators better understanding of what students are experiencing and how they perceive it. One of the first steps in solving a problem is defining the problem, and by knowing how students are defining bullying among themselves, we are better equipped to recognize incidents of bullying and create solutions to this problem. The development of an understanding of student perceptions of bullying may provide insights that will support school-based efforts to reduce bullying. These perceptions, and the insights gained from them, could aid in the creation of learning environments that envelop the student in a sense of safety and comfort, and provide for them an alternative to the fear-inducing interactions of bullying.

Through understandings of students' perceptions and their definitions of bullying, teachers and administrators can become more aware of the complex dynamics involved in the phenomenon of bullying. This understanding of students' perceptions and definitions may assist teachers and administrators in dealing with bullying that takes place in school.

They can better access the situation if they are informed. Teachers and administrators need to be able to evaluate if students are bullying one-on-one or as a group, since there are differences in the type of bullying that may occur in either situation. Students may not define bullying in the same ways that teachers do; thus, development of common understandings on the part of teachers and students may lead to meaningful solutions to a problem that has captured the attention of educators, parents, and the media.

The number of students who reported feeling too unsafe to go to school has increased in recent years (Digest of Education Statistics, 2003). By reducing the number of bullying incidents, and thus providing an environment where students will feel safer, attendance should increase for these students, which means increased opportunities for learning.

As studies have shown that many incidents of school violence and shootings have stemmed from the perpetrators having been bullied (Aronson, 2000; Howell, 1997; Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 2005), it is possible that by addressing bullying in the schools there will be a decrease in these extreme incidences of school violence as well. By creating a culture of tolerance and acceptance, in which all students are treated with respect, we can hope to reduce the number of multiple-victim homicides that have become all too familiar in K-12 and post-secondary education settings.

Agencies have attempted to profile bullies in the past in order to reduce bullying and, in some cases, greater violence (DuRant, Getts, Cadenhead, & Woods, 1995; Edwards, 2001; Morrison & Skiba, 2001). Perhaps time would be better spent profiling victims of bullying so that they can be better protected by the adults around them. Whether it is the loner, the students who dress differently, the student perceived as

homosexual, the overweight or small students, or any other student who has been

identified as having those traits that have been associated with being a victim of bullying,

we need to identify those students and offer them the opportunity to feel safe in school

and the opportunity to learn that should be afforded every student.

Besides protecting potential victims, there are other avenues of prevention that

have been attempted and some that need to be considered. Suspension and expulsion are

used in some schools (Morrison & Skiba, 2001), as are zero tolerance policies (Shafii &

Shafii, 2001), various security devices (Bonilla, 2000), and curriculum practices such as

cooperative learning (Aronson, 2000). Based on the findings of this current study, there

are other possibilities for reducing bullying. Listening to students' definitions and

perceptions of bullying would inform teachers and others as to the nuances of bullying

incidents that may have been overlooked in the past, or which may not have been thought

of by those in power as issues related to bullying. Another step that could be taken to

reduce bullying would be to eliminate name-brand clothing from schools. Any clothing

that advertises itself could be eliminated from schools. While this would be a difficult

policy to enforce, it would be one in which a more level playing field would be created

and where students would no longer have a visual identifier to use in order to target

certain students.

Students should also be engaged in conversations with respected adults and peers

who can share their experiences with bullying in an attempt to see the regrets one may

feel from the bullying they do to others. Realizing the potential ramifications of bullying,

and the possible regrets of such actions could impact the incidence of bullying. Through

education, students can see the ramifications of bullying on themselves and others and

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realize that their current actions have an impact that they may not realize and that may impact them later in life.

Implications for Future Research

Students bully in elementary, middle, and high school, and whether it's a power struggle or the influence of groups or friends, bullying reaches across grades, but when exactly does it start? In order to better understand bullying, it would be beneficial to know when bullying begins and how it starts. The goal of the current study was to examine students' definitions and perceptions of bullying in their K-12 schooling, but most of the recollections of the participants were of their middle and high school years. While some participants mentioned clothes as a reason they were bullied in middle school, nothing was mentioned about being bullied because of clothes in the elementary grades. Finding out when students start to notice clothes, when they start to bully, and how they learn to bully would provide insight that could assist in reducing incidents of bullying through early prevention programs.

