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Bullying And Victimization In High School As Perceived By Female Students In A Midwestern University

Shannon Y. Schwab

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This research is a product of the graduate program in [Family and Consumer Sciences](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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BULLYING AND VICTIMIZATION IN HIGH SCHOOL AS PERCEIVED
BY FEMALE STUDENTS IN A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

SCHWAB

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BULLYING AND VICTIMIZATION IN HIGH SCHOOL AS PERCEIVED BY
FEMALE STUDENTS IN A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

BY

SHANNON Y. SCHWAB

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2008
YEAR

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Abstract

Bullying and victimization increased tremendously over the past 2 decades and are presently one of the most enduring and underrated problems in U.S. schools. Much of the research available on bullying has focused primarily on males; however, recently, research has shown that females are just as likely as males to engage in bullying behaviors. Unfortunately, female bullying occurs quite frequently, yet remains unrecognized because it is often overlooked. Females tend to prefer more indirect forms of bullying behaviors in order to keep it anonymous. The focus of the current research was to examine the nature and frequency of female bullying behaviors, the characteristics of victims that are targeted by females, and coping mechanisms of females that have been bullied. A self-report questionnaire was designed by the researcher and was distributed to 374 female Midwestern University students. Results indicated that 70.3% of the participants had been aggressive toward a peer and 92% had been a victim of a peer's aggression. Verbal aggression was the most common form used by participants, followed closely by relational aggression. The characteristics most often seen in victims of participants' aggression were sarcasm, difference from peers, cynicism, low self-esteem and displaying too much emotion. Findings indicated that victims of aggression in this study coped with their experiences by holding in their emotions, keeping issues to themselves, or changing their peer group. Results from this research have implications for school administrators and policymakers alike.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to my two wonderful children, Whitney and Christian "CJ," for being my strength in completing my academic profession. I thank you both for giving me personal motivation and the desire to succeed. Without your continued love, patience and support, I would have been unable to complete my academic dream. To my mom and dad, for believing in me and supporting my desires to better myself for my children; without your love, encouragement and rapport, I would have been unable to complete my academic journey. It is my hope that I have been able to set an example for my children, my brothers, my nephews and niece. It is with my own strength, courage, dedication, motivation and hopes that I have been able to confide in all of you to fulfill your own hopes and dreams. I love you all.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Bullying and victimization have increased over the past 25 years and are presently considered to be two of the most enduring and underrated problems in U.S. schools (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Although bullying is not limited to the United States, the U.S. has the highest reported rates of bullying incidents in the world (Seals & Young, 2003). About one-half of all children are bullied at some point, and up to 32% are victimized at least once a week (Langevin, n.d.). Research has shown that more than one-third of middle school students feel unsafe at school because of bullying behaviors (Peterson & Ray, 2006).

Research on bullying, victimization, and aggression has traditionally focused on males, but these types of behaviors are not limited to males. Studies comparing male and female bullying behavior have found bullying, victimization, and aggression to be prevalent in both sexes, but it appears boys are more physically aggressive than girls. A limited number of research studies have focused solely on factors affiliated with female aggression and bullying. This is problematic because experts suggest that female aggression is becoming more prevalent (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), but it can be hard to detect due to the secretive nature of the behavior typical of females.

Research has examined both males and females and has discovered that females tend to use more indirect forms of bullying, such as spreading rumors and isolating victims (Kyriakides, Kaloyirou & Lindsay, 2006). It may be that

females prefer these types of behaviors over more direct attacks because, as perpetrators, they can hide their identity. Thus, it is easier to engage in bullying.

Today's technological advances make it even easier for bullies to hide their identity, allowing the bullies to be secretive in assaults. For instance, using cell phones or the Internet to harass or taunt others allows aggressors to remain anonymous. Regardless of the mechanism or behaviors used to attack peers, bullying is a disturbing issue that deserves more attention. The effects are devastating for victims and can leave long-lasting psychological scars. Further, the hidden, secretive nature typical of female bullies can make coping more complex for victims as they attempt to move on with their lives (Bright, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine bullying behaviors exhibited by female university students during their high school years, characteristics of the females they bullied, and coping strategies if they were victimized by others. Three hundred seventy four midwestern university female students were asked to respond to a questionnaire that was developed by the author to examine the nature and frequency of female bullying (see Appendix A). The researcher used current literature, published surveys, and published interview protocol to help develop the questionnaire. Additionally, Dr. David Bartz, Professor Emeritus at Eastern Illinois University was consulted for his expertise in survey design. Female students from family and consumer sciences classes and members of sororities at a midwestern university were asked to participate in the study and answer questions about their own use of bullying behaviors, the characteristics of

females against whom they aggressed, and how they coped if other females bullied them during high school.

Research Questions

The research questions were:

1. What types of behaviors were used most often in females who engaged in bullying in high school?
2. How often did females engage in bullying behaviors in high school?
3. What were the characteristics of the individuals whom females targeted when engaging in bullying?
4. How did females who were bullied by others cope with their experiences of victimization?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used.

Adolescence – A period in the lifespan that involves biological, physical, psychological, emotional, and social developmental changes from the onset of puberty to maturity (usually ranging from ages 10-19); most commonly referring to people who attend high school (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2007).

Aggression – A behavior carried out with the intension of causing harm or pain to another individual (Straus, 2007).

Bully – An individual who aggressively intimidates, frightens, hurts, or intentionally harms another individual by using strength or status (The Free Dictionary, 2007).

Bully-victim – Children who are victims of bullying incidents. They also may be reactive bullies or provocative victims (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Bullying – A form of aggressive behavior intended to intimidate, humiliate, or inflict injury or discomfort upon another by using one's strength or status (Kyriakides, et al., 2006; Middle School Bullying, n.d.).

Coping – The recognition of all responses while encountering a potentially harmful outcome of any given situation (Causey & Dubow, 1992).

Cyber-bullying – “The use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, blogs, online games and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others” (Li, 2007, p. 1779).

Victim – Someone who is harmed, hurt, or adversely affected by an individual resulting in a negative action or circumstance (Encarta, 2007).

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Most of the research concerning female bullying has examined females in conjunction with males to ascertain whether or not females were as aggressive as males. The current study was interested only in female experiences with bullying. Thus, only the research relevant to females was reported in the review of literature. In addition, while the focus of the current study was primarily on female bullies, most of the existing literature has examined the concept from the perception of the victim as opposed to the perpetrator. This research sought to look at bullying mainly from the perspective of the bully, with the exception of victim coping mechanisms, as it is a topic that is understudied. This literature review is organized into four sections: (a) types of behaviors exhibited by females, (b) the frequency into which the aggressive behaviors occur, (c) the characteristics of individuals whom females target when engaging in bullying, and (d) coping strategies used when victimized by others.

Types of Bullying Behaviors Females Exhibit

Research that has studied the types of bullying behaviors characteristic of females has found that females exhibit several different forms of aggressive behavior (Peets & Kikas, 2006). In general, female bullying behaviors can be categorized as overt, relational, and cyber. Overt aggression involves physical and verbal attacks done in an open manner, and is the traditional form of bullying typically displayed by males (Peterson & Ray, 2006). The physical behaviors associated with overt aggression include hitting, kicking, shoving, punching,

biting, tripping, spitting, stealing, vandalizing, and the threat of using additional physical force against the victim. Verbal overt aggression is characterized by teasing, threats, name-calling, slandering, and taunting. Verbal aggression is harder to detect and thus, intervention is more difficult because it leaves no visible markings, though its effects are just devastating on its victims (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Peterson and Ray (2006) examined 205 gifted eighth grade females in 11 states. The participants recalled experiences from kindergarten through 8th grade in a retrospective study design. Using a self-report survey, Peterson and Ray found that across all grades the two most prevalent forms of bullying were teasing and name-calling. The study also demonstrated that overt aggression increased as the participants' ages increased.

Kyriakides, et al. (2006) examined bullying and victimization experiences among 160 girls ages 11 to 13. The researchers asked participants to self-report on their bullying and victimization experiences over a 4-month period. Using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ), Kyriakides, et al. found that verbal overt aggression was the most prevalent form of bullying. While there is not a great deal of literature available regarding overt aggression practiced by females, the findings from these studies suggest that females may be more comfortable with hurling insults or name-calling than using physical aggression.

Dhami, Hoglund, Leadbeater, and Boone (2005) stated that relational aggression involves the social exclusion of victims from peers and social groups. This type of bullying behavior is more devious than overt aggression as it allows

bullies to confront their target without ever coming into contact with them, thus minimizing the risk of retaliation. Most of the research on female bullying has focused on relational aggression. This is probably due to the fact that females tend to possess higher levels of social competence than males, making it easier for them to use relational aggression. Dhimi et al. further stated that it also makes them more susceptible to the effects of relational aggression.

Relational aggression includes spreading rumors and stories, making racial slurs, gossiping, using negative body language or facial expressions, and influencing others to reject or exclude the victim from participating in social activities (Bright, 2005; Langevin, n.d.; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). These types of behaviors can erode friendships, leave victims virtually friendless, or both. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) administered a peer nomination scale to assess social behavior (i.e., overt aggression, prosocial behavior, relational aggression, and isolation) among 235 girls in grades 3 through 6 from a mid-sized midwestern community. Of the sample, approximately 21.2% were categorized as relationally aggressive as defined by Crick and Grotpeter (i.e., behavior intended to harm individuals by damaging or manipulating peer relationships). Crick and Grotpeter found that the girls were more likely to use relational aggression in groups than boys. In their self-report study of 160 girls, Kyriakides et al. (2006) also found that girls used relational aggression. More specifically, compared to boys, girls were more likely to engage in spreading false rumors, ignoring others, and excluding individuals from certain activities.

