College Student Peer Bullying Behaviors:

A Social Cognitive Perspective

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Abstract

Peer bullying is a "hot topic" issue in the media. The bulk of the research on peer bullying comes from K-12 literature and is understudied within higher education. Higher education bullying is often related to faculty-graduate student relationships or faculty, staff, and administrator workplace issues, and not peer-related. The following research questions guided the study: a) How do students describe bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience from peers? b) How do students address bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience from peers? What university resources do they use, if any? and c) To what extent do students perceive that resources, either from the university or elsewhere, are appropriate and adequate? Twenty-one undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota were interviewed to learn more about how they experience bullying-type behaviors by peers while in college. A model based on the social cognitive theory that considers the college student development process and the higher education environment was useful for developing the interview protocol used to study the bullying behaviors. Data analysis using an open coding method revealed findings in four areas: a) certain common behaviors exist; b) structured social contexts serve as a primary location; c) confusion exists in distinguishing conflict and bullying, including a lack of norms about inclusion/exclusion; and d) there is sensitivity to holding people accountable for negative behaviors. The findings lead to implications for higher education professionals in setting expectations, encouraging the use of campus resources, capitalizing on peer relationships, and training faculty and staff to handle bullying situations.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are expected to provide a safe learning environment and to build community for students, faculty, and staff. Research in higher education indicates a need for an environment where individuals feel a sense of belonging, feel safe and able to participate, and where there is a mutual sense of support among people in order to build community (McKinney, McKinney, Franiuk, & Schweitzer, 2006). Student affairs professionals need to continually examine their campus ecology, which includes developing and changing campus environments, in addition to supporting individual students' development, in order to foster the best student learning and development (Banning & Bryner, 2001). The presence of bullying behaviors between peers on college campuses negatively affects campus ecology, yet this is a problem that is currently understudied due to its complexity.

Definition of Bullying

The most commonly used definitions of bullying come from K-12 literature. Bullying is defined as a form of abuse that includes acts of aggression in which one or more people physically and/or psychologically harass a weaker victim (Olweus, 1994). Bullies are often aggressive, hostile, and domineering toward their victim (Olweus, 1994). In addition, bullying behavior is repeated over time or has the potential to be repeated over time (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2012). Stopbullying.gov also explains that there are three types of bullying: verbal, physical, and social. Verbal bullying includes taunting and name-calling; physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, punching, and tripping; and social bullying includes exclusion,

embarrassment, and spreading rumors about another person (USDHHS, 2012). The

University of Minnesota Board of Regents Student Conduct Code, which was amended to

include a definition for bullying in the last revision in 2012, defines bullying as

"aggressive behavior directed at another person, either in person or through electronic

means, that causes stress or harm and that is repeated over time, including but not limited

to assaulting, defaming, terrorizing, making obscene gestures, or invading privacy"

(University of Minnesota Board of Regents, 1970, p.5).

Background and Context of the Study

Within higher education, there is not a consistent definition of bullying used by all

institutions. The 2013 American Educational Research Association [AERA] report,

Prevention of Bullying in Schools, Colleges, and Universities, states that "structurally and

culturally separate units across college campuses use different terms, definition, and

techniques to address bullying" (p.50). Peer bullying is handled differently through the

student conduct process than bullying that occurs between faculty and staff. The AERA

report states that bullying and harassment can appear in different forms, such as sexual

harassment, hazing, violence, and cyberbullying, and some of these forms are more

studied than others (AERA, 2013). For example, although there is a significant amount

of research on how college students involved in student groups such as fraternities and

sororities or marching bands experience hazing and associated negative consequences,

there is limited research on how cyberbullying affects college students.

The 2010 Office for Civil Rights Dear Colleague letter regarding peer bullying

explains that schools and school districts have taken steps to reduce bullying in recent

years (Ali, 2010). The letter states that "even when bullying or harassment is not a civil rights violation, schools should still seek to prevent it in order to protect students from the physical and emotional harms that it may cause" (Ali, 2010, p.2). Although the letter primarily focuses on bullying in elementary and secondary school contexts, it specifically mentions that higher education institutions have a responsibility to adhere to the laws and regulations enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (Ali, 2010). The letter provides a reminder for higher education institutions that similar to expectations for elementary and middle schools, student misconduct that is included in a school's anti-bullying policy may require additional action under federal anti-discrimination laws enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (Ali, 2010).

