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The relationship between the perception of school violence and gender in West Virginia

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Abstract

This study examined the perceptions of 659 students in the 6th, 9th, and 12th grades in three West Virginia counties. The students were given a survey that consisted of eleven scenarios. Each scenario suggested a potentially violent situation. The student participating in the survey was asked to rate each scenario on a 5-point Likert scale. Within the four versions of the survey, gender was alternated so that a different ratio of fear responses could be determined in relation to gender. The results of the responses of the actual male and female subjects in each scenario were examined. A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Chronbach's alpha showed an alpha level of .8224. Results showed that male and female subjects perceived the male student to be more aggressive than the female student in ten out of the eleven scenarios. Out of the 22 possible scenarios (11 scenarios with female students and 11 scenarios with male students), the results of this study identified three statistically significant scenarios.

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In closing, I would like to dedicate this to my family. My mother and father, David and Mary Keeney, have provided unconditional encouragement along this long, bumpy road. To my phenomenal husband, Mike---thank you for being that second parent when I could not be. You have always reminded me that my goals were reachable, even when I was not so sure. And lastly, to my daughter, Madeline---even though you are too

young to understand the importance of this, I want you to know that I would gladly make the sacrifices all over again if it meant securing a better future for you.

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The Relationship between the Perception of School Violence and Gender in West Virginia

Prior to 1960, school violence and student victimization was of little concern to educators. School administrators did not require teachers to collect violence data on a regular basis; therefore, attacks or acts associated with violence, such as vandalism or robberies, were not recorded. School violence did not arise as an identified problem until the mid-1970s. In the mid-80s, youth violence continued to grow, not only in schools, but in communities as well. During the 1990s, many people attributed adolescent violence outside of the home to changes in family structure. For example, divorce rates increased, resulting in more single-parent households. This change led to one-income families that had only one parent to provide supervision. Often, this economic change left the remaining parent with little choice but to work more than one job, thus forcing the parent to spend even more time away from their child(ren).

In 1998, President William Clinton asked the United States Department of Education and the Department of Justice to develop a plan that would address the nationwide problem of violence in schools. This guide was called *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools.* As a follow-up resource, the Departments then created a publication called *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide.* These actions emphasize the fact that, in the 21st century, school violence that infringes on student safety and the interruption of academic learning has become a dire concern for parents, school administrators, and government officials. Many schools now use safety precautions such as metal detectors, video cameras, I.D. badges, and hired security staff to assure the safety of faculty and students. The federal government has also become involved by funding studies related to school violence.

Longitudinal studies are showing that children who exhibit violent behaviors in childhood are at a higher risk for committing serious violent offenses in adolescence or adulthood (Farrington, 1998; Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, Harachi, 1998). By analyzing data from the National Youth Survey, Elliot (1994) found that 45 percent of youths who initiated violence by age 11 went on to commit violent offenses by their early 20s. Thornberry, Hurzinga, and Loeber (1995) found similar results in their analysis of data from the Rochester Youth Development Study. They found that 39 percent of children who initiated violence before age 9 and 30 percent of youths who initiated violence between the ages of 10 and 12, committed violent offenses. Other early predictors of adolescent violence include combinations of the following characteristics: poor grades, low self-esteem, early drug use, impaired cognitive functioning, a history of physical abuse, availability of weapons, and a lack of familial support.

In the past decade, a trend of school violence has developed. Even though the majority of violent acts committed by adolescents occur at home or in their community, an increasingly large number of violent acts are now being committed at school. The Center for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a school-based survey designed to produce a nationally representative sample of risk behaviors among students in grades 9-12 (NCIPC, 2000). The 1997 YRBS showed the following nationwide statistics: thirty days preceding the survey, 8.5% of high school students carried a weapon on school property, 7.4% of high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, and 4% of students had missed one or more days of school because they felt unsafe at school. Between 1985 and 1991, annual

homicide rates among males 15-19 years old increased 154 percent (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1994). Since 1992, there have been more than 211 school deaths associated with violence (Wolf, 1998).

Hill and Drolet (1999) used the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to collect data related to school violence among adolescents between 1993 and 1995. Results showed that males were more likely than females to carry weapons on school property, to get threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, and to get into a physical fight. Furthermore, Benson and Roehlkepartain (1992) examined data from 47,000 sixth through twelfth graders in towns and cities smaller than 50,000 in population. Among males, 65 percent were involved in at least one violent behavior, compared to 45 percent of females (Benson et al., 1992). Since 1994, the Department of Education in West Virginia has been required to report to the federal government every gun related incident (Saxton, 2000). Each West Virginia county in this study has reported that a student has brought a gun (a pistol, revolver, or shotgun) to school.