Crick, Bigbee, and Howes (1996) conducted two studies examining relationally manipulative behaviors and the identification of such behaviors as aggressiveness. The first study consisted of 239 boys and 220 girls, aged 9 to 12 years, in a medium-sized midwestern town. Using self-report assessments, the children were asked two questions, "What do boys do when they are mad at someone?" and "What do girls do when they are mad at someone?" In the responses for "what girls do", 30.8% of the males noted that females use more physical aggression than any other method of bullying behaviors and 32.1% of the females answered that they used more acts of relational aggression on their victims than any other method. Thus, the responses were incongruent between the sexes. Crick et al. speculated that females viewed relational aggression as normative "angry" behavior (e.g., excluding others from the peer group, not being a friend to a certain person, or spreading rumors and lies about another) and that the boys defined aggression in different terms than the girls possibly due to the differences in handling altercations.

Crick et al. (1996) conducted a separate analysis on different grade levels within the first study to determine if older females (5th and 6th graders) were more likely than younger females (3rd and 4th graders) to use relational aggression. They found that the older females did use more relational aggression than younger females, specifically verbal aggression and relational aggression increased as age increased.

The second study conducted by Crick et al. (1996) involved 69 boys and 93 girls in grades 3 through 5, located in a medium-sized midwestern town.

Participants were asked to complete a peer-assessment measure developed by the researchers that asked the students to nominate up to three classmates who fit a behavioral descriptor (e.g., children who yell at others or used name-calling). In addition, 60 of the participants were randomly selected to be interviewed. The randomly selected interviewees had no knowledge of their aggressive stature and were asked four questions to assess normative beliefs about aggression. The questions were: (a) "What do most boys do when they want to be mean to another boy?," (b) "What do most boys do when they want to be mean to a girl?," (c) "What do most girls do when they want to be mean to another girl?," and (d) "What do most girls do when they want to be mean to a boy?" (p. 1009).

When the girls answered the question about girls' behaviors toward other girls, the results revealed that verbal insults (32.3%) and relational aggression (25.8%) were the most common responses. Overall, the researchers determined that girls were more relationally aggressive (e.g., do not maintain a friendship with that person, exclude the person from peer group, spread lies and rumors about that person) towards both girls and boys. Relational aggression may be easier for girls to view and decipher, but less visible to boys as they may assume that girls and boys have the same norms and engage in the same types of behaviors (Crick et al., 1996). Overall, studies have implied that as girls age, they engage in more relational aggression. Based upon this finding, one would expect to see frequent relational aggression at the high school level.

A relatively newer form of bullying involves the use of technology such as cell phones and the Internet to harass victims, which has been labeled "cyber-

bullying” (Smith, 2004; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Langevin, n.d.; Li, 2006). Cyber-bullying is characterized by the use of digital communication devices or the Internet to send or post harmful or cruel text messages or images (Li, 2006). Cyber-bullying takes place in many configurations, such as harassment, flaming (rude, derogatory, and insulting messages), denigration (put-downs, and posting of untrue statements), outing or trickery (sharing embarrassing or private material about an individual), masquerading (pretending to be someone else), exclusion, and cyber-stalking (Li, 2006; Willard, n.d.). Individuals take part in this type of bullying behavior use email, list serves, cell phones, or websites to terrorize their victims. Bullies can coerce their victims, or others, into behaviors in which they would not normally engage when applying these types of behaviors, because the commands are exhibited in a more controlling and abusive manner than demonstrated in person (Langevin, n.d.). According to Li (2006), females prefer this type of bullying because of its’ ease. It may also be enticing to aggressive females because of the anonymity associated with it.

During 2002, the National Children’s Home (NCH) in the United Kingdom completed a national survey that showed one in four children (both male and female) aged 11 to 19 years had been cyber-bullied through the use of a cell phone or a personal computer. The total number of children participated in the study was not indicated. The NCH (2005) conducted another study on cell phone bullying, with a sample of 770 children (both male and female) aged 11 to 19 years. Results indicated that one in five had been cyber-bullied via email, Internet chat room, or text messaging. Text messaging (14%) was the most

prevalent form of cyber-bullying, followed by Internet chat rooms (5%), and cyber-bullying by email (4%). Ten percent admitted they had sent a threatening or bullying message to someone else.

Li (2006) examined cyber-bullying experiences of females enrolled in grades 7 through 9. One-hundred thirty four females completed a survey on cyber-bullying. The results indicated that 12% had used cyber-bullying techniques. Nearly 55% of the female participants stated they were aware that cyber-bullying took place and 44.4% revealed they were labeled as "bully-victims," meaning they had bullied others and been victims. As technology continues to advance, cyber-bullying is becoming more prominent and needs to be taken more seriously by parents, teachers, and society.

Research has shown that females have engaged in overt verbal aggression, relational aggression, and cyber-bullying types of behaviors. Although a study has not yet indicated which type of aggression is the most prevalent among female bullies, the literature suggests that females are more comfortable expressing aggression with words rather than with their physical behaviors.

Incidence and Frequency of Bullying Behaviors

According to the research on the incidences of bullying, bullying behaviors are persistent during the primary, middle, and high school years (Smith, 2004). The bulk of the research in this section looked at the rates of victimization, rather than bullying. However where there is victimization there is a bully, so it is reasonable to estimate the prevalence of bullying by looking at victimization

rates. Olweus (1983) conducted a nationwide survey in Norway's primary and junior high schools. Approximately 568,000 students, both male and female, completed the self-report questionnaire on bully and victimization problems. Olweus found that 9% were victims and 7% were classified as bullies. Olweus did not report separate statistics by sex, so it is not possible to ascertain the breakdown.

Boulton and Smith (1994) conducted a study involving 83 boys and 75 girls from three urban middle schools in Britain. Using self-reporting surveys and personal interviews, they found that approximately 35% of the sample was characterized as bullies, victims, or both. Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, and Scheidt (2001) conducted a secondary data analysis using survey data from a national study of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. There were 15,686 students (male and female) in grades 6 through 10 who answered questions about bullying and psychosocial adjustment (e.g., frequency of smoking, fighting, and truancy). The cross-national study on North America's youth conducted by Nansel et al. reported that 7.3% of females were sometimes bullied, and 6.4% were bullied on a weekly basis.

Simanton, Burthwick, and Hoover (2000) examined bullying among 2,794 participants (male and female) in grades 4 through 12, across 16 small-towns, cooperatives, and rural districts located in a Northern-tier state of the United States. Simanton et al. found that 15.2% of the females could be classified as victims and 20.6% as bullies. Using self-report methodology,

Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, and Rimpela (2000) conducted a study in Finland during May and December of 1994 and April of 1997. Male and female students ($N = 26$ and 430 respectively) in 8th and 9th grades were surveyed. Kaltiala-Heino et al. found that 38% of the girls were involved with bullying incidents on a few occasions, 5% were categorized as victims, and 2% reported weekly involvement as bullies.

Peterson and Ray (2006) assessed aggression rates among 205 gifted 8th grade females and found that 63% of the females had been victims of aggression at least once between Kindergarten and 8th grade. In 2001, Craig and Harel (2004) conducted an international study known as the Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. A self-report questionnaire was administered to 163,000 participants, aged 11-15, in 36 countries. Craig and Harel indicated that 32.16% of females from the U.S. bullied others at least once, and 7.9% were bullied more than once over the previous couple of months (The authors did not indicate the total number of participants from the U.S.). Olweus' (1983) study in Norwegian primary and junior high schools revealed that 7% of 568,000 students were categorized as bullies.

The literature on the incidence of bullying reviewed in this section revealed that 10% to 63% of females experienced bullying in some form, whether they were the bully, victim, or both. The wide range is perhaps indicative of the manner in which bullying was operationalized. The current study seeks to clarify the question regarding the frequency of different types of bullying behaviors.

Regardless of how bullying is defined, the fact that bullying among females occurs at all is alarming.

Victim Characteristics

The characteristics of the individuals that females tend to target for different types of bullying is a topic that has not been well researched. However, characteristics of male and female victims of overt aggression have been reported in the literature, and it is logical to surmise that victims share similar characteristics, regardless of gender or type of aggression. Thus, this section reviews existing literature on victim characteristics for both male and female victims of overt aggression.

Victims of overt aggression are usually depicted as unable to protect themselves from abuse because they are frail, weak, and small in stature. Victims of overt aggression are sometimes classified as having a negative attitude toward violence, fears getting hurt, and lacking in sports or other physical activity skills (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Victims have been described as being overly emotional, introverted, unassertive, cynical, "different", insecure, lonely, sensitive, and anxious (Lyznicki, McCaffree, and Robinowitz, 2004). Victims of overt aggression also appear to exhibit poor communication skills and an inability to solve social problems (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Research has shown that sometimes victims of overt aggression do well in school, but see themselves as failures (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). It also seems that victims of overt aggression can be quick to blame themselves and may not report the bullying incidents. Researchers speculate that the lack of

reporting can be attributed to victims' insecurities and negative feelings about social support systems (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Unfortunately, this lack of reporting puts victims at risk for further victimization.

In one of the few studies focusing on female victim characteristics, Owens, Shute, and Slee (2000) found that the victims of relational aggression stated that they felt the abuse was their fault. The participants were 54 Australian females age 15 years. The study used a qualitative design by employing focus groups and individual interviews to examine the nature of indirect aggression. In the study, subjects who self-identified as victims of relational aggression stated they had done something wrong or annoying that caused the bullies to initiate a conflict with them. Other subjects stated they were simply vulnerable to being a victim because they had very few (if any) friends, were new to the school, or were nerdy or unassertive in nature. These findings are consistent with the previously-reviewed characteristics of victims of overt aggression, suggesting that generally victims share similar traits regardless of the types of behavior enacted against them. However, this area needs further research to clarify the traits of those targeted by female bullies.

Coping Responses

Research has noted that victims of bullying have used various coping strategies when confronted with bullying behavior. Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) reviewed several studies and compiled a list of characteristics that showed that many victims (male and female) suffered from internalizing disorders such as depression, attention-deficit disorders, anxiety, and eating disorders.