This expectation for action is unclear, however, because it does not specifically clarify the differences between bullying and harassment other than indicating that harassment "does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents" (Ali, 2010, p. 2). According to the Office for Civil Rights, the label used to describe the incident (bullying, harassment, etc.) does not specifically matter because institutions have an obligation to respond to negative types of behaviors no matter what label is given to them or not given to them (Ali, 2010). Although bullying and harassment are both discussed with equal importance and often used interchangeably in the Dear Colleague letter, most higher education institutions have better defined processes for dealing with allegations defined as harassment rather than bullying due to Title IX regulations. Most higher education institutions have equal opportunity offices that respond to incidents of harassment, in addition to the student

conduct process. Institutions currently have limited legal standing to address bullying that does not involve a legally protected category (AERA, 2013). Guidelines are not available for how to address bullying behaviors that do not fall under Title IX legislation and there is not a systematic approach to how higher education institutions respond to instances of bullying and aggressive behavior when it is not defined as harassment according to Title IX legislation (AERA, 2013).

The AERA brief explains that the multiple constituent groups on college campuses (including faculty, staff, students, administrators) with varying levels of power and authority make it a complex environment for understanding how bullying occurs (AERA, 2013). For example, faculty bullying often includes members of the same department who are competing for tenure or engaging in competing research interests. Faculty members are much more likely to be affected by "mobbing," which is bullying by more than one person, than other university employees (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Faculty-student bullying often is targeted at graduate students who spend significant hours in labs doing research under a faculty mentor who exploits their time and talent (Morse, 2010).

The area of peer bullying in higher education is significantly understudied compared to these other groups and also to peer to peer bullying in K-12 schools. Unlike K-12 research, there is not quantitative data to support the perceived negatives effects of bullying on college students' success, development, or retention. In addition, contradictory policies and expectations regarding bullying type behaviors exist for students; largely because of the lack of clarity about what is meant by "bullying

behaviors" as students learn to navigate acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. For example, students are often encouraged and rewarded for possessing a competitive behavior in their classes, but also expected to maintain a positive classroom environment as defined by their institution's student conduct code. Finally, in addition to these factors, students are moving through a complex period of student development in which they are growing cognitively and socially, while connecting to their campus environment and learning how to relate to others.

These issues lead to important questions for higher education institutions to consider: What are higher education institutions doing to protect their students from bullying behaviors by other peers? Also, do we know enough about how college students experience peer bullying behaviors in order to provide a comprehensive and effective response? How do college students describe and classify these types of experiences? Is "bullying" the proper term to describe these types of behaviors?

Purpose and Approach of the Study

The major goal of this study is to develop a coherent theory of how students experience bullying behaviors by peers in higher education. Other goals of the study are to a) better understand how students define these experiences, whether that is described a bullying or not; b) provide a foundation for questions that will be useful for higher education institutions in a national, quantitative study of bullying type behaviors among college students; and c) provide recommendations for future programs and strategies that will be useful to addressing this type of behavior on college campuses and providing a more positive campus ecology.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature that was used to develop a framework for examining individual peer bullying in the context of higher education. A summary of what is known about peer bullying based on the more robust body of research that has been conducted in other sectors, particularly K-12 education and within the workplace, is also included. The research and the applicability of this research are critiqued regarding the usefulness for understanding the issues of peer bullying among college students. The research methodology is presented in Chapter Three, beginning with an introduction to the research questions. The conceptual framework, based on social cognitive and student development theories along with campus ecology work is then introduced. The framework, which considers personal, behavioral, and environmental influences, was used to address the research questions and develop the protocol for the interview questions. Chapter Three also addresses the design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and my reflections as a researcher. Chapter Four covers the results of the interviews regarding perceived bullying experiences that were conducted with current undergraduate college students at the University of Minnesota. Chapter Five reviews the research questions and key findings, areas for future research, implications for practice, and limitations of the study. A grounded theory of how students experience bullying behaviors by peers in higher education is introduced as well.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of research related to bullying behaviors among peers. The first section of the literature review provides an overview of peer bullying research from the K-12 sector, which is more largely studied than higher education. The second section will highlight some of the literature related to bullying in the workplace. The third section highlights the limited body of knowledge related to peer bullying behaviors in higher education and also reviews the differences in studying bullying behaviors as compared to K-12 schools. The literature review ends with a discussion on the need for a model to address peer bullying in higher education that considers the unique student development processes of college students, the interactions with faculty, staff, administrators, and peers that occur in multiple settings on college campuses, as well as students' perceived connection to the campus environment.