Further research into how students define bullying at different ages or grades would provide teachers with a roadmap that would allow them to customize their instruction, procedures, and attitudes regarding bullying in their classrooms. What may constitute bullying in one grade might not in another. In addition, while clothes may be important in middle school, they may not be in elementary school. Some students may view bullying one way in earlier grades and very differently in later grades. Some teachers may be able to assist students in finding ways to make friends in the earlier grades, which would help students feel connected and possibly aid in reducing bullying, which would hopefully carry over into the student's later years of schooling. Bullying,

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like learning, varies at different grade levels, and to acknowledge that would open up opportunities for reducing bullying that yet realized.

Studies that compare bullying at the high school level to bullying done at the college/university level would, like the research suggested previously, allow the opportunity for finding similarities and differences between students of different ages. In addition, comparison research could also look at the various contexts in which bullying occurs in order to find common themes, explanations, and possible solutions. Besides looking at how bullying may differ across the lifespan, it may be useful to investigate programs that are set up to reduce bullying.

Studies should also be conducted evaluating the effectiveness of teacher's professional development regarding bullying. Professional development is part of every teacher's continuing education, and some teachers attend professional development that focuses on bullying. The effectiveness of this professional development would provide guidance as to which types of professional development offer the greatest chance at identifying and/or reducing bullying. How teachers implement what they learn in professional development would also need to be taken into account in order to delineate the effectiveness of the professional development and the teacher's ability to follow through with the training provided.

Further research is also needed to evaluate the effectiveness of various programs that deal with bullying, or programs that address broader issues in hopes of creating climates where bullying does not occur, such as Character Counts. School systems invest a great deal of resources in programs that are meant to eliminate bullying, create positive environments, and provide students with guidelines on how they should act respectfully

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towards others. Research into the efficiency of these programs would not only assist in making sure schools systems were getting quality programs for the resources allocated (money, time away from instruction, space, etc.), it would also shed light on which programs provide the desired outcome, reducing bullying. Knowing which programs are most effective would allow other school systems to address bullying more efficiently.

It is important to continue a dialogue with those who participate on a regular basis as perpetrator, witness, and victim, as their insights are valuable in addressing this problem that has impacted the education of many students globally. Research should be conducted so as to keep educators informed of the events that transpire in schools, but because of the changing attitudes, discourses, and other variables within schools, this research is not to be stagnant. Research should also be conducted on a regular basis to inform teachers and administrators of current trends in bullying. Repeating the same research question regarding students' definitions and perceptions of bullying will, at any time, potentially yield different results as the actions, definitions, perceptions, and other variables are fluid with regards to bullying.

Other potential research should examine who gets bullied in more detail. A research question such as "Who are the victims of bullying and why?" could assist in identifying students who are bullied, as well as potential victims. Related, it would also be of great value to consider what influence race may play in bullying. While some participants did mention race, many did not directly mention it. Research should address the issue of race in incidents of bullying to better understand all aspects of the problem. Since some of the data in the current study suggest that some students stand up for others who are bullied, it would be useful to know who stands up for the victims of bullying and

why they stand up for the victims, since these characteristics may be desirable and educators may be able to find ways to replicate these characteristics in students through various curriculum choices. Another research question that could prove insightful would be "What role does clothing play in bullying and other forms of victimization of students?" This research would further elucidate what this study has shown, that clothes can make the bully and the victim.

Because of the timing, location, the people involved, and the results of this study, it would be meaningful and insightful to study empathy after a tragic event. One possible research question would be: "After the shootings that occurred at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, do students at Virginia Tech demonstrate empathy towards others who are different?" Answering this question could show if there were changes in students' empathy as a result of that tragedy, as well as other perceptions students have regarding such events. A comparison of students' perceptions of bullying before the tragic event and after may provide insights into the ways such events can change a community and how students treat each other. Since regrets were a theme that emerged in the data of this current study, a study to see if it is possible for an entire university and community to have collective regrets that may alter their views of bullying could provide insights valuable in the quest for preventing bullying.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

School Survey

1. What is your gender?
   o male   o female

2. What is your race/ethnicity? _____

3. What type of high school did you attend?
   o public   o private

4. What was the population of your high school?
   o 300 or less o 301-500   o 501-700   o 701-900   o 901 or higher

5. Were you ever harassed, picked on, or bullied while at school?
   o yes   o no

6. Did you ever witness someone harassed, picked on, or bullied while at school?
   o yes   o no

7. Did you ever harass, pick on, or bully other students while at school?
   o yes   o no

8. Were you ever in a fight in school?
   o yes   o no

9. Did you ever witness a fight in school?
   o yes   o no

10. What kinds of discipline procedures were in place for students who fought during school? Check what you believe applied.
    o detention   o zero tolerance
    o in-school suspension   o magistrate or judge
    o out-of-school suspension   o police called
    o expulsion   o not sure of discipline policy
    o parents notified   o parents called in to school
    o other _____