This implies that one of the main ways of coping with victimization is to keep emotions bottled up inside. This is not surprising, considering how the literature portrays victims of aggression as introverted, insecure, and fearful. However, it is a cause for concern that victims appear unable to express their fears, frustrations, and anger.

Research has demonstrated that chronic cases of bullying can leave victims engaging in persistent absenteeism at school, poor academic performance, loneliness, feelings of being abandoned, and increased apprehension. Victims can also experience long-term effects from being bullied, such as problems with personal relationships, and victims can suffer from low self-esteem and self-worth (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Kyriakides et al., 2006). Studies indicate that males and females who have been victimized tend to avoid school, show stress related symptoms such as headaches and nightmares, complain about being sick, and claim other health related issues (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2004; Kyriakides et al., 2006). As females become victims, they frequently begin to withdraw from family activities (Bright, 2005). Perhaps most alarming is the finding that many victims consider suicide (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Smith, Talmelli, Cowie, Naylor & Chauhan, 2004).

Boulton's and Smith's (1994) study demonstrated that a potential consequence of victimization is low self-esteem. Both male and female victims had low scores on the global self-worth and self-perceived social acceptance sections of their surveys. Boulton and Smith claimed that for female victims, this result could be due to their portrayal of low self-esteem. With this in mind,

female victims could be excluded from peer groups due to the lack of confidence that they possess.

Crick and Bigbee (1998) used the Social Experience Questionnaire – Self Report (SEQ-S), the Social Experience Questionnaire Peer Report (SEQ-P), and an Overt Aggression Scale to examine victimization experiences with 194 boys and 189 girls in 4th and 5th grades. Three types of victims were identified in the study. Self-identified overt victims are victims who self-report high levels of victimization but their peers do not identify maltreatment. Self-peer identified overt victims are victims that self-report victimization and are also identified by their peers as being victimized. Peer-identified overt victims are identified by peers as being maltreated but do not self-report victimization. The researchers found that the victims in their study exhibited submissiveness, internalized problematic behaviors, and possessed a problem with low self-restraint if negative conclusions (e.g., kids at school are mean to me) were drawn from their peers. Crick's and Bigbee's study revealed that self peer-identified overt victims were more emotionally distressed than any other group and self-identified overt victims were more distressed than peer-identified overt victims and nonvictims. While self-peer and self-identified relational victims were more distressed than peer-identified relational victims, the results indicated that the nonvictims and peer-identified relational victims were more distressed than nonvictims overall. Therefore, Crick's and Bigbee's study showed that victims of relational aggression can exhibit considerable social-psychological adjustment problems.

Owens et al. (2000) completed a study on 54 Australian females. Data showed that victims of bullying stated that they felt confused about why they were victimized. The participants also reported that they felt hurt, experienced low self-esteem, lost confidence, and feared exclusion in future relationships.

Kristensen and Smith (2003) examined 76 girls between the ages of 9-13 years and 87 girls between the ages of 12-16 years in four schools within Denmark. Using a revised version of the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) and a modified version of the Self-Report Coping Measure (SRCM), Kristensen and Smith found that the coping strategy used most often by self-identified victims was the self-reliance and problem-solving method, followed by distancing and seeking self-support. Externalizing (yelling to let off steam, throwing items or hitting something) and internalizing (becoming so upset that one is unable to speak to another, and crying about a situation) behaviors were the least common coping strategies among the victims in the study. Self-reliance and problem solving were conceptualized as changing a fixation in an attempt to make it work out or trying to think of different ways to solve problems in response to hypothetical bullying incidents. Unlike the coping strategies presented earlier in this section, self-reliance and problem-solving appear to be healthier ways of coping.

A different type of coping is seen in victims who lash out at others following their own victimization experience with a bully. Reactive bullying, also known as bully-victimization, is characterized as becoming a bully after being bullied by someone else. Reactive bullying can be considered a coping

response because victims are essentially responding to bullying with their own aggression. Reactive bullying "can be the most difficult to identify" (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p. 102) as bullies "tend to be impulsive, taunting others into fighting with them" and then claim self-defense.

In terms of how often reactive bullying is utilized as a coping mechanism, Olweus (1983) found that 1.6% of the participants could be classified as reactive bullies. Duncan (1999) examined 178 middle school females from three schools located in rural areas within the southern United States. Using the Peer Relations Questionnaire (PRQ), Multiscore Depression Inventory for Children Scale (MDIC), and the Children's Loneliness Questionnaire (CLQ), Duncan found that females were just as likely to be the perpetrators as they were to be the victims of teasing.

Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2000) studied coping responses among students living in Finland that self-identified as reactive bullies. The participants completed a self-report survey as part of the School Health Promotion Study. The study examined questions related to bullying, depressive symptoms, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, excessive drinking and substance abuse, eating disorders, and multiple mental health problems. For male (23%) and female (44%) reactive bullies, depressive symptoms and anxiety were the most common reactions and these subjects were at the greatest risk for drinking and substance abuse (male 20% and female 22.6%). Lastly, 28.3% of female reactive bullies reported having at least two or more mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, eating disorders, psychosomatic symptoms, excessive alcohol, or drug

abuse). Nansel et al. (2001) reported that for the U.S., 6.3% of the student sample were categorized as reactive bullies. While this number is slightly higher than what Olweus (1983) and Kaltiala et al. (2000) found, (1.6% vs. 1%) the discrepancy is minimal and could be attributed to the way reactive bullying was operationally defined.

While reviewing several studies, Lyznicki et al. (2004) found several characteristics that both male and female reactive bullies possessed that included hot-temperers, hyperactivity, trouble paying attention, provoking and annoying others around them, using hostility toward others, and showing negative reactions to others because they were not socially accepted by their peers. Reactive bullies demonstrated low levels of self-esteem, negative self-image, an inability to solve problems, and high levels of neuroticism. Studies have also demonstrated that reactive bullies feel very negatively toward themselves, that they are less physically attractive, less popular, unhappy, less intellectual, and more anxious and more troublesome than pure bullies (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) suggested that reactive bullies (both male and female) have the greatest risk of experiencing psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety, depression, mental health problems, and eating disorders when compared to that of bullies or victims alone. This may be due to the dual roles of reactive bullies as both bullies and victims. Adolescent males and females who were labeled as "reactive bullies" in the Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2000) study evidenced a higher risk of alcohol and substance abuse, as well as a higher risk

for psychiatric symptoms later in life when compared to non-reactive bullies and victims (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Coping styles and behaviors can be detrimental to victims of bullying behaviors as it appears that the bulk of victims use negative behaviors to cope. For example, one of the ways that victims cope is by becoming an aggressor themselves as described in the preceding section. It is unclear whether or not victims of all types of bullying behaviors react in a negative manner. The current study will explore coping mechanisms further.

Conclusion

With bullying and victimization increasing across the United States over the past several decades, researchers have become increasingly interested in this important issue. Researchers have found that bullying occurs quite frequently and is often overlooked and unrecognized. Although the majority of the research on bullying focuses on males, it is becoming more prevalent for bullying behaviors to be exhibited by females (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

The research reviewed in this section showed that females tend to prefer more indirect forms of bullying that allow them to keep their identity anonymous, that victims are typically portrayed as weak, fearful and overly emotional, and that the primary way victims of bullies have coped is by containing emotions or becoming aggressive towards others. Further research is needed to identify what form of bullying is the most prevalent among females, to learn more about the characteristics of the individuals females target for different types of bullying,

how females cope with bullying experiences, and how often bullying takes place in high school.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to examine bullying behaviors exhibited by female university students during their high school years, characteristics of the females they bullied, and coping strategies if they were victimized by others. Data were collected to examine bullying behaviors exhibited by female participants during high school, characteristics of victims that were bullied by participants and coping mechanisms displayed by participants that were victimized by peers. A retrospective quantitative research design was used. The analyses applied were descriptive and exploratory in nature. A self-report questionnaire developed by the researcher was distributed to female midwestern university students enrolled in 28 undergraduate Family and Consumer Science classes, one Education class and five Greek Sororities. Participants were surveyed once and no attempt was made to change behaviors, characteristics or responses.

Data Collection Instrument

The researcher developed a questionnaire called the *Experiences with Peer Aggression Questionnaire* (see Appendix A) that contained demographic items (i.e., age, ethnic background, electronic devices owned or accessible), as well as items regarding personal experiences with peer aggression, victim characteristics, and coping experiences.

Reliability and validity. Literature on female bullying was consulted to make sure that a full range of meanings associated with bullying was covered in

the questionnaire created by the researcher. As a second assessment of validity, two EIU faculty (Drs. Taylor and Bartz) evaluated the instrument to identify if it appeared to measure bullying and related factors. Finally, a pilot study was carried out to gather feedback about the questionnaire. If deemed appropriate, changes suggested by pilot study participants were incorporated.

After the data were collected, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the internal consistency of the measure, which served as an assessment of reliability of the questionnaire. The strength of Cronbach's alpha is that it addresses virtually every possible pairing of scores to determine internal consistency as a measure of reliability. Cronbach's alpha was first computed for the entire measure and findings showed $\alpha = .87$. Cronbach's alpha was then computed for each individual section. For variables that measured aggression used by the participants, Cronbach's alpha was .81. Cronbach's alpha was .85 for items that tapped into the aggression used by peers against participants. In regard to variables that were designed to measure victim characteristics, Cronbach's alpha was .85 and, for items that looked at participant coping responses, Cronbach's alpha was .99. The alphas (reliability coefficients) previously listed are acceptably high for an instrument developed for a specific purpose as was the case in this study (Reynolds, Livingston & Willson, 2006).