What is known from K-12 Research?

Peer bullying behavior is an international concern for school administrators, teachers, parents and students that has produced both significant research and intervention programs at the K-12 level. Studies show the significant numbers of 12-18 year old students affected by peer bullying. In 2007, nearly 32% of these students reported being bullied at some point during the school year ("Indicators of School Crime and Safety," 2010). Of the students who had been bullied, 63 percent said that they had been bullied once or twice during the school year, 21 percent said that they were bullied once or twice a month, 10 percent reported being bullied once or twice a week, and 7

percent said that they had been bullied almost daily ("Indicators of School Crime and Safety," 2010).

Some sub-groups of students are more likely to be bullied than others according to K-12 research. A national sample of 3,450 students ranging from 13-18 years old from 1,011 secondary schools found that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students are three times as likely as non-LGBT students to say that they do not feel safe at school (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network & Harris Interactive, Inc., 2005). Males bully more than females, but both are equally as likely to be victims (Farrington, 1993). Based on this information, it is clear that a significant number of students experience bullying behavior from their peers.

Previous research also provides background on some of the risk factors for adolescents more likely to be affected by bullying behavior, both as the bully and the victim. Students that engage in bullying behavior are more likely to have behavioral problems, come from families with lower socioeconomic status, and come from single-parent families (Jansen, Veenstra, Ormel, Verhulst, & Reijneveld, 2011). Victims of bullying have similar risk factors to bullies. Students whose parents have lower socioeconomic status and education levels are more likely to be victims of this type of behavior as well (Nordhagen, Nielsen, Stigum, & Köhler, 2005).

Negative Impact of Peer Bullying on Student Success

Research done among K-12 students show that bullying and aggressive behavior adversely affects several student success factors and social functioning for both bullies and their victims. Both traditional bullies and cyberbullies do not perform as well

academically as their peers, have higher levels of stress, low self-esteem, changes in interests, and are more likely to be depressed (Twyman, Saylor, Taylor, & Comeaux, 2010). A 2001 study of 15,686 students in grades 6-10 showed that students that are bullies, bullied, or engaged in both of those roles show poorer psychosocial adjustment (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Fighting was positively associated with all three roles related to bullying behavior. Alcohol use was positively associated with bullying and negatively associated with being bullied. Smoking and poor academic achievement were associated with both being a bully and being bullied (Nansel et al., 2001). Students who bully are also more likely to have a poor view of the school climate (Nansel et al., 2001).

In addition, bullying can affect the success of sub-groups of students to different degrees. According to Williams and Peguero (2013), race and ethnicity played a role in the grade point average of high achieving students who were bullied. The study of 9,590 students in 580 schools found that black students that were bullied lost almost .3 of a GPA point by their senior year of high school. Latino students lost .5 of a GPA point if they had been bullied during the same timeframe. White students, however, averaged a loss of less than .03 of a point when exposed to similar bullying conditions (Williams & Peguero, 2013).

Research also shows that the effects of bullying and victimization extend into adulthood. In a longitudinal study of bullying and victimization, Olweus (1993) found that when bullies were identified by eight years old, they were six times more likely to be convicted of crimes as young adults and were five times more likely to have serious

criminal records by the age of 30. This study also found that former victims of bullying demonstrated more symptoms of depression and lower self-esteem than peers who were not bullied as young adults (Olweus, 1993). Although this study shows that bullying affects people into adulthood, and research shows that student success in K-12 is negatively affected by bullying behaviors, there is a lack of information on how this translates to effects on student success when they move into the higher education environment.

Environmental Responses to Peer Bullying

The investigation of bullying behaviors is important for understanding why it occurs and how to address it. Bullying and aggressive behavior is addressed in different ways in different types of environments. Since bullying has been at the forefront of discussion for many years in K-12 schools, the importance of providing a safe school environment in order to protect students from bullying and aggressive behavior is of major concern to most schools and school districts. Olweus (1994) identified characteristics of the school environment that are considered important to reduce instances of bullying including: a) warmth, positive interest, and involvement from adults; b) firm limits to unacceptable behavior; c) monitoring and surveillance of students; and d) non-hostile, non-physical consequences for behavioral issues.