The majority of past studies looking at violence have focused on males and physical aggression. Based on statistical evidence, what we know about the relationship between gender and implied threat among adolescents is that males are more likely than females to be involved in aggressive crimes (i.e., robbery, physical fights, aggravated assault). In 1997, St. George and Thomas examined the aggressive behavior of middle school students (6th, 7th, and 8th). They found that fighting was associated with more males than females (33 percent versus 23 percent). A cultural factor that may predispose a person to violence is the male belief in physical prowess, toughness, search for thrills, and actions (Rosenberg & Fenely, 1991). Even though males still complete more acts of serious violence, statistics indicate that girls are becoming increasingly involved in

aggressive crimes. In 1995, female juvenile arrests increased 34%, nearly four times the male juvenile increase of 9 % (Snyder, 1997).

Overall, adolescent violence is unacceptably high. Although studies show that adolescent males threaten, bully, and commit aggressive acts more often than female adolescents, crimes committed by adolescent females are on the rise. Combined accessibility to weapons and violent messages, used by the media and entertainment industry to sell movies and CDs, bombards adolescents with constant negativity. As a result of the nationwide data that is now being circulated in journals, crime prevention websites, and government studies, many federal and state governments are creating educational programs that educators are required to implement in their daily curriculum. These pro-active programs target all students, not just "at-risk" students who show "characteristics" or "signs" of being violent or aggressive. Some of these programs include mentoring, peer mediation, and after-school programs. Because children spend the majority of their day at school, this is an excellent place to start.

Because there has been little research conducted on male and female students and their perceptions of aggressive situations in relation to gender, the hypothesis of this study is that male *and* female subjects will perceive male students to be more aggressive than female students in each of the eleven scenarios.

Method

Subjects

The population from which subjects were selected for this study were students who attended middle and high schools in three West Virginia counties. The counties included Harrison, Lincoln, and Marion. Participation was voluntary. Students were

disqualified if their parents disapproved of their participation by responding to a parental notice. Subjects were 6th, 9th, and 12th graders. The subjects were sorted into groups by homeroom. The study included 642 subjects. Since the study was conducted in a variety of schools and geographic areas, there was diversity in the composition of socioeconomic status of the students; however, based on Census 2000 data, most students were predicted to fall into the low to low-middle SES category.

Instrumentation

The examiners created the survey. Each examiner was required to create five ambiguous scenarios that presented an interaction or observation that may or may not have suggested a potentially violent situation. From the twenty-five scenarios, the group selected eleven scenarios that best represented the sample (See Appendix A). The demographic section consisted of items 1-7. Each subject was asked non-identifiable data such as age, gender, grade level, race, academic grades, the amount of time they watched TV, and the number of sports teams they were a part of. Item 8 asked if the subject had ever been threatened or bullied at school. The scenario section consisted of questions 9-19. The level of threat perceived by the subjects was measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The Likert scale consisted of the following levels of threat: 1=Not at all, 2=Possibly, 3=Somewhat likely, 4=Very likely, 5=Definitely. There were four versions of this survey: A, B, C, and D. Within the four versions, gender was alternated so that a different ratio of fear responses could be determined in relation to gender. Chronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency. The "good" alpha level (.8224) showed that the items within the instrument measured the same thing. The closer the alpha level is to 1.00, the greater the internal consistency of items in the instrument being assessed.

Procedure

In this study, the research team consisted of five psychology graduate students. The team examined what characteristics middle and high school students in West Virginia *actually perceived* to be aggressive or non- aggressive. Our goal was to explore students' perceptions of school violence and aggression. We also wanted to determine whether there were differences between different types of individuals. This goal was accomplished by administering two questionnaires. The first questionnaire (see Appendix A) had eleven ambiguous scenarios that presented an interaction or observation that may or may not have suggested a potentially violent situation. Before completing the questionnaire, the student was asked to complete a demographic section consisting of the following non-identifiable data: age, gender, grade level, race, academic grades, the amount of time they spent watching television, and the number of sports teams they were a part of. A second area that was examined was how children viewed issues regarding the aspects of violence, guns, and behaviors that involved conflict between others. This was accomplished by administering the second questionnaire (this was not included in Appendix A due to copyright laws), the Attitudes Toward Guns and Violence Questionnaire (AGVQ). The questionnaire was developed by Jeremy P. Shapiro, Ph.D. and is made up of four subscales (Shame, Comfort, Excitement, and Power/Safety). Prior to data collection, a letter (see Appendix B) was sent to school administrators explaining the study and asking for their participation. Also, a parental consent form (see Appendix C) was sent to the parents of each student in the 6th, 9th, and 12th grade homeroom classes by school staff. This notice informed the parent of the study and asked for permission to allow their child to participate in the anonymous study.