Procedure for Data Collection

The author's proposal was reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning data collection. This ensured that adequate precautions were taken to protect the rights and well-being of the

participants. The questionnaire was administered to 28 undergraduate Family and Consumer Sciences classes, one Education class and five Greek Sororities. Before distributing the questionnaire, the author described the purpose of the study, provided instruction, explained potential risks, discomforts and potential benefits to subjects and/or to society, discussed confidentiality, and informed the participants of their right to refuse participation or to withdraw without penalty or prejudice. The questionnaire was distributed to students at the end of a class session and participants were asked to return the questionnaire to the researcher during the next class session. Students also had the option to complete the survey and return it through campus mail in a sealed envelope provided by the researcher. A statement of consent was included with the questionnaire which all participants were required to read prior to completing the questionnaire (See Appendix B). No identifying information was collected on the questionnaire to ensure complete anonymity.

Statistical Analysis

This was an exploratory study so the statistical analyses were also exploratory. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to determine differences in types of aggressive behavior used by the participants. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the frequency of bullying behaviors by participants. Frequencies were computed to determine the most common characteristics of the individuals the participants targeted for bullying. Finally, frequencies were used to determine how participants coped with bullying experiences if they were victimized by their peers.

Chapter Four

Results

Initially, the sample is presented in this chapter in a description of its elements relevant to the study. This is followed by reporting the results separately for each of the four research questions. The chapter concludes with a summary which condenses the most relevant results of the four research questions.

Description of the Sample

The sample consisted of 374 female undergraduate students from a midwestern university. It was 88.8% Caucasian, 7.5% African-American, 1.3% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1.1% Hispanic, and 0.8% were classified as "other." The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 45 years old ($M = 20.57$, $SD = 2.168$).

The focus of this study was female bullying in high school. Before proceeding to answer the four research questions, the researcher wanted to determine: (1) the percentage of the sample who had been victimized (bullied) by their peers in any way and (2) the percentage of the sample who had engaged in any bullying behaviors during high school. Items 5 through 25 measured aggression used against participants (victimized or bullied) and items 28 through 47 measured aggression used by participants (engaged in bullying). Frequencies were computed that indicated 70.3% of the sample had been aggressive toward a peer (bullied others) at least once in high school, and

92% had been the victim of a peer's aggression (victimized or bullied) at least once in high school.

The researcher also determined that of the 374 sample members, 67.6% had been victimized by peers at least once and also had been aggressive toward peers at least once. This means that these participants can be labeled as "reactive bullies" due to being a victim of a bullying experience as well as becoming a bully— meaning they responded to bullying as a means of coping with their own aggression that resulted from being bullied.

To further describe the sample, the researcher established the percentage of participants that had either used or been targeted by each of the four different forms of aggression (physical, verbal, relational and cyber). Frequencies were computed and findings are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Regarding the percentage of sample members that used each of the different forms of aggression, Figure 1 indicated that 62.0% had used verbal, 41.7% relational, 29.4% physical and 19.50% cyber. For members of the sample that were targeted by each of the four different forms of aggression (see Figure 2), relational (79.1%) was the highest, followed by verbal (73.8%), physical (63.1%) and cyber (39.6%).

In summary, the sample of 374 participants had often been involved in the four forms of aggression (physical, verbal, relational, and cyber) in high school in the context of being a bully, had been bullied, or both. This give credence to the validity of these four types of aggressive behaviors being relative factors to consider in the study of female bullying.

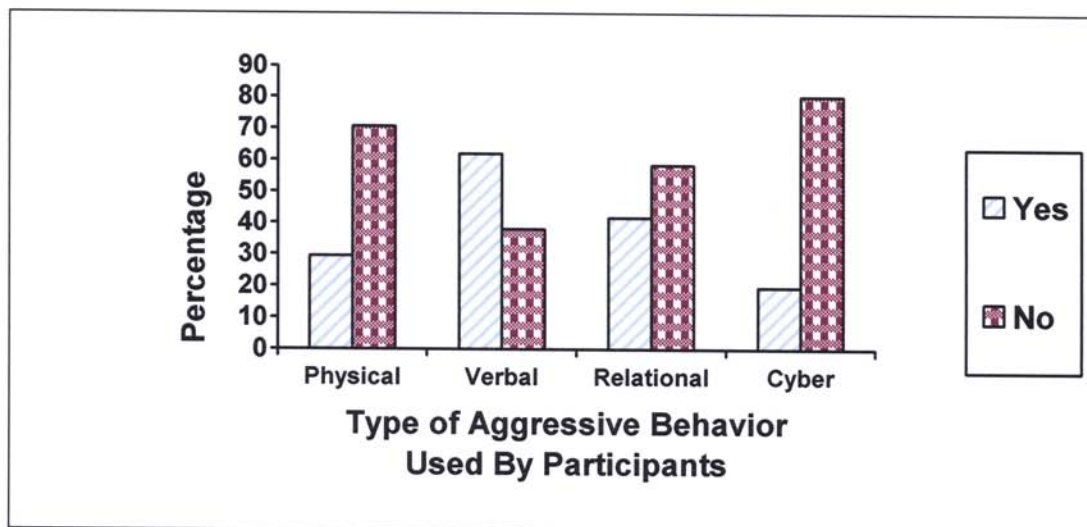


Figure 1: Type of aggression used by participants.

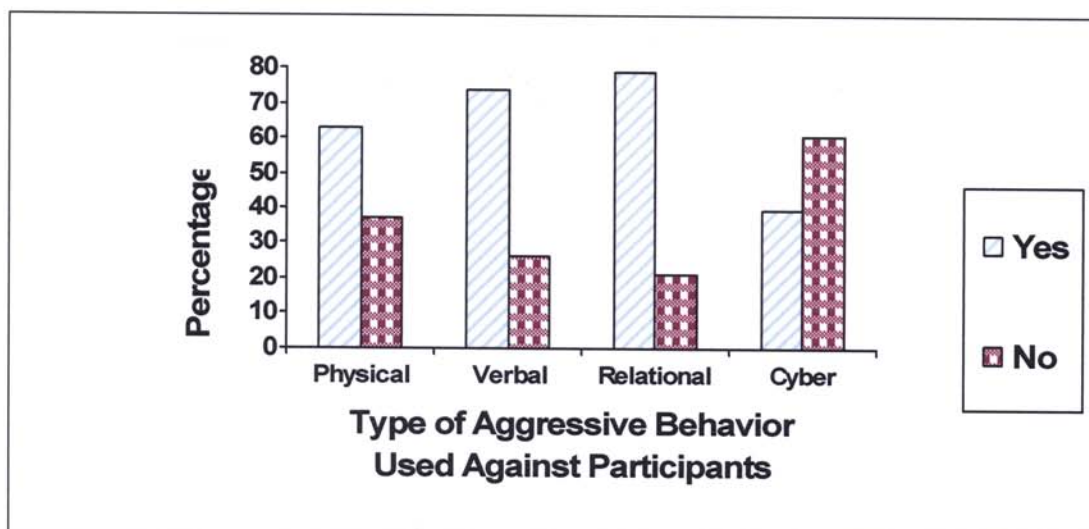


Figure 2: Type of aggression used against participants.

Results for Research Question One

Research question one was: What types of behaviors were used most often in females who engaged in bullying in high school? Questions 28 through 47 of the *Experiences with Peer Aggression Questionnaire* were used to answer this research question. Participants indicated how often they used each type of behavior by using a 4-point Likert Type Scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Frequently).

Mean scores for each type of aggression (e.g., verbal, physical, relational, cyber) were computed by summing all of the variables that characterized each type and dividing by the total number of items. Once the new variables were developed for each type of aggression used by participants, they were copied and pasted into a separate SPSS data set, within the same column, which resulted in 1,496 cases. Another variable was then created to indicate the type of aggression in the new data set. Scores for physical aggression were coded as "1," scores for verbal as "2," relational as "3," and cyber as "4." Thus, the new data set had two variables: the grouping variable for type of aggression used by participant and the aggression score which was comprised of participants' mean score for each type of aggression they had used.

To establish which type of aggression (physical, verbal, relational and cyber) was used most often by participants, a one-way analysis of variance was computed, with the grouping variable as the independent variable and the aggression score as the dependent variable. The ANOVA was significant

$F = 143.68, p = >.001$. This means that for at least one pair of the possible means for the four types of aggression differed significantly beyond the .001 level (see Table 1 for a listing of possible pairs of means). The Dunnett T3 post-hoc test was used to assess differences among the possible pairs of means. As indicated in Table 1, the following pairs of means differed significantly: physical ($M = 1.08$) versus verbal ($M = 1.64$), physical ($M = 1.08$) versus relational ($M = 1.52$), physical ($M = 1.08$) versus cyber ($M = 1.06$), verbal ($M = 1.64$) versus relational ($M = 1.52$), verbal ($M = 1.64$) versus cyber ($M = 1.06$), and relational ($M = 1.52$) versus cyber ($M = 1.06$).

It was concluded that verbal ($M = 1.64$) and relational ($M = 1.52$) were used most often (see Figure 3), and that they were used significantly more often as indicated in Table 1 for most of the pairs of means.