Most K-12 schools implement some forms of intervention to address bullying behaviors for both in-person activities and online activities. Cyberbullying is the use of the Internet or other digital communication device to insult or threaten someone (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Cyberbullying includes a measure of anonymity that decreases the

threat of punishment to those that partake in this behavior (Twyman et al., 2010). The use of anonymous measures to bully others provides a whole new level of complication for schools and other institutions where bullying may not occur in the physical form. Some measures used to address cyberbullying at the K-12 level include: a) providing students and parents with education on cyberbullying; b) specifying negative consequences of participating in cyberbullying; c) updating the acceptable use of technology policy for their schools; d) adding a provision on the school's right to discipline for these types of situations; e) coordinating with other schools in the district to address the issue; and f) establishing task forces aimed at online safety (Beale & Hall, 2007).

One of the most widely utilized intervention strategies involves the role of significant adults other than school personnel. At the K-12 level, parents are key partners in their child's educational experience. Parents communicate with their student's teachers, attend field trips and class activities, inquire about their student's day, follow-up with the student and possibly the teachers regarding homework assignments, and hold the student accountable for their educational experience (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Researchers that study the impacts of bullying indicate that parenting practices are likely associated with the tendency to engage in bullying behaviors. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) found that one of the major factors for students who engage in cyberbullying or are the victims of cyberbullying is the lack of parental monitoring and intervention of online behaviors. Along with parental involvement and environmental support by schools,

intensive supervision, discipline, counseling services, and training for teachers are considered important and effective tools for decreasing bullying behaviors (Ma, 2001).

K-12 Model of Peer Bullying and Aggressive Behavior

Theories related to peer bullying explain the possible reasons that students engage in or are victims of bullying and aggressive behavior. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program states that the there are three interrelated reasons why students bully other students ("Olweus Bullying Prevention Program," 2011). Those reasons are:

- Students who bully have strong needs for power and dominance.

- Students who bully find satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students.

- Students who bully are often rewarded in some way for their behavior with material or psychological rewards.

Students who bully have strong needs for power and dominance. Bullying is considered one way in which adolescents manage peer relationships and exert dominance as they make the transition into new social groups (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Utilizing the *Interpersonal Goal Inventory for Children*, a study of 225 males and 277 females ages 10–11 and 14–15, found that bullies demonstrated dominance by being proactively aggressive towards those that they bully (Sijtsema, Veenstra, Lindenberg, & Salmivalli, 2009). Additional studies have shown that bullying is a way of achieving dominance and demonstrating their social position (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003). When considering this assertion, it is important to note that bullying and aggressive behavior increased with the transition to middle school and then declined in high school (Pellegrini & Long,

2002). Research is lacking to describe how students experience bullying during the transition from high school to college.

Students who bully find satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students. Students who find satisfaction in causing suffering to others are likely to be influenced by their environment at home, which may cause hostility within the student (Hazelden Foundation, 2007). Evidence suggests that students who are bullies at school are victims of bullying in their homes (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

Olweus (1980) found bullying to be related to four factors related to child rearing in the home environment: a) a negative emotional attitude such as lack of warmth and involvement by the primary caregiver; b) permissiveness of aggressive childhood behavior; c) the use of power-assertive parenting methods like physical punishment; and d) the temperament of the child. Batsche and Knoff (1994) reviewed literature showing that bullies tend to come from families where parents have an authoritarian style of decision making, demonstrate hostility towards their children, lack problem-solving skills, and advocate fighting-back as a way to resolve an issue. Sibling relationships also contribute to the generation of bullying behavior. In a study of 94 seventh graders and 281 eighth graders in the United States, 25% self-identified as victims and 28% self-identified as bullies using a 20-item *Peer Relations Questionnaire.* Results showed that both bullies and victims reported the highest frequency of sibling bullying and victimization (Duncan, 1999).

Students who bully are often rewarded in some way for their behavior with material or psychological rewards. As demonstrated above, bullies are often

psychologically rewarded by their family and/or peers for engaging in bullying. In a study analyzing bullying on the playground, peers spent 75% of the time reinforcing the behavior by passively watching the bullying behavior or modeling the behavior (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Although bullies tend to enjoy a high social status among their peers, these students are often not well-liked by peers and are often avoided by other students (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003).