The researchers, and their assistants, were all graduate psychology students at Marshall University Graduate College. The researchers trained approximately four assistants who helped with the data collection. The training was conducted by two researchers who provided the assistants with a short summary explaining the study and the duties they were assigned to complete (see Appendix D). All questions from the assistants were answered during the training session by the two researchers until they were knowledgeable about their assigned role(s). A one-paragraph summary was also developed so that the researchers and their assistants would have a standardized format to follow (see Appendix E).

The homeroom class setting was a controlled environment. The subjects had no knowledge of the hypothesis because of the pre-packaged envelopes. The envelopes had no identifying information on the outside. Each envelope contained one survey and one questionnaire. There were four versions of this survey (A, B, C, or D), but only one was placed in each envelope. The survey consisted of eleven ambiguous scenarios (see Appendix A) that presented an interaction or observation that may or may not have suggested a potentially violent situation. The questionnaire, the Attitudes Toward Guns and Violence Questionnaire (AGVQ), examines how children view issues regarding the aspects of violence, guns, and behaviors that involve conflict between others. The surveys were randomly distributed to the subjects. The surveys were placed in a 10" x 13" envelope. The classroom procedures were as follows:

1. Prior to entering the homeroom class, the researchers requested and obtained an approximate number of subjects who were in the homeroom class.
2. The researchers distributed pre-packaged envelopes to the subjects after checking the attendance report for each classroom. For example, if there were 24

subjects in each homeroom class, the researcher provided a box containing 24 envelopes. Each box was labeled so that it could be linked to the appropriate school and grade of the classroom. Each envelope contained one A, B, C, or D survey and one Attitudes Toward Guns and Violence Questionnaire. Any remaining packets were kept by the researchers.

3. Before distributing the packets, the researchers read a standard paragraph of instructions to the class (see Appendix E). The researchers then read a standardized paragraph found on the AutoScore Form of the AGVQ to the subjects (see Appendix E).
4. After each subject finished the surveys, the researchers collected the envelopes and verified that all components of the envelope were present.
5. All envelopes were returned to the corresponding box by the examiner.

Results

Analysis of Data

A between-subjects approach was used. A group-comparison design was used because of the identified independent variable. The independent variable was gender. The group-comparison design was also used because gender and race was manipulated in each survey, in addition, gender was examined nonparametrically because it was a categorical variable. The dependent variable was the level of threat perceived by the subjects and was measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The Likert scale consisted of the following levels of threat: 1=Not at all, 2=Possibly, 3=Somewhat likely, 4=Very likely, 5=Definitely. The results of the responses of the actual male and female subjects were examined. A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used because it is a procedure that designates a single dependent variable that is always continuous (the level of threat)

and utilizes exactly two independent variables that are always categorical (males and females).

Forms 1, 2, 3, and 4

Because the independent variable was categorical, recoding had to occur so that females and males could be compared between the four scenarios. Form 1 represented Surveys A and D. Form 2 represented Surveys B and C. Form 3 represented Surveys A and B. Form 4 represented Surveys C and D.

Scenario 9, Form 1 and 2

In Scenario 9, Form 1, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score females significantly higher ($M = 2.62$) than female subjects scored females ($M = 2.48$), $F(1, 302) = 1.541$, $p = .22$. In Scenario 9, Form 2, the potential aggressor was male. There was a significant main effect for gender. Female subjects scored males significantly higher ($M = 3.02$) than male subjects scored males ($M = 2.67$), $F(1, 319) = 9.441$, $p = .00$ (See Table 1). Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 10, Form 1 and 2

In Scenario 10, Form 1, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score males significantly higher ($M = 3.37$) than female subjects scored males ($M = 3.34$), $F(1, 302) = .062$, $p = .80$. In Scenario 10, Form 2, the potential aggressor was female. There was a significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score females significantly higher ($M = 3.18$) than male subjects scored females ($M = 3.14$), $F(1, 319) = .136$, $p = .71$. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 11, Form 1 and 2

In Scenario 11, Form 1, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score females significantly higher (M = 2.46) than female subjects scored females (M = 2.31), F (1, 300) = 1.550, p = .21. In Scenario 11, Form 2, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score males significantly higher (M = 2.592) than female subjects scored males (M = 2.590), F (1, 317) = .000, p = .99. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 12, Form 1 and 2

In Scenario 12, Form 1, the potential aggressor was female. There was a significant main effect for gender. Female subjects scored females significantly higher (M = 3.54) than male subjects scored females (M = 3.30), F (1, 300) = 3.754, p = .05 (see Table 2). In Scenario 12, Form 2, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score males significantly higher (M = 3.47) than female subjects scored males (M = 3.43), F (1, 318) = .098, p = .75. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 13, Form 3 and 4

In Scenario 13, Form 3, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score females significantly higher (M = 2.92) than female subjects scored females (M = 2.84), F (1, 321) = .648, p = .42. In Scenario 13, Form 4, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score males significantly higher (M = 2.98) than male subjects scored males (M = 2.86), F (1, 297) = .948, p = .33. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 14, Form 3 and 4