11. Are you willing to participate in a study where you will be interviewed about your experience(s)? All precautions will be taken to ensure confidentiality.
    o yes   o no

If no, thank you for your time.
If yes, please provide the following information:

Name _____   Phone number _____

E-mail address _____   Age _____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

The interview protocol is as follows (Prompts are included in parentheses):

1. Tell me about what school was like for you when you were young, like in elementary school? What was it like for you later, in middle school and then high school? (Where were your schools? What were the communities like in which your schools were located? Can you describe or characterize what the student populations were like? If so, tell me about these student populations.)

2. How did you feel about going to school every day? (Why? Were there changes in your feelings about going to school during different phases of your school experience before college? If so, tell me about them. How did you get to school?)

3. What did your schools feel like when you entered each morning…or left in the afternoon? (Were there changes in how you felt about your elementary, middle, and high schools? Where did you go after school? How did it compare to school?)

4. Where did you hang out before and after school? (Why?)

5. What were student interactions like in your schools? (Can you tell me about student interactions with other students at your school? Were there some students who interacted differently than others? Can you tell me about them?)

6. What was it like to walk the halls of your schools? (What was it like when switching classes in middle and high school? Before and after school? Special events?)

7. Do you remember the rules from any of your schools well enough to tell me about them? If so, tell me about the rules at your schools. (Whose rules were they? Teachers, principal's, the school district, unwritten?)

8. What are your thoughts about kids who pick on or tease other folks in schools? (Were those feelings ever shared with anyone in particular?)

9. How does picking and teasing work? (Were there any particular reasons for picking on someone?)

10. Can you describe the students who picked on and/or teased others in your school? (What was their motive?)

11. Tell me about those who were the victims of the picking and teasing. (Who were they? How did they become the targets?)

12. Were you ever the target of picking and teasing in school? (If so, tell me about it. Under what circumstances did it occur? Who else was involved? How did it come about? Where did it occur? Can you give me any reasons that you might have been selected as a target?)

13. Did you ever pick on or tease people? (If so, tell me about it. Who else was involved? What was it about? When did it happen? How do you think you identified specific others to pick on or tease? Why did it occur? Were things resolved, and if so, how?)

14. How have you thought about these things since leaving high school, here at college? (What brought on these thoughts?)

15. How would you define and classify bullying?

16. Are there degrees of bullying, as you understand it? Tell me about those "degrees of bullying."

17. In your opinion, is there anything that schools could do to reduce bullying?

18. How might your peers' definitions agree or differ?

19. Finally, IF a participant has brought up the topic of school violence during the previous discussion, the following questions will be added:

   a) You mentioned school violence earlier in the conversation. When you think of school violence, how would you describe your understanding of it?

   b) Did you ever have an experience that involved school violence? If so, tell me about it.

   c) How would you distinguish between bullying and violence?

   d) Do you have any thoughts on the relationship between school bullying and school violence? If so, tell me about your thoughts on this relationship.

The following additional probes may used as needed to elicit elaboration of answers to the interview questions. Probes will include:

- When did that happen?

- Who else was involved?

- Where were you during that time?

- What was your involvement in that situation?

- How did that come about?

- Where did that happen?

- Who, what, where, when, and how?

- Would you elaborate on that?

- Could you say some more about that?

- That's helpful. I'd appreciate a bit more detail.

- I'm beginning to get the picture.

- What do you mean by _____?

(Patton, 2002, pp. 373-374)

Appendix C: Informed Consent

**Informed Consent for Participants
in Research Involving Human Subjects**

Title of Project_____

Investigator(s)_____

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of this research project is to gather data about various aspects of student interactions in the school setting. It is hoped that this research will provide valuable insights into the school culture.

The subjects will consist of college freshmen. Several interviews will be conducted.

II. Procedures

This research will entail semi-structured interviews. The researcher will select participants from questionnaires administered to freshmen classes at Virginia Tech. Names and other identifying characteristics will eliminated from the transcripts of the taped interviews.

III. Risks

There are minimal risks involved in participation of this study. Phone numbers of counseling services in the area will be provided. The whereabouts of the tapes will be only known by the researcher and the transcripts will only be accessible to the researcher and his graduate committee. The notes will not be made available to any other person.