Olweus (2001) contends that these three interrelated reasons suggest why students engaging in bullying behavior. These factors were used to develop the Bullying Circle Model. The circle demonstrates how individual roles in the process come together as a social act (Olweus, 2001).
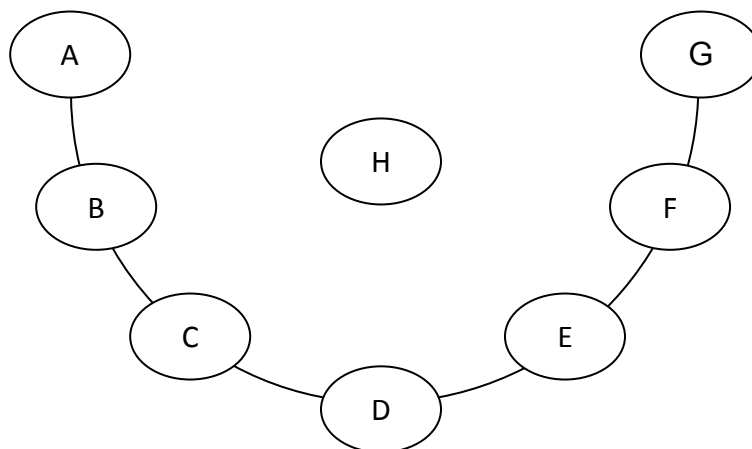
A. Bullies – Lead role in bullying
B. Followers – Active in bullying, but not in lead role
C. Supporters or passive bullies – Actively support, but do not join in
D. Passive supporters or possible bullies – Seem to like the bullying, but do not take an active part
E. Disengaged onlookers – Do not get involved or take a stand
F. Possible defenders – Dislike the bullying, but do nothing
G. Defenders –Dislike the bullying and try to help
H. Victim

Figure 1: The Bullying Circle. Olweus (2001).

The model suggests that the prevention of bullying requires a social rather than an individual response. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is based on the student roles described in the bullying circle, and is one of the most widely utilized bullying prevention programs both in the U.S. and other countries. The program is designed to provide intervention strategies at the following levels ("Olweus Bullying Prevention Program," 2011):

- School-wide level (i.e. establish a bullying prevention committee, administer the Olweus bullying survey, and review/establish the school's anti-bullying policies)

- Classroom level (i.e. hold class meetings about bullying, hold student and parent meetings about bullying)

- Individual level (i.e. supervise student activities, intervene and set up retention plans for involved students)

- Community level (i.e. develop partnership with community members to support school policies, spread anti-bullying messages into the community).

Criticism of Current Research and Programs

The Olweus research describing the reasons why students bully and the resulting model for bullying are widely utilized as part of many K-12 anti-bullying programs. Although the bullying circle details the individual roles in bullying, it lacks information describing the continuum of how a student can engage in bullying behavior and also be a victim of bullying at the same time, which is a problem within current research (Hazler,

Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). Confusion among administrators also exists over what is considered bullying behavior and what should be defined as other types of conflict. Results from a study of 251 teachers and counselors indicated that physical threats or abuse was seen as more severe than social and emotional abuse (Hazler et al., 2001). This emphasis on physical abuse overlooks the influence of sustained emotional abuse and its impacts. The results indicate the need for more training to identify the varying types of bullying and to better address instances of long term bullying rather than simply addressing immediate concerns.

Walton (2005) suggests that the current literature on bullying and aggressive behavior does not address the developmental nature of bullying in our culture. Often aggressive behavior among adults is characterized as part of normal masculine culture, and may not be identified as bullying (Walton, 2005). For example, overtly aggressive behavior is often rewarded in sports, politics, business, academics, and families. The developmental process for learning aggressive behaviors in homes, schools, work, etc., and how that affects people beyond K-12 years is often overlooked. In addition, Li (2008) explains that despite much research attention on the issue of bullying, there is a lack of a theoretical model that identifies possible links among various factors related to bullying. Some researchers argue that the studies on bullying-related behaviors have been designed and conducted without utilizing a broadly based, integrative, theoretical orientation (Li, 2008; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Most intervention studies rely on self-reported data of bullying and are not grounded in a

theoretical framework to help guide program development and evaluation (Swearer et al., 2010).