An open-ended item that asked participants if they had ever bullied or harassed a peer in a way that was not included in the survey was included in the participants' aggression section (question 49). Once open-ended responses were collected and analyzed to examine if there were similarities among the answers. The researcher and two graduate students organized four general themes based upon responses: physical behaviors, verbal behaviors, relationally abusive behaviors, and cyber-related behaviors. Frequencies were then calculated by the researcher for the four categories to determine how many responses fell into each category. Fifty-eight percent of the open-ended responses were related to verbal behaviors, 17% were physical behaviors, 17% were cyber behaviors, and 8% were relational behaviors. Examples of behaviors

Table 1

Possible pairing of means for the four types of aggression

*Physical	versus	Verbal
(M = 1.08)		(M = 1.64)
*Physical	versus	Relational
(M = 1.08)		(M = 1.52)
Physical	versus	Cyber
(M = 1.08)		(M = 1.06)
Verbal	versus	Relational
(M = 1.64)		(M = 1.52)
*Verbal	versus	Cyber
(M = 1.64)		(M = 1.06)
*Relational	versus	Cyber
(M = 1.52)		(M = 1.06)

* = $p > .001$

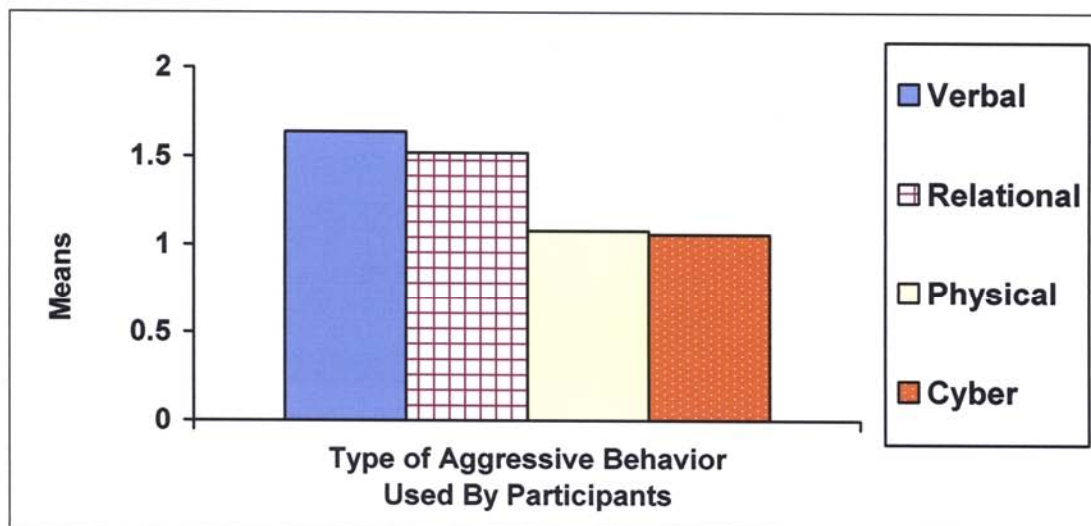


Figure 3: Aggressive behaviors used by participants.

for each of the four types of aggression are:

1. Verbal — *“I often gossiped about individuals whom I attended school with, this was often viewed as negative and sometimes hurt the individuals’ feelings” and “the boy who made me feel bad...I decided to get even by telling everyone what he did to me.”*
2. Physical — *“I hung around boys a lot in high school girls were too much drama, so we play a lot physical with boys like tripping but not to hurt some one or each other, it was fun” and “we would purposely be rude and mean to underclassmen. We would harass girls that dated our ex-boyfriends. We would push girls into lockers and throw tampons at them.”*
3. Relational— *“I left someone out of a group only if we were fighting.”*

4. Cyber— *“I wrote about them on MySpace because they did something to me that upset me.”*

Results for Research Question Two

Research question two was: How often did females engage in bullying behaviors in high school? Questions 28 through 47 of the *Experiences with Peer Aggression Questionnaire* addressed this research question. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of total responses for each item on the *Experiences with Peer Aggression Questionnaire* in comparison to the total responses for a given item. For example, the first item “Hit others?” in Table 2 had 340 (90.9%) of the 374 participants indicate that this response choice was “never” used. The data in Table 2 are categorized for each of the four types of aggression—physical, verbal, relational and cyber.

There were 10 items in Table 2 pertaining to physical aggression. In general, participants indicated minimal use for each of these 10 items as indicated by the high percentages in the “never” category. The item “Shove others?” was used the most frequently of these 10 items.

For the aggression factor of verbal, the results for the two items used to measure this factor in Table 2 indicated that 50% of the respondents, to some degree, used “Tease others?” for the other item used to measure verbal aggression— “Call others mean/nasty names?”, 51.9% used it to some degree. (The 51.9% was arrived at by combining the percentage of responses used for the categories rarely, occasionally and frequently.)

Table 2

Frequencies for participants' use of peer aggression (N = 374)

Variable				
How often did you exhibit the behavior toward others during your high school years?	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)
Physical				
Hit others?	340 (90.9%)	32 (8.6%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)
Shove others?	320 (85.6%)	49 (13.1%)	4 (1.1%)	1 (0.3%)
Punch others?	351 (93.9%)	16 (4.3%)	6 (1.6%)	1 (0.3%)
Kick others?	364 (97.3%)	8 (2.1%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)
Bite others?	369 (98.7%)	4 (1.1%)	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Trip others?	336 (89.8%)	31 (8.3%)	5 (1.3%)	1 (0.3%)
Spit on others?	370 (98.9%)	4 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Steal from others?	366 (97.9%)	6 (1.6%)	2 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Vandalize one's belongings?	348 (93.0%)	22 (5.9%)	3 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Threaten others with physical force?	328 (87.7%)	32 (8.6%)	14 (3.7%)	0(0.0%)
Verbal				
Tease others?	187 (50.0%)	147 (39.3%)	36 (9.6%)	4 (1.1%)
Call others mean/nasty names?	180 (48.1%)	143 (38.2%)	43 (11.5%)	7 (1.9%)
Relational				
Leave someone out of a group on purpose?	218 (58.3%)	120 (32.1%)	35 (9.4%)	1 (0.3%)
Cyber				
Send a text message to bully or harass others?	349 (93.3%)	20 (5.3%)	5 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)

Table 2 (continued). Frequencies for participants' use of peer aggression (N = 374)

Variable	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)
How often did you exhibit the behavior toward others during your high school years?				
Cyber continued.				
Create a website to bully or harass others?	372 (99.5%)	2 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Enter or add pictures on-line without permission to bully or harass others?	374 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Write mean/nasty blogs about others?	353 (94.4%)	17 (4.5%)	4 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Sent instant messages through the Internet to bully or harass others?	326 (87.2%)	41 (11.0%)	7 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Make threatening phone calls to bully or harass others?	342 (91.4%)	29 (7.8%)	3 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Take camera phone pictures of others without permission and show them to others to embarrass them?	369 (98.7%)	3 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

For the aggression factor relational, the item in Table 2 used to measure it was "Leave someone out of a group on purpose?" Results indicated that 41.7% of the participants used this item to some degree.

There were six items in Table 2 that measured the cyber aggression factor. In general, none of these six items were used very often by participants. For example, no participants used "Enter or add pictures on-line without permission to bully or harass others?" and only 2 (0.5%) used "Create a website to bully or harass others?". Of the six items, "Sent instant messages through the Internet to bully or harass others?" was used to some degree by 12.8% of the participants. This item was used more often than any of the other five items measuring the factor of cyber aggression.

Analyzing the results for the items in Table 2 by comparing them to the four types of aggression indicated verbal was used most often, followed by relational, physical and cyber. Examining the items irrespective of the four types of aggression, "Calling others mean/nasty names?" was used most often followed by "Tease others?" and "Leave someone out of a group on purpose?".

Results for Research Question Three

Research question three was: What were the characteristics of the individuals whom females targeted when engaging in bullying? In Section III of the *Experiences with Peer Aggression Questionnaire* participants were asked if they had ever used the four different types of behaviors (verbal, physical, relational and cyber) against a classmate or peer. If the participants selected "yes" indicating they had used one of the four types of behavior, they were to

think about the characteristics of the individual(s) that they had targeted and check all the descriptors that applied to their victims.

Table 3 presents the results for the 12 characteristics used to assist each of the four factors that participants perceived existed in those they bullied for the verbal abuse factor. Of the 12 characteristics, "sarcastic" was the highest with 40.8%. The lowest was "frail" (1.5%).

Table 4 presents the results for the 12 characteristics assessed for physical abuse that participants perceived existed in those they bullied. As was the case for verbal abuse, "sarcastic" had the highest percentage (50.0%) identified by participants. Table 4 also indicates for physical abuse the characteristics "frail" (0.0%) and "lonely" (0.0%) were not selected by any participants.

Table 5 presents the results for the 12 characteristics assessed for relational abuse that participants perceived existed in those they bullied. The data in Table 5 indicated the characteristic "different" (40.6%) ranked the highest, followed by "sarcastic" (34.7%). As was the case with verbal and physical abuse, "lonely" (10.0%) and "frail" (2.9%) were rated the lowest.

Table 6 presents the results for the 12 characteristics assessed for cyber abuse that participants perceived existed in those they bullied. The characteristic "different" (29.0%) was highest, followed by "sarcastic" (28.5%), "overly emotional" (28.5%), and "low self-esteem" (26.6%). Regarding the lowest characteristics "frail" (6.5%), "lonely" (6.5%) and "poor in sports" (3.2%) were the bottom three characteristics.