IV. Benefits

There is no promise or guarantee of benefits for participating in this research project.

It is hoped that the benefits from this project will be for the field of education and society as a whole.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

All student responses will be anonymous and there will be no identifying information collected in this research project. Notes will be taken, but in the final write-up there will not be any use of names or any other identifiers. If names are used they will be pseudonyms.

The researcher will only break confidentiality if the health, safety, and well being of a child or adult are in jeopardy. This would include any suspicion of child abuse or any indication that a child could be a threat to himself/herself or others.

VI. Compensation

There will not be any compensation of participating in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

The participant is free to withdraw from the study whenever she/he feels it necessary.

If you wish to withdraw call one of the following:
William Williams   951-8406   Student Researcher
Mary Alice Barksdale   231-3166   Professor in Charge
David Moore   231-4119   Head of IRB

VII. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the Department of _____ and _____ (if others, i.e., school or school system, hospital, daycare center, multi-institutional project etc.).

_____   _____
IRB Approval Date   Approval Expiration Date

_____   _____
Researcher   Participant

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Approval Form

**From the Mouths of Victims: A Study of Students' Perceptions
of Bullying**

Justification of Project

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to provide an opportunity for college freshmen to share their perceptions of bullying. The overall goal will be to provide teachers, as well as others who work with young people, an understanding of students' perceptions of bullying. These understandings will enable educators to develop methods for addressing bullying in schools.

Rationale

In *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2003* (Department of Justice, 2003) it is reported that both males and females were more likely to report being bullied in 2001 than in 1999, with males reporting 9% and females reporting 7%. In 1999 there was no difference between males and females, as the rates for both were 5%. Another study found that 60% of 12-to17-year-olds have witnessed a classmate bullying another student every single day (Druck & Kaplowitz, 2005). If students are bullied, they can feel that school is too unsafe a place for them to attend, which can negatively impact attendance and therefore the student's ability to learn. The number of high school students who reported feeling too unsafe to attend school rose from 4% in 1997 to 5.2% in 1999, and 6.6% in 2001 (The National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). The same study goes on to report that the number of high school students threatened or injured with a weapon on school property increased from 7.4% in 1997 to 8.9% in 2001. Bullying is toxic to an environment conducive for learning. As Maslow (1954) established more than half a century ago, the basic safety needs of individuals must be met before higher needs such as learning and critical thinking can be achieved. Our students must be protected and made to feel safe on their way to and from school and while at school.

Anticipated Contributions

The ultimate goal of this research is to inform teachers and contribute to more effective teacher preparation for addressing the bullying that occurs in schools. It is hoped that teachers with greater insight into bullying in schools will be able to help reduce these incidents and provide safer environments for their students. Providing students with a safe place may assist in increasing attendance and improving academic achievement. The development of an understanding of this phenomenon will be achieved in part by exploring students' perceptions regarding bullying, along with their perceptions of teachers' and administrators' roles in these events.

Perceptions and insights gained from student perceptions could aid in the creation of learning environments that envelop students in a sense of safety and comfort.

It has been suggested that in order to understand aggression and bullying as they relate to children, one needs to understand the child's eco-system (family, peer-group, and school) (Arllen, Gable, & Hendrickson, 1994). Through an understanding of students' perceptions of bullying, which can be seen as part of the child's eco-system, teachers and administrators could be more aware of the complex dynamics involved in the phenomenon of bullying. This understanding of students' perceptions will assist

teachers and administrators in dealing with the bullying that takes place in school. Varying student perspectives need to be understood if change is to occur, for in order to correct an incident, it is important that all parties define the incident or phenomenon in the same way.

Bullying does deserve the attention of educators who wish to create an environment conducive to learning for all students. This study will provide teachers with an understanding of the perceptions of bullying, and through this understanding bullying can be addressed in schools. Thus, the research question for this study is:

What perceptions do college freshmen have regarding bullying and what are their definitions of the term "bullying"?

Procedures

Participants will be selected from classes at Virginia Tech where the majority of the class population is freshmen. Biology courses offered during the summer and Communication Skills offered during the school year are a logical choice for selecting freshmen because the courses consist primarily, if not totally, of freshmen. Selecting students from Biology, a core requirement course, would allow for more diversity given that students in Biology are drawn from a variety of departments and colleges at Virginia Tech.