In Scenario 14, Form 3, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score males significantly higher (M = 3.36) than male subjects scored males (M = 3.32), F (1, 315) = .061, p = .81. In Scenario 14, Form 4, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score females significantly higher (M = 3.21) than male subjects scored females (M = 3.07), F (1, 287) = 1.120, p = .29. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 15, Form 3 and 4

In Scenario 15, Form 3, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score females significantly higher (M = 2.28) than female subjects scored females (M = 2.12), F (1, 314) = 1.828, p = .18. In Scenario 15, Form 4, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score males significantly higher (M = 2.25) than male subjects scored males (M = 2.16), F (1, 287) = .419, p = .52. Overall, male and female subjects found females to be more threatening.

Scenario 16, Form 3 and 4

In Scenario 16, Form 3, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score males significantly higher (M = 2.89) than female subjects scored males (M = 2.74), F (1, 315) = 1.374, p = .24. In Scenario 16, Form 4, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score females significantly higher (M = 2.534) than female subjects scored females (M = 2.531), F (1, 287) = .003, p = .95. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 17, Form 3 and 4

In Scenario 17, Form 3, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score females significantly higher ($M = 2.81$) than male subjects scored females ($M = 2.75$), $F(1, 313) = .214$, $p = .64$. In Scenario 17, Form 4, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score males significantly higher ($M = 2.91$) than male subjects scored males ($M = 2.77$), $F(1, 286) = 1.054$, $p = .31$. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 18, Form 3 and 4

In Scenario 18, Form 3, the potential aggressor was male. There was a significant main effect for gender. Male subjects scored males significantly higher ($M = 2.70$) than female subjects scored males ($M = 2.45$), $F(1, 313) = 4.014$, $p = .05$ (see Table 3). In Scenario 18, Form 4, the potential aggressor was female. There was no significant main effect for gender. Female subjects did not score females significantly higher ($M = 2.64$) than male subjects scored females ($M = 2.52$), $F(1, 284) = .839$, $p = .36$. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Scenario 19, Form 3 and 4

In Scenario 19, Form 3, the potential aggressor was female. There was not a significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score females significantly higher ($M = 2.15$) than female subjects scored females ($M = 2.06$), $F(1, 318) = .629$, $p = .43$. In Scenario 19, Form 4, the potential aggressor was male. There was no significant main effect for gender. Male subjects did not score males significantly higher ($M = 2.18$) than female subjects scored males ($M = 2.17$), $F(1, 285) = .008$, $p = .93$. Overall, male and female subjects found males to be more threatening.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Scenario 9, Form 2

Gender	Form 2	Mean	SD
Female	Total	3.0194	1.0159
Male	Total	2.667	1.0188

F values and Significance Level of Scenario 9, Form 2

	F value	Sig.
GENDER	9.441	.002

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Scenario 12, Form 1

Gender	Form 1	Mean	SD
Female	Total	3.5369	.9762
Male	Total	3.2968	1.1519

F values and Significance Level of Scenario 12, Form 1

	F value	Sig.
GENDER	3.754	.054

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Scenario 18, Form 3

Gender	Form 3	Mean	SD
Female	Total	2.4527	.9571
Male	Total	2.6982	1.1792

F values and Significance Level of Scenario 18, Form 3

	F value	Sig.
GENDER	4.014	.046

Discussion

Male and female subjects perceived the male student to be more aggressive in ten out of the eleven scenarios. In Scenario #15, male and female subjects perceived the female student to be more aggressive. This scenario involved "a female asking for permission to go to the bathroom...the teacher asks the student to wait...she gets out of her seat and walks out of the room."

Out of the twenty-two possible scenarios (eleven scenarios with female students and eleven scenarios with male students), the results of this study identified three statistically significant scenarios, two from the total female subjects and one from the total male subjects. In nineteen scenarios, female and male subjects found male and female students to be at least *possibly* aggressive, but not in a statistically significant manner.

Out of the eleven scenarios that portrayed the male student to be the possible aggressor, the female subjects gave a statistically significant response in only one scenario. In scenario 9, the female subjects perceived the male student in the situation to be *somewhat likely* to be aggressive, while the male subjects in the same scenario perceived the male student in the situation to be *possibly aggressive*. This scenario involved a "strange man standing in the bathroom...wearing torn clothes...looks like a janitor...is not wearing a school ID."

Out of the eleven scenarios that portrayed the male student to be the possible aggressor, the male subjects gave a statistically significant response in only one scenario. In scenario 18, the male subjects scored the male student in the situation *higher* for the *possibility to be aggressive*, while the female subjects scored the male student *lower* for the *possibility to be aggressive*. This scenario involved a "younger boy jumping in front

of the subject in the lunch line...is a slow learner...tells subject to 'Shut Up!'...allows another student to get in front of him."