Table 3

Characteristics of victims who were targeted by verbal abuse

Characteristic of victim	Percentage of participants that used verbal behavior (n = 196) and that said characteristic under consideration applied to victim by type of abuse
Sarcastic	40.8%
Different	27.0%
Shy	25.0%
Low self-esteem	20.4%
Overly emotional	18.4%
Unassertive	13.8%
Poor in sports	13.3%
Sensitive	13.3%
Shy	11.2%
Withdrawn	10.2%
Lonely	7.1%
Frail	1.5%

Table 4

Characteristics of victims who were targeted by physical abuse

Characteristic of victim	Percentage of participants that used physical behavior (n = 48) and that said characteristic under consideration applied to victim by type of abuse
Sarcastic	50.0%
Cynical	22.9%
Low self-esteem	16.7%
Sensitive	14.6%
Unassertive	8.3%
Overly emotional	8.3%
Different	8.3%
Poor in sports	6.3%
Shy	4.2%
Withdrawn	4.2%
Frail	0.0%
Lonely	0.0%

Table 5

Characteristics of victims who were targeted by relational abuse

Characteristic of victim	Percentage of participants that used relational behavior (n = 170) and that said characteristic under consideration applied to victim by type of abuse
Different	40.6%
Sarcastic	34.7%
Overly Emotional	30.0%
Cynical	22.4%
Low self-esteem	21.8%
Sensitive	20.6%
Unassertive	15.9%
Withdrawn	15.9%
Poor in sports	13.5%
Shy	11.8%
Lonely	10.0%
Frail	2.9%

Table 6

Characteristics of victims who were targeted by cyber-related abuse

Characteristic of victim	Percentage of participants that used cyber-related behavior (n = 31) and that said characteristic under consideration applied to victim by type of abuse
Different	29.0%
Sarcastic	25.8%
Overly Emotional	25.8%
Low self-esteem	22.6%
Unassertive	19.4%
Cynical	19.4%
Sensitive	16.1%
Shy	12.9%
Withdrawn	9.7%
Frail	6.5%
Lonely	6.5%
Poor in sports	3.2%

When analyzing information in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 by the 12 characteristics across the four types of behavior, “sarcastic” and “different” were consistently ranked high. Those characteristics consistently ranked low were “frail”, “lonely”, and “withdrawn”.

Results for Research Question Four

Research question four was: How did females who were bullied by others cope with their experiences of victimization? Participants were asked to report on behaviors, thoughts or health issues that applied to how they coped with being bullied during high school. Participants were first asked whether they were bullied or harassed by a classmate or peer. For those who answered yes, they were instructed to circle “yes” or “no” for each type of coping skill listed. If the participant had never been a victim of bullying or harassment, they were asked to circle “n/a”.

The first step in analyzing the data for the fourth research question was to exclude all “n/a” responses from the analyses. SPSS syntax was created to filter the “n/a” responses for each of the coping mechanisms (all items in Section IV) and then frequencies were calculated for each coping variable. Results are displayed in Table 7.

The column in Table 7 labeled “Number and percentage of participants that indicated they had used the coping behavior” represents the number and the percentage of participants that used a particular coping behavior. Listed in the column titled “Number of participants that responded to the coping behavior item” is the number of participants that answered either “yes” or “no” for a given coping

Table 7

How participants coped with bullying experiences

Coping behavior	Number and percentage of participants that indicated they had used the coping behavior	Number of participants that responded to the coping behavior item
Held in your emotions	149 (66.8%)	223
Kept things bottled up inside of you	144 (65.2%)	221
Changed who you hung out with	119 (54.1%)	220
Developed low self-esteem	95 (44.8%)	212
Became depressed	89 (42.4%)	210
Was lonely	92 (42.4%)	217
Developed a negative self-image	86 (40.6%)	212
Was overly anxious	79 (38.2%)	207
Felt abandoned	76 (35.8%)	212
Claimed to be sick when you were not	69 (31.8%)	217
Lashed out at others verbally	66 (30.8%)	214
Experienced headaches	60 (28.6%)	210
Was apprehensive	56 (26.9%)	208
Withdrew from family and/or friends	57 (26.6%)	214
Had trouble paying attention in school	50 (23.5%)	213
Smoked cigarettes	44 (21.1%)	209
Had suicidal thoughts	37 (17.6%)	210
Exhibited difficulty controlling anger	31 (14.6%)	213
Developed an eating disorder	29 (13.7%)	211
Performed poorly in school	25 (11.7%)	213

Table 7 (continued). How participants coped with bullying experiences

Coping behavior	Number and percentage of participants that indicated they had used the coping behavior	Number of participants that responded to the coping behavior item
Excessive alcohol use	23 (11.3%)	204
Became physically aggressive toward others	24 (11.3%)	213
Tried to annoy others around you	22 (10.2%)	215
Had nightmares	21 (10.1%)	207
Was absent from school a great deal	21 (10.0%)	211
Excessive illegal drug use	14 (6.9%)	203
Attempted suicide	11 (5.3%)	208

behavior. As an example, for the coping behavior “held in your emotions”, 149 (66.8%) of the 223 participants answered “yes” and thus, used this coping behavior.

The majority of participants that were bullied reported that they “held in their emotions” (66.8%) as a coping technique. The next most common coping technique was to “keep things bottled up inside” (65.2%), followed by “changing who they hung around with” (54.1%). The least common coping behaviors used were “school absenteeism” (10.0%), “drug use” (6.99%) and “suicide attempts” (5.3%). It was alarming that 11 participants (out of 374) indicated that they had “attempted suicide” as a way of coping with bullying victimization and that 37 (17.6%) participants had “suicidal thoughts”.

Summary

This section presents information that summarizes each of the four research questions. Research question one was: What types of behaviors were used most often in females who engaged in bullying in high school? In general, the results indicated that the aggressive behaviors verbal and relational were used most often, followed by physical and cyber. Based on the results of the ANOVA, verbal and relational were used significantly more often than physical and cyber.

Research question two was: How often did females engage in bullying behaviors in high school? The results indicated in general that the participants minimally used each of the four aggressive behaviors of bullying. When comparing the four types of aggressive behaviors regarding frequency of use,

behaviors associated with verbal ranked highest, followed by relational, physical and cyber. When examining all of the variables combined for the four types of aggressive behavior, "Calling others mean/nasty names?", "Tease others?" and "Leave someone out of a group on purpose?" were used most often.

Research question three was: What were the characteristics of the individuals whom females targeted when engaging in bullying? The results indicated that "sarcastic" and "different" were consistently ranked high across the four types of aggressive behaviors. Those characteristics consistently ranked lowest were "frail", "lonely" and "withdrawn".

Research question four was: How did females who were bullied by others cope with their experiences of victimization? The results indicated that the majority of participants "Held in their emotions" as a coping technique, "Kept things bottled up inside" and/or "Changing who they hung around with". It was troubling that 11 participants indicated they had "attempted suicide" and 37 had "suicidal thoughts" as strategies to cope with being bullied.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Limitations, Recommendations and Implications

Smokowski & Kopasz (2005) reported that bullying and victimization has increased over the past 25 years. Considering that the U.S. has the highest rates of aggression incidents in the world, experts have deemed bullying and victimization as one of the most critical issues facing U.S. schools today (Seals & Young, 2003). Research on bullying, victimization and aggression has traditionally focused on males; however, recent research indicates that females engage in bullying behaviors as well. Experts find this problematic as the few studies conducted solely on females indicate that female aggression is becoming more prevalent (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The current study examined four forms of aggression (physical, verbal, relational and cyber) to identify which was used most often during female university students' high school years, the characteristics of the individuals females targeted when engaging in the aggressive behaviors and the coping strategies used if participants were victimized by others.

The limited amount of research on female bullying has shown that females tend to engage in more indirect forms of bullying behaviors, such as spreading rumors and isolating victims (Kyriakides, et al., 2006), a finding replicated in this study. As expected, the most common form of aggression by participants was verbal, followed closely by relational. The two individual behaviors that were used the most often were calling peers mean and nasty names and teasing

others. Overall, 61% of the participants in this study engaged in verbal aggression.

Relational aggression was the second type of behavior used most often by participants. Of the entire sample, 41.7% admitted they used relationally aggressive tactics. The most common individual relationally aggressive behavior in this study was to purposely leave someone out of a group.

It is very intuitive that girls are more relationally aggressive than physically aggressive. The reasons for this could be that the acts of relational aggression are harder to identify and address, are often done at home or away from others, and can be easily denied as there are no visible aspects of victimization (i.e., no black eyes or bruises). Creating prevention programs that focus directly on relational aggression may be constructive in helping to identify the artifacts of relational aggression.

In past research, physical bullying behaviors have been attributed primarily to males. However, findings in this study indicated that females also participate in overt physical aggression. Of the participants in the sample, 29.4% indicated they had been physically aggressive with a peer in high school. In fact, overt physical aggression was recently featured on several news programs as a female was pummeled by several cheerleaders while an onlooker videotaped the incident. Females not only engage in physical aggression, sometimes they are, in fact, even proud of it (Cable News Network [CNN], 2008).

Most females are engaging in relational aggression, however, one-third of the participants in this study did indicate that they had used some type of

physical aggression toward a peer. Therefore, it is possible that the prevention programs focusing on male bullying could be translated to females that are engaging in physical aggression toward another.

Cyber aggression is a fairly new form of aggression (Smith, 2004; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Langevin, n.d.; Li, 2006) and the current study revealed that females do indeed bully other females in cyberspace. In the current study, 19.6% of the participants reported that they had used cyber aggression. According to Li (2006), cyber aggression is the preferred method of bullying for females because of its subversive nature, but in the current study it was verbal and relational aggression that females used the most often.

Only 20% of the participants in this study indicated that they had used cyber aggression. It is assumed by the researcher that the retroactive aspect of the data in this study played a role in the low number of participants indicating use of cyber aggression. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 45 years old with the mean being 20.57 years of age. This puts the participants about 3 to 7 years behind the use of technology by adolescents today. Not every high school student five years ago had a cell phone or access to computers, but many do have that capability today. With the boom in the use of technology by adolescents it is crucial to look at contemporary high school students and their use of technology in bullying. It is the researchers' belief that contemporary adolescents engage in cyber bullying in much higher numbers than what this study indicates.

The characteristics of individuals that females tend to target for bullying have not been well researched to date. Victims of overt aggression have received the most attention in past literature and they were usually depicted as unable to protect themselves from abuse and frail, weak or small in stature (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). In the current study, the findings were in direct contradiction to existing literature. Across all four behavioral categories (verbal, physical, relational and cyber), the characteristics of frail and lonely were identified the least often. Sarcasm of the victim ranked the highest in two of the four categories (verbal and physical); however it was one of the most applicable characteristics for all of the categories. Other characteristics selected frequently by participants were victims being labeled as different, cynical, victims exhibiting low self-esteem, and victims displaying too much emotion.