The researcher will enter one or more sections of Biology and/or Communication Skills and will share a basic concept of the research project with the students. With permission of the instructor, the researcher will then pass out a brief questionnaire (See Appendix A) that asks the students to recall experiences that they had or witnessed in school that involved bullying.

A pool of up to 300 students will complete the questionnaire, which asks students to identify whether or not they experienced bullying (as victim or bully), and queries whether or not they would be willing to participate in a study about their experiences. It is expected that, of the 300 whom complete the questionnaire, at least 50 will indicate that they are willing to be interviewed.

The researcher will engage in an analysis of the questionnaire data for the purpose of identifying participants for the interviews. Ideally the participants would consist of 15 students who have been bullied, 15 students who have been the bully, and 15 students who have witnessed an incident of bullying. Participants will be selected with the goal of achieving a balance between these different roles. Based on the literature, it is known that most students are likely to fit into more than one of these roles; thus, it is possible that many of the participants will cross over categories.

When the questionnaires are tallied, those who meet the criterion of having been a bully, having been bullied, or having witnessed another being bullied will be placed into stacks representing said categories. From these categories participants who represent both male and female and various racial and ethnic categories will be pulled out and selected for participation. An attempt will be made to balance the three categories (bully, bullied, witness) by race, ethnicity, and gender.

The ideal situation would also be to have students of both genders and various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Selection of participants for the interview will consist of finding students who have experience in the different roles, students of both genders, and students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Again, ideally participants will

represent bullies, victims, and witnesses and both genders and various racial and ethnic groups.

If the pool of participants does not provide such a sample, then those who represent bullies, victims, and witnesses will take precedence in the sample selection. An attempt will be made to have an equal number of participants from each category. If there are not equal numbers representing bullies, victims, and witnesses, the number available in each category will be utilized until a sample of ten to fifteen is identified. That is, the questionnaire could be administered to additional groups of freshmen Biology students until a sample of interview participants representing these three categories is identified. The categories of gender, and racial and ethnic diversity will be used to balance membership among the three categories. After participants have been selected in an attempt to balance the categories, they will be contacted to see if they are willing to participate in the study and be interviewed.

Interview Participants

The selection of 40-50 participants will allow for in-depth interviews and follow-up interviews, if needed, to be completed in a timely manner. How long interviews last and the extent to which the participant categories are balanced will determine the total number selected. The interviews should only take an hour to complete. It may be necessary to conduct follow-up interviews, which would take less than thirty minutes. The interviews will take place in a location of the participant's choosing. Possible locations include, but are not limited to, available office space, classrooms, or student lounges.

Semi-structured interviews (See Appendix B for possible interview questions and prompts) will be used. As Seidman (1998) notes, "we can come to understand the details of people's experience from their point of view." He goes on further to note, "We can see how their individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work, and we can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context" (p. 112). It is understanding, or at least seeing from the person's point of view, and allowing the voice of the student to be heard, which suggests qualitative methods, specifically interviewing, to be utilized to answer the research questions.

Risks and Benefits

The risks for this study are minimal. The possible hazard of this research involves the recalling of potentially painful experiences which could cause some emotional discomfort. An attempt will be made to reduce risk by having various members of a committee approve the questions and through the interviewer's experience and training in the human sciences. If participants seem overly emotionally taxed they will be given contact information for the on-campus counseling center and encouraged to seek counseling, which is provided free of charge to students.

The benefits of this project are larger societal benefits. It is hoped that a better understanding of bullying will provide teachers and others with the tools to reduce, and maybe even eliminate, the occurrences of bullying. The possible benefit of the research being the reduction of bullying outweighs the potential risk of the participants recalling painful memories.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be contained in several ways. First, students who are interviewed will select their own pseudonyms and the list of names and corresponding pseudonyms will be kept in a locked secure location in the researcher's place of residence. Second, transcription will be done by either by the researcher or someone who will be supervised by the researcher and who will keep findings confidential.

Audiotapes will be the primary source of data collection. Audiotapes are needed to make sure that material from the interview is accurately represented in the final report.

Proposed Data Analysis Strategy

The tape-recorded interviews of student participants will be transcribed verbatim. The transcripts will be read to develop categories based on the recommendations for interview data analysis described by Hycner (1985). General themes will be the basis for the construction of categories that emerge from the data. Themes that are unique to individuals, groups, age groups, etc. will also be noted. The transcripts will be reread for more examples of the themes, and samples will be selected for reporting the study.

Informed Consent

Participants will be required to sign an informed consent form (Appendix C).