Out of the eleven scenarios that portrayed the female student to be the possible aggressor, the female subjects gave a statistically significant response in only one scenario. In scenario 12, the female subjects scored the female student in the situation *higher* for being *somewhat likely* to be more aggressive, while the males scored the female student *lower* for being *somewhat likely* to be more aggressive. This scenario involved a "female coming down the hall...has a reputation of being a troublemaker...often punches her fists in her hands...has fought the friend of the subject." Out of the eleven scenarios that portrayed the female student to be the possible aggressor, the male subjects *did not* give a statistically significant response in any of the scenarios.

In conclusion, male and female subjects perceived the male student to be more aggressive than the female student in ten out of the eleven scenarios. In one scenario, male and female subjects perceived the female student to be more aggressive than the male student. These findings support current research in this area. Researchers have found that males are more apt to carry weapons, are perceived to be more aggressive than females, and are more likely to be involved in aggressive crimes. There are three limitations in this study that could affect this particular outcome. The first limitation is that the subjects were not assessed for reading levels prior to examination. The second limitation is that all subjects did not have the same amount of time to finish the surveys because some homeroom periods were shorter than others. The most important limitation is that the subjects were from mainly rural areas; therefore, they may not have had the chance to be exposed to similar situations as presented in the given scenarios. Future

research may want to focus on these limitations, especially the diversity issue regarding gender.

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Appendix A: Student Surveys A, B, C, and D

Student Survey -A

1. How old are you?
    A. 12 years old or younger
    B. 13 years old
    C. 14 years old
    D. 15 years old
    E. 16 years old
    F. 17 years old
    G. 18 years old or older

2. What is your sex?
    A. Female
    B. Male

3. What grade are you in?
    A. 6th Grade
    B. 7th Grade
    C. 8th Grade
    D. 9th Grade
    E. 10th Grade
    F. 11th Grade
    G. 12th Grade

4. How would you describe yourself? (Select one or more responses)
    A. American Indian or Alaska Native
    B. Asian
    C. Black or African American
    D. Hispanic or Latino
    E. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    F. White
    G. Other, please indicate: _____

5. During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?
    A. Mostly A's
    B. Mostly B's
    C. Mostly C's
    D. Mostly D's
    E. Mostly F's
    F. None of these grades
    G. Not sure

6. On an average school day, how many hours do you watch TV?
    A. I do not watch TV on an average school day
    B. Less than 1 hour per day
    C. 1 hour per day

D. 2 hours per day
E. 3 hours per day
F. 4 hours per day
G. 5 or more hours per day

7. During the past 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play? (Include any teams run by your school or community groups.)
A. 0 teams
B. 1 team
C. 2 teams
D. 3 or more teams

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8. In the last 12 months, have you been threatened or bullied at school?
A. Yes
B. No

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Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

10. The homecoming football game, you and your friends decide to go around the school to where all of the rest of the kids hang out at halftime. You walk around the dark school building and see a group of white boys. The kids have been known to get into many fights in the school and to listen to loud and angry rap music. How likely are these individuals to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

11. A 16-year-old black girl who wears black clothing all of the time and has black lipstick on decides to sit at the same table as you while you are eating lunch. She is known to not have many friends and often does not like to talk to anyone. She also has a

pierced eyebrow and both of her ears have at least three piercings. She has been known to talk to herself and has been called a Satan worshiper. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

12. A large twelve-year old white girl is coming down the same hall as you and looks angry. This girl has a reputation of being a troublemaker and has been in fights with others. She is wearing a red bandana around her head, a tank top and blue jeans. She often punches her fists in her hands because she is always angry. You know that she has been kicked out of school this year after fighting with one of your friends. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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13. You are sitting quietly against the wall and a 16-year old white female who plays ball at the local high school is coming towards you. She is wearing designer blue jeans and a t-shirt with the sleeves cut out so that you can see tattoos on each of her shoulders. She also has a gold tooth and wears many gold chains. The ball player has been known to pick on younger kids. She also has a mean look on her face. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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14. In your 6th period English class, a profoundly overweight sixteen-year-old black boy is being picked on due to his strong body odor. After a few minutes of being picked on, he says, "If you don't leave me alone, I'll kill everyone in the school." Just then, the bell rings to change classes and go to your final class of the day. After being in your last class for ten minutes, you ask the teacher if you may use the hall pass to go to your gym locker. As you enter the gym, you see the overweight sixteen-year-old black boy that was being picked on in your 6th period class. He is sitting in the gym in a long black trench coat listening to hard rock music and will not speak to anyone. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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15. In your music class, a ten-year-old white girl asks the teacher for the 5th time if she may go to the bathroom. The teacher again says for the student to wait until the lesson for the day is completed before she can go to the bathroom. The white girl gets out

of her seat and walks out of the classroom. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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16. Walking home alone from school, a red convertible with five popular white boy athletes pull up beside you and ask you if you want a ride. You know that these white boy athletes are known for picking on younger kids. How likely are these this individuals to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