When using self-report data, information is filtered through the participant's perspective. An observational study may provide a more accurate picture of actual victim characteristics. Identifying victim characteristics through the eyes of the perpetrator may not provide as rich of a picture of the situation.

Bullies could be selecting their victims based upon the above characteristics for a number of reasons. It could be that bullies target victims that are sarcastic because sarcasm is a masked form of hostility. Perhaps the females in this study recognized sarcasm as aggression and reacted to it similarly. This is an important finding because families and schools can teach children to avoid sarcasm and use more effective and positive forms of communication. Bullies may feel more important or popular, have the ability to

have control over certain situations, or they could bully because it is the way that they had been treated over time by others around them. Environmental factors surround the way in which individuals live their lives. Bullying is a learned behavior as it is not a predisposition from birth. The bullying behaviors can be learned from school, peer groups or from home environments.

Selecting individuals to target can be easy for some. Some may see the same characteristics within themselves. An example would be someone who is sarcastic, always mouthing off. Bullies can find individuals to target who is similar to them or they could target them for being different in some aspect. Why they do it is unknown to most but the environment around us can tell us a lot about the person and maybe why they do what they do.

Seventy nine percent of the participants had been a victim of relational aggression, 73.8% were victims of verbal aggression, 63.1% victims of physical aggression and 39.6% were victims of cyber aggression. Overall, 92% of the participants in this study had been a victim of some form of bullying at least once during their high school years. To cope, most of the participants that were bullied held in their emotions or kept them bottled up inside. Past research has indicated that one of the most common ways to cope with victimization is to keep emotions bottled up inside (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005), so the findings from the current study were consistent with the literature. However, the study presented in this thesis included a much longer list of coping mechanisms and found that participants coped with bullying in other ways. In addition to holding in emotions and keeping things bottled up inside, participants changed friends, exhibited low

self-esteem, became depressed or felt lonely. Although suicidal thoughts and attempts were not selected as frequently in comparison to other coping responses, it is chilling that a little over one-sixth (17.6%) of the participants reported that they had thought about suicide and 5.3% had tried to kill themselves as a result of bullying. This finding clearly emphasizes the troubling nature of female bullying.

Society needs to be aware of what bullying is and how detrimental the effects can be on the victims of bullying incidents. It is important to be able to recognize victimization, even in subtle forms and the changes in an individual that has been bullied (e.g., mood, diet, friendships). Parents, teachers, and friends need to be ready to listen and talk with victims, offer to help them find counseling and always take their thoughts about suicide seriously.

Overall, the instrument in this study was quantitative in nature. However, it appeared that the participants had more to say by adding rich qualitative data despite the fact that the instrument was quantitative in nature. For instance one participant added "*Withdrew from others and felt as though I was not a good person. It was rough, but I had a lot of family/emotional issues on top of it. So trust was huge with me, eating disorder (disordered) developed and being "to myself" was common. Since then I've grown and matured – looking at the past as nothing but a learning experience in which I grew and flourished from. That the beauty in this life.*" Allowing participants to enter qualitative data can be a positive piece in the research process. It allows the researchers to gain further knowledge and information as to how participants are feeling and what their

thoughts are about the topics or issues at hand. When researchers rely solely on quantitative data, the results are determined exclusively on what the participants have self-reported on the survey instruments.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. One limitation was the small convenience sample that made the data less generalizable to the population. Another limitation was the variety of participants in this study. A majority of the participants came from the School of Family and Consumer Sciences. Students majoring in Family and Consumer Sciences are interested in human development, nutrition, consumer studies, merchandising, textile design and hospitality management. A wider variety of students across several majors may have given different results. An example would be that a student majoring in Math may look at bullying and victimization differently than a student majoring in Family and Consumer Sciences because Math majors focus on numbers while Family and Consumer Sciences majors focus on human behavior and may have more insight into motivation, reactions, and coping mechanisms. Five sororities were also involved in this study. Not every sorority member was a major in Family and Consumer Sciences. Clearly, a sample including students from a variety of academic majors could make the study more generalizable to the general population. Since the study was completed in a midwestern university primarily made up of Caucasian students, diversity was minimal, which was also a limitation to the current study.

The current study was also cross-sectional. A longitudinal design would have allowed a longer and more comprehensive examination of female bullying over time. A final limitation of this study was the self-report methodology. Interviews and focus groups may have revealed information about bullying behaviors, victim characteristics, and coping mechanisms beyond what the researcher was able to preconceive. In addition, self-report surveys run the risk of misinterpretation as was evidenced in the open-ended coping response question (participants wrote about romantic relationship violence rather than bullying).

Recommendations and Implications

Several recommendations are proposed by the researcher as additional exploration is needed due to the lack of research on bullying that is exclusive to females. A longitudinal study design that followed females through their high school years to examine bullying over time would provide rich detail about female bullying. Conducting a longitudinal study would allow the researchers to track how females grow, converse, and react throughout their high school years. Since adolescence is a very trying and important developmental period in one's life, females are learning about self-image and self-perceptions of not only themselves but the others around them. The adolescent body makes many changes both physically and emotionally. Collecting data on relationships amongst peers, over a period of time, would allow researchers to better understand why some are more at risk for violence than others. Longitudinal data would provide details about adolescent characteristics of behavior (in

general) and coping mechanisms used to manage the issues of everyday life. Putting the pieces of the puzzle together would allow researchers to better understand adolescents, why they do the things they do and why they treat others as they do.

When considering coping strategies, future research should investigate the specific mechanisms used to deal with bullying experiences and the long-term outcomes associated with victimization. Investigating the coping mechanisms of those targeted and the long-term outcomes associated with victimization can do a number of things. First, it would give insight as to how the participants actually manage bullying incidents from a victim's standpoint. Second, it would allow researchers to further understand why different types of bullying behaviors affect individuals differently. In other words, why does cyber harassment cause one person to attempt suicide while another individual may only experience nightmares? Next, researchers would be able to take a closer look at the long-term outcomes and work with medical and counseling personnel to set up advanced treatment options for participants that are affected by bullying incidents. Finally, researchers may be able to pinpoint certain factors, or triggers, that enable individuals to use certain coping mechanisms over others. Being able to monitor various coping mechanisms would allow researchers to examine which coping mechanisms are more conducive to positive outcome for the victim.

Finally, future research should include parents or primary caregivers as participants in the process to see how they cope with the experiences of their

children either being victimized or labeled as a bully. Including parents or primary caregivers would allow researchers to examine how they are affected by an incident. Do parents or caregivers know that their child has been victimized or is victimizing others? Are they allowing it to happen? What are the steps they are taking to prevent or stop the incidents?

Inclusion of males in this study may have provided more information about the number of female bullies that target males as their victims. Researchers could have determined how many females target only males and why they targeted them specifically. Male participants would have been able to provide direct male to female comparisons in regards to bullying behavior and experiences.

With today's advancement of technology, many high school students have experience with different types of electronic devices in comparison to older age individuals. During the study, participants were asked what types of electronic devices they owned or had access to during their high school years. The most common electronic device was a cell phone with text messaging capability (85.8%), followed by a personal computer with email and Internet access (82.6%) and cell phones with picture taking capabilities (65.8%). These statistics reflect that well over half of our participants are current with today's technology. This means that as new electronic devices are made, students, as consumers will purchase the items and eventually will find ways to harass or taunt their victims.

The current study has implications for public policy regarding bullying in the school system. One policy recommendation is to include the use of the

school system in tracking data on female bullies and victims. These data could be used to educate and mentor faculty and staff on appropriated and effective ways to recognize and deal with bullying behaviors. Such data would also help the school board administration create and implement a more successful school program against bullying.

Another policy recommendation is to create an educational school awareness workshop or program for students. Such a program would help students learn the aspects of bullying, recognize the different types of behaviors that can be exhibited by classmates, reinforce rules and policies against bullying behavior, and assist in incident reporting. A successful anti-bullying policy and program for students would allow administration, faculty, and students to reduce violence in schools and increase safety in schools across the country.

A final recommendation would be that School and Community Resource Centers work together to create a comprehensive anti-bullying program that fabricates a lasting impact upon adolescents, families and community volunteers by establishing an effective anti-bullying awareness and prevention program. Social service professionals should partner with school personnel and other volunteers to create a collaborative learning program that teaches and incorporates cultural change by addressing topics related to bullying. A successful program could include information and materials related to the different types of bullying (verbal, physical, relational and cyber) and focus on situations that lead to bullying (cliques, gang activity, negative adult role models). Social service professionals, school personnel and community volunteers could

be able to identify and support students in regard to their strengths and weaknesses in dealing with bullying behaviors. The inclusion of focus groups available to students of all ages, family members and other community volunteers would accentuate on-going approaches to learn the skills needed to handle bullying incidents. Anonymous self-report surveys and follow-up assessments of individuals who wish to receive support and guidance on bullying awareness and prevention would verify that all goals and objectives of a successful program are in place.

The focus of the current research was to examine the nature and frequency of female bullying behaviors, the characteristics of victims that are targeted by females, and coping mechanisms of females that have been bullied. Results indicated that the majority of the participants had been aggressive toward a peer and had been a victim of a peer's aggression. In general, the verbally and relationally aggressive behaviors were used the most often by participants in this study. The participants reported that when they were the aggressors, sarcasm, difference from peers, cynicism, low self-esteem and displaying too much emotion applied to the individuals that they targeted for abuse. Finally, findings indicated that victims of aggression in this study coped with their victimization experiences by holding in their emotions, keeping issues to themselves, changing their peer group, and considering or attempting suicide.

The findings from this study illustrated how common bullying is among female high school students. More research is needed on this crucial issue as the outcomes associated with female bullying are alarming. Policymakers should

give serious consideration to requiring and implementing anti-bullying policies and programs in all schools as a preventative effort to thwart this troubling issue.

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Appendix A

Experiences with Peer Aggression Questionnaire

You are being asked to participate in a study exploring high school experiences with peer aggression. Results of this study will be used for a Master's level thesis at Eastern Illinois University in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences, which is being supervised by Dr. Lisa Taylor. Your participation in this study will be for research purposes only and is entirely voluntary. Please be honest with all answers. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study is completely anonymous.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at: syschwab@eiu.edu.

SECTION I

Personal Background Information

1. How old are you? _____ (in years)
2. Gender (check one) _____ Female _____ Male
3. Ethnic background (check one)
 - _____ White/Caucasian
 - _____ Black/African American
 - _____ Asian or Pacific Islander
 - _____ Hispanic
 - _____ American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - _____ Other (specify) _____
4. While in high school (9th through 12th grade), which of the following electronic devices did you own/have access to (check all that apply)?
 - _____ Personal Computer with E-Mail and Internet Access
 - _____ Webpage building software
 - _____ Cell phone with text-messaging capability
 - _____ Cell phone with picture taking capability
 - _____ Digital camera or video recorder
 - _____ Other (specify) _____

SECTION II**Personal experiences with peer aggression**

Please respond to the next set of questions by circling the response from the scale below that best describes how often the behavior under question was directed **TOWARD YOU** during your high school years.

1	2	3	4
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently

During your high school years, how often **DID A CLASSMATE/PEER...**

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 5. | Hit you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. | Shove you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. | Punch you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. | Kick you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. | Bite you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. | Trip you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. | Spit on you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. | Steal from you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. | Vandalize something of yours? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. | Threaten you with physical force? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. | Tease you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. | Call you mean/nasty names? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. | Start rumors about you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. | Leave you out of a group on purpose? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Occasionally	4 Frequently
19. Send a text message to bully or harass you?	1	2	3	4
20. Create a website to bully or harass you?	1	2	3	4
21. Enter or add pictures on-line without your permission to bully or harass you?	1	2	3	4
22. Write mean/nasty blogs about you?	1	2	3	4
23. Send instant messages through the Internet to bully or harass you?	1	2	3	4
24. Make threatening phone calls to bully or harass you?	1	2	3	4
25. Take camera phone pictures of you without permission and show them to others to embarrass you?	1	2	3	4
<hr/>				
26. Did a classmate/peer bully or harass you in any other way?	Yes		No	
27. If you were bullied or harassed in some other way, please explain how you were bullied or harassed.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>			

Please respond to the next set of questions by circling the response from the scale below that best describes how often the behavior under question was used **BY YOU** toward others during your high school years.

1	2	3	4
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently

During your high school years, how often **DID YOU...**

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|
| 28. | Hit others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. | Shove others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. | Punch others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. | Kick others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. | Bite others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. | Trip others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. | Spit on others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35. | Steal from others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 36. | Vandalize one's belongings? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 37. | Threaten others with physical force? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 38. | Tease others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. | Call others mean/nasty names? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. | Leave someone out of a group on purpose? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 41. | Send a text message to bully or harass others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 42. | Create a website to bully or harass others? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Occasionally	4 Frequently
43. Enter or add pictures on-line without permission to bully or harass others?	1	2	3	4
44. Write mean/nasty blogs about others?	1	2	3	4
45. Send instant messages through the Internet to bully or harass others?	1	2	3	4
46. Make threatening phone calls to bully or harass others?	1	2	3	4
47. Take camera phone pictures of others without their permission, show them to others to embarrass them?	1	2	3	4

48. Did you bully or harass a classmate/peer in any other way? Yes No
49. If you did bully or harass another classmate/peer in any other way, please explain how you carried out the bullying or harassment.

SECTION III**Characteristics of Behavior(s)****Verbal behaviors**

Have you ever engaged in verbal behavior (calling individuals nasty names, making threats, teasing, slandering or taunting others) **toward another classmate or peer?**

Yes**No**

If so, was the individual?

 Unassertive Cynical Sensitive Overly emotional Shy Withdrawn Low self-esteem Sarcastic Frail Poor in sports Different Lonely**Physical behaviors**

Have you ever engaged in physical behavior (hitting, kicking, shoving, punching, biting, tripping, spitting, stealing, vandalizing or using the threat of physical force to another person) **toward another classmate or peer?**

Yes**No**

If so, was the individual?

 Unassertive Cynical Sensitive Overly emotional Shy Withdrawn Low self-esteem Sarcastic Frail Poor in sports Different Lonely

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Relational behaviors

Have you ever engaged in relational behavior (spreading of rumors and stories, the making of racial slurs, gossiping, use of negative body language or facial expressions, influence of other to reject or exclude one from participating in social activities) **toward another classmate or peer?**

Yes**No**

If so, was the individual?

 Unassertive Cynical Sensitive Overly emotional Shy Withdrawn Low self-esteem Sarcastic Frail Poor in sports Different Lonely**Cyber behaviors**

Have you ever engaged in relational behavior (using digital communication devices or the Internet to post harmful/cruel text messages or images about another individual with or without their knowledge) **toward another classmate or peer?**

Yes**No**

If so, was the individual?

 Unassertive Cynical Sensitive Overly emotional Shy Withdrawn Low self-esteem Sarcastic Frail Poor in sports Different Lonely

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SECTION IV**Coping Behaviors**

If you were ever bullied and/or harassed by a classmate or peer, circle "yes" for all of the following behaviors, thoughts, or health issues that applied to how **YOU COPE** WITH THE EXPERIENCE and "no" for those that do not. If you were never bullied and/or harassed by a classmate or peer, please circle "n/a" for all of the behaviors below.

Became depressed	Yes	No	N/a
Was overly anxious	Yes	No	N/a
Excessive alcohol use	Yes	No	N/a
Excessive illegal drug use	Yes	No	N/a
Smoked cigarettes	Yes	No	N/a
Changed who you hung out with	Yes	No	N/a
Had suicidal thoughts	Yes	No	N/a
Attempted suicide	Yes	No	N/a
Developed an eating disorder	Yes	No	N/a
Was absent from school a great deal	Yes	No	N/a
Performed poorly in school	Yes	No	N/a
Was lonely	Yes	No	N/a
Felt abandoned	Yes	No	N/a
Was apprehensive	Yes	No	N/a
Developed low self-esteem	Yes	No	N/a
Developed a negative self-image	Yes	No	N/a
Experienced headaches	Yes	No	N/a
Had nightmares	Yes	No	N/a

Claimed to be sick when you weren't	Yes	No	N/a
Withdrew from family and/or friends	Yes	No	N/a
Held in your emotions	Yes	No	N/a
Kept things bottled up inside of you	Yes	No	N/a
Lashed out at others verbally	Yes	No	N/a
Became physically aggressive towards others	Yes	No	N/a
Had trouble paying attention in school	Yes	No	N/a
Exhibited difficulty controlling anger	Yes	No	N/a
Tried to annoy others around you	Yes	No	N/a

If you were ever bullied and/or harassed by a classmate or peer, did you experience any problems with **any of your relationships** (i.e., intimate relationships, friendships, family relationships) following the experience?

Yes

No

If so, please describe the nature of these problems.

END OF EXPERIENCES WITH PEER AGGRESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

High School Experiences With Bullying and Victimization in Female Midwestern University Students

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Shannon Schwab, Graduate Student, from the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine bullying behaviors experienced or exhibited by females during high school.

- **PROCEDURES**

Volunteers participating in this study will be asked to:

- (a) Complete a self-report questionnaire covering four sections that will be used for exploratory purposes only.

(Section 1) asks general background information about the participants' age, gender, ethnic background, and the types of electronic devices owned or accessible by participant.

(Section 2) asks the participants' about their personal experiences with peer aggression. This section involves answering questions on issues addressing how often classmates or peers used aggression toward participants in the study and how often did the participant use aggression toward others.

(Section 3) asks questions about behavior characteristics displayed by victims with each type of aggression (i.e., verbal, physical, relational and cyber-harassment).

(Section 4) asks questions related to coping experiences displayed by participants (i.e., if they were ever victimized by classmates or peers).

The questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Since the data in this study is confidential, there is no risk to the participants, third parties, or society. However, the questionnaire contains questions about bullying and victimization; some participants may feel uncomfortable in answering certain questions. If, at any time, participants feel they cannot continue, they can withdraw or decline to participate by returning the questionnaire to the researcher in the enclosed envelope. Any participant who wishes to speak with a counselor about a situation is free to do so. Phone numbers to two different services providing aid for emotional and health problems are given below. Eastern Illinois University Counseling Center: 217-581-3413; Health Services: 217-581-3013. Participants' confidentiality will be respected.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Participants will not directly benefit from participation in this study. However, as a result of participating in this research, participants may become more aware of the need for research in the area of female bullying and victimization. The researcher believes the potential benefits to society will be an increase in knowledge of the issue. Exploring female bullying and victimization can provide the university with the information needed to teach individuals on the rising concerns and awareness of adolescent female aggression.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of safeguarding all questionnaires and will become property of Eastern Illinois University and the School of Family and Consumer Sciences. Participants will not record any personal data, such as name and social security number on the questionnaire. The researcher will store and secure all data. Access will be permitted to the researcher and those on the thesis committee.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. Once the participant volunteers to be in this study, they may choose to withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which otherwise entitled. The participant may also refuse to answer any questions they do not want to answer. There is no penalty for withdrawal from the study and participants will not lose any benefits to which otherwise entitled. The

investigator may withdraw the participant from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact research personnel: Principal Investigator, Shannon Schwab, Graduate Student by email at syschwab@eiu.edu, or Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Lisa Taylor, Assistant Professor at 217-581-8584 or by email at lmtaylor@eiu.edu.

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If there are any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, participants may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

Participants will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about their rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Shannon Y. Schwab
Graduate Student, Eastern Illinois University
School of Family and Consumer Sciences

Date