17. In your 5th period class, your teacher assigns the class a group project. Everyone in the class will be paired up with another student in the class by the teacher. The teacher assigns you to work with a fourteen-year-old black girl that wears dark make-up, red, green, and orange hair, has a tongue piercing and wears all black clothing. The student is known for being a loner and has never been seen talking to anyone. The fourteen-year-old black girl turns to you and says, "You better make our project good, or else." How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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18. While waiting in the lunch line, a younger white boy jumps in front of you. You have seen him in the halls before and know that he is either in a class for slow learners or for kids with behavior disorders. You politely tell him to move to the back of the line. He tells you to "Shut up!" and lets another boy get in front of him. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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19. During a science test, the teacher walks out of the room. You glance over and see a black girl classmate looking at a cheat sheet. The classmate catches you looking at her and gives you a mean look. When the teacher re-enters the room, the girl hides the piece of paper. After grading the papers, the teacher reports that the girl you caught cheating received the only 100% in the class. You don't know the girl very well, but you have noticed she is often very quiet and keeps to herself in the hallways and in the cafeteria. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

Student Survey -B

1. How old are you?
   A. 12 years old or younger
   B. 13 years old
   C. 14 years old
   D. 15 years old
   E. 16 years old
   F. 17 years old
   G. 18 years old or older

2. What is your sex?
   A. Female
   B. Male

3. What grade are you in?
   A. 6th Grade
   B. 7th Grade
   C. 8th Grade
   D. 9th Grade
   E. 10th Grade
   F. 11th Grade
   G. 12th Grade

4. How would you describe yourself? (Select one or more responses)
   A. American Indian or Alaska Native
   B. Asian
   C. Black or African American
   D. Hispanic or Latino
   E. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   F. White
   G. Other, please indicate: _____

5. During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?
   A. Mostly A's
   B. Mostly B's
   C. Mostly C's
   D. Mostly D's
   E. Mostly F's
   F. None of these grades
   G. Not sure

6. On an average school day, how many hours do you watch TV?
   A. I do not watch TV on an average school day
   B. Less than 1 hour per day
   C. 1 hour per day
   D. 2 hours per day

E. 3 hours per day
F. 4 hours per day
G. 5 or more hours per day

7. During the past 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play? (Include any teams run by your school or community groups.)
A. 0 teams
B. 1 team
C. 2 teams
D. 3 or more teams

Bullying is verbal threats that include name-calling, teasing, and harassment; physical behavior includes fighting, shoving, blocking, slapping, and other forms of physical contact meant to cause harm.

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9. During class-time you ask the teacher if you may go to the bathroom. She asks you to take a hall pass. You get to the bathroom and notice a strange white man standing in the bathroom. He looked to be cleaning the bathroom. The man is wearing old torn clothes that are stained with grease. Although he looks like a janitor, you see that he is not wearing a school ID. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

10. At the homecoming football game, you and your friends decide to go around the school to where all of the rest of the kids hang out at halftime. You walk around the dark school building and see a group of black girls. The kids have been known to get into many fights in the school and to listen to loud and angry rap music. How likely are these individuals to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

11. A 16-year-old white boy who wears black clothing all of the time and has black lipstick on decides to sit at the same table as you while you are eating lunch. He is known to not have many friends and often does not like to talk to anyone. He also has a pierced eyebrow and both of his ears have at least three piercings. He has been known to talk to himself and has been called a Satan worshiper. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

12. A large twelve-year old black boy is coming down the same hall as you and looks angry. This boy has a reputation of being a troublemaker and has been in fights with others. He is wearing a red bandana around his head, a tank top and blue jeans. He often punches his fists in his hands because he is always angry. You know that he has been kicked out of school this year after fighting with one of your friends. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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13. You are sitting quietly against the wall and a 16-year old black female who plays ball at the local high school is coming towards you. She is wearing designer blue jeans and a t-shirt with the sleeves cut out so that you can see tattoos on each of her shoulders. She also has a gold tooth and wears many gold chains. The ball player has been known to pick on younger kids. She also has a mean look on her face. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

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15. In your music class, a ten-year-old black girl asks the teacher for the 5th time if she may go to the bathroom. The teacher again says for the student to wait until the lesson for the day is completed before she can go to the bathroom. The black girl gets out of her seat and walks out of the classroom. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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16. Walking home alone from school, a red convertible with five popular black boy athletes pull up beside you and ask you if you want a ride. You know that these black boy athletes are known for picking on younger kids. How likely are these individuals to do something aggressive?

Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
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Not At All	Possibly	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Definitely
1	2	3	4	5

Student Survey –C

1. How old are you?
   A. 12 years old or younger
   B. 13 years old
   C. 14 years old
   D. 15 years old
   E. 16 years old
   F. 17 years old
   G. 18 years old or older

2. What is your sex?
   A. Female
   B. Male

3. What grade are you in?
   A. 6th Grade
   B. 7th Grade
   C. 8th Grade
   D. 9th Grade
   E. 10th Grade
   F. 11th Grade
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4. How would you describe yourself? (Select one or more responses)
   A. American Indian or Alaska Native
   B. Asian
   C. Black or African American
   D. Hispanic or Latino
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   F. White
   G. Other, please indicate: _____

5. During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?
   A. Mostly A's
   B. Mostly B's
   C. Mostly C's
   D. Mostly D's
   E. Mostly F's
   F. None of these grades
   G. Not sure

6. On an average school day, how many hours do you watch TV?
   A. I do not watch TV on an average school day
   B. Less than 1 hour per day
   C. 1 hour per day
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E. 3 hours per day
F. 4 hours per day
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7. During the past 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play? (Include any teams run by your school or community groups.)
A. 0 teams
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11. A 16-year-old black boy who wears black clothing all of the time and has black lipstick on decides to sit at the same table as you while you are eating lunch. He is known to not have many friends and often does not like to talk to anyone. He also has a pierced eyebrow and both of his ears have at least three piercings. He has been known to talk to himself and has been called a Satan worshiper. How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?

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Student Survey -D

1. How old are you?
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   B. 13 years old
   C. 14 years old
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   E. 16 years old
   F. 17 years old
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   D. 9th Grade
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   F. 11th Grade
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   F. White
   G. Other, please indicate: _____

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   A. I do not watch TV on an average school day
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   C. 1 hour per day
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Appendix B: Letter to School Administrator

March 14, 2001

School Administrator
County Board of Education
123 Smith Street
Charleston, WV 25311

Dear Ms. Administrator,

We are a research group of faculty and graduate students at Marshall University Graduate College who are exploring the issue of school violence in West Virginia. Most importantly, we are exploring what characteristics students in our state *actually perceive* to be aggressive or non-aggressive. Our mission is to not only look at students' perceptions of school violence and aggression, but to determine whether there are differences between different types of individuals.

We ask for your assistance in completing this task by allowing us to survey middle and high school students in your area. To assure that all ethical and legal standards are followed, our research team will give prior parental notice. The students who are given permission by their parents to participate in this anonymous study *will not* be required to give their names. Before completing the survey, the student *will* be asked to complete a demographic section consisting of the following non-identifiable data: age, gender, race, personal interests, approximate grade point average, and the amount of time they spend with their friends and parent(s)/guardian(s). The survey consists of eleven ambiguous scenarios that are on a third-grade reading level. Each scenario will give a student interaction or observation that may or may not suggest a potentially violent situation. After being asked the question, "How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?" the student participating in the survey will be asked to rate each scenario (see attached survey).

A second area we will be examining is how children view issues regarding the aspects of violence, guns, and behaviors that involve conflict between others. The Attitudes Toward Guns and Violence Questionnaire (AGVQ) is made up of various subscales measuring the amount of aggression students display, responses to shame, how comfortable a child feels about guns and violence as a means of feeling safe or being powerful, and the amount of excitement the child feels about guns. The intended purpose of this research is to determine differences between 6th, 9th, and 12th grade students in West Virginia.

Our research team estimates that it will take 15-20 minutes to administer the surveys to each student. To expedite this process and to make it less intrusive, we would like to give the survey to an entire group of students during their homeroom period. The parental notification form will be sent home to the parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to the survey day.

This is an exciting research project because it will allow us, as educators, to be more informed about how students perceive school violence. It will also allow us to determine what your students consider to be potentially violent situations. For this to occur, we will need permission from you to allow us to administer the survey to your students. Once the research study is completed, the results will be sent to you and the schools that participated.

If you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Boyles, at MUGC (304-746-2032 or boyles@marshall.edu). If you would like to participate in this study, please send a letter of confirmation in the SASE provided.

Thank you,

_____

Dr. Elizabeth Kelley Boyles
Professor of School Psychology
Marshall University Graduate College

Participating Psychology Graduate Students at MUGC:
Charley Bowen
Heidi Gregoire
Corey Layne
Nancy Price
Randal Staats

Appendix C: Parental Consent Form

Dear Parents,

We are a research group of faculty and graduate students at Marshall University Graduate College. We have decided to explore the issue regarding school violence in your area. Most importantly, we are going to look at what behavior characteristics the students in your area *actually see as* being aggressive or non-aggressive. We are not only going to look at what children see as threatening but also what is most threatening to them, such as gender, race, class, and other types of groupings.

We ask for your help in our completion of this research by allowing us to administer a 15-20 minute, anonymous survey to your child. The survey consists of twelve short stories that may or may not be a potentially violent situation. Before completing the survey, your child will be asked to complete a demographic section consisting of the following non-identifiable data: age, gender, race, personal interests, approximate grade point average, and the amount of time they spend with their friends and parent(s)/guardian(s). Your child ***will not*** be asked his/her name. Our research team would like to stress to you that appropriate measures will be taken to assure that all ethical and legal standards are followed when this survey is given and no respondents will be identified by name.

Because the issue of school violence is such an important topic right now, we encourage you to allow your child to participate in the study. In an effort to maintain safe schools, we hope that you will join us with this challenge. Once the research study is completed, we will send a copy of the results to your child's school and you will be able to review them at your convenience.

If you decide that you would not like your child to participate in the study or if you have any questions regarding this research study, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Boyles, at MUGC (304-746-2032). Thank you for your time.

Appendix D: Short Summary

Dear Assistants,

Our research team is exploring the issue of school violence in West Virginia. Most importantly, we are exploring what characteristics students in our state *actually perceive* to be aggressive or non-aggressive. Our mission is to not only look at students' perceptions of school violence and aggression, but to determine whether there are differences between different types of individuals. We ask for your assistance in completing this task by helping us survey middle and high school students in five West Virginia counties. To assure that all ethical and legal standards are followed, our research team will give prior parental notice. The students who are given permission by their parents to participate in this anonymous study *will not* be required to give their names. Before completing the survey, the student *will* be asked to complete a demographic section consisting of the following non-identifiable data: age, gender, race, personal interests, approximate grade point average, and the amount of time they spend with their friends and parent(s)/guardian(s). The survey consists of twelve ambiguous scenarios that are on a third-grade reading level. Each scenario will give a student interaction or observation that may or may not suggest a potentially violent situation. After being asked the question, "How likely is this individual to do something aggressive?" the student participating in the survey will be asked to rate each scenario. We estimate that it will take 15-20 minutes to administer the surveys to each student. We will be giving the survey to an entire group of students during their homeroom period. The parental notification form will be sent home to the parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to the day of the survey.

A second area we will be examining is how children view issues regarding the aspects of violence, guns, and behaviors that involve conflict between others. The Attitudes Toward Guns and Violence Questionnaire (AGVQ) is made up of various subscales measuring the amount of aggression students display, responses to shame, how comfortable a child feels about guns and violence as a means of feeling safe or being powerful, and the amount of excitement the child feels about guns. The intended purpose of this research is to determine differences between 6th, 9th, and 12th grade students in West Virginia.

Thank you for you for volunteering to help us with our project.

Dr. Elizabeth Kelley Boyles
Assistant Professor of School Psychology
Marshall University Graduate College

Participating Psychology Graduate Students at MUCG:
Charley Bowen
Heidi Gregoire
Corey Layne
Nancy Price
Randal Staats

Appendix E: Duties of Assistants

Instructions for Administering Survey and Questionnaire

Survey:

1. Instruct the subjects to get the form titled "Student Survey (A, B, C, or D)" out of the envelope.

2. Read paragraph titled "Introductory Paragraph for Subjects"

   "We are Graduate Students at Marshall University Graduate College and we would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this short survey. The purpose of this study is to obtain a better idea of what students at your age think. For each question, remember to circle one number. Each number is assigned a response. For example, 1 = Not At All, 2 = Possibly, 3 = Somewhat Likely, 4 = Very Likely, and 5 = Definitely."

3. Instruct the subjects to place the survey in the envelope when they have finished.

4. Collect all the envelopes when all subjects are finished and place them in the box.

AGVQ Questionnaire:

1. Hand out envelopes individually to each subject. Instruct them to keep them closed until all have been handed out. Envelopes will be marked A, B, C, and D. Please make sure that the first subject in the row gets envelope A, second subject B, third subject C, etc.

2. Instructions to the subjects regarding the AGVQ:

   "I would like you to find the paper that says "What's Your Opinion" at the top and take it out of the envelope. You *will not* be writing your name on the forms, but I would like for you to fill in your grade, age, gender, ethnicity, and the date at the top of the form. When you have completed this, please put your pencils down."

   "I will now read the instructions to you." (Read instructions at the top of page – "What's Your Opinion?")

   **Indicate to them how they should mark their answers---agree, not sure, and disagree. Review what to do if the subject makes a mistake. Instruct them to practice examples A, B, and C.
   **Remind them to press hard when marking their answers.
   **Ask the subjects if they have any questions.
   **Instruct them to place the page back into the envelope when they have finished responding to statements 1-26.