School-based anti-bullying prevention programs have been met with mixed results (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Swearer et al., 2010). Most current anti-bullying programs fail to direct interventions at the social structures that promote and sustain bullying behaviors, such as peer and family influence (Swearer, et. al., 2010). In the Olweus model, the three reasons identified as why individual students bully or are bullied focuses on internal and familial factors, yet interventions are designed at the school level which is much easier for administrators and educators to control. These programs rarely address the changing demographics of communities and therefore fail to incorporate factors such as race, disability, and sexual orientation into the program content. School-wide programs are also designed to reach all students, rather than specifically targeting bullies and victims (Swearer, et. al., 2010). Finally, there is limited knowledge on how the discipline climate at schools affects victims and bullies, which makes it difficult to provide administrators with knowledge about how to improve school policies and practices that discourage bullying (Ma, 2001). The continued studying of this phenomenon at the K-12 level and into the higher education environment is important so that administrators can improve school policies and implement practices that discourage bullying and help students deal with bullying behaviors in school.

What is known about Non-Higher Education Workplace Bullying?

In addition to bullying in the K-12 environment, it is useful to examine literature related to workplace bullying, which is a common areas for bullying behavior to occur in

adulthood. Research on workplace bullying often focuses more on social and organizational climate and structure than most K-12 studies, which more often emphasize individual characteristics (Smith, 1997). Workplace bullies often manipulate the work environment to achieve their ends (Rayner & Hoel, 1997). Correlations have been found between the occurrence of bullying and lack of leadership, role conflict, and control over work (Rayner & Hoel, 1997).

There are conflicting reports about who are most likely to be the bulliers in the workplace. In a study of 1,137 part-time students, 77% of the respondents reported that they had witnessed bullying in their workplace and 53% reported being the victim of workplace bullying at some point in their careers (Rayner, 1997). Seventy-one percent indicated that they were bullied by a manager or senior manager. Consistent with school-based research, women were more equally bullied by both men and women whereas men were almost always bullied by men. In this study, 27% of the people that were bullied left their jobs as a result of the bullying. However, in a 2004 study by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health of 516 public and private companies, co-workers were found to be the bulliers more often than supervisors or customers ("Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," 2004). Because bullying seems to occur at different levels within the workplace, there is a need for organizations to strengthen their culture and relationships at all levels including management, peers, and with customers.

The effects of bullying are largely understudied in the workplace. Smith (1997) indicates that although it quite likely that there are negative effects related to workplace bullying, such as lower self-esteem, less ability to concentrate, higher likelihood for

depression, it is not known if these effects are similar to the effects found in K-12 literature. Physical bullying is rarely reported in the workplace, and bullying behaviors are often grouped into categories such as: threat to professional status, threat to personal standing, isolation, overwork, and destabilization (Rayner & Hoel, 1997). Threat to professional status includes instances where an individual is publicly humiliated by another person in front of professional colleagues. Threat to personal standing includes instances where an individual is intimidated by someone else or insulted for his/her opinion. Isolation occurs when a person is not given opportunities to interact with other colleagues or information is withheld so that he/she is unable to fully complete his/her work. Overwork occurs when an individual is put under an intense amount of pressure or given unrealistic deadlines. Finally, examples of destabilization include when responsibilities are taken away from an individual for no reason, meaningless tasks are added, or an individual is never given credit for his/her accomplishments (Rayner & Hoel, 1997).

Although workplace anti-bullying policies are starting to appear, they are sometimes incorporated into the sexual harassment policies without consideration of the differences between them (Rayner, 1997). In order to encourage people to come forward about their experiences and not remain silent because they are scared of losing their jobs, Beasley and Rayner (1997) suggest strategies that the employers can adopt for their staff to encourage a positive workplace environment. The strategies include: a) developing a clear policy on bullying, which identifies forms of bullying, ways to have complaints addressed, and the disciplinary action which offenders will face; b) clear communication

of the policy to staff; c) watching employees for signs of stress; d) prompt response to complaints; and e) training in stress and anger management for aggressive managers. Additionally, both school administrators and employers need to put an emphasis on bystander training to empower those who are not directly participating in the bullying (Smith, 1997). The similarities and differences found in workplace bullying as compared to K-12 research are useful to providing a beginning for the study of peer bullying in higher education.

What is known about Peer Bullying in Higher Education?

Individual peer bullying in higher education has become increasingly discussed in the media in the past couple of years due to a few high profile cases. For example, the case of Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers University student who committed suicide after being the target of anti-gay harassment and cyberbullying, was heavily covered in the media and brought forth new concerns regarding college students and bullying behavior (Williams, 2011). The *2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People* report by Campus Pride documented the experience of over 5,000 faculty, staff, and students on college campus who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQQ). The report showed that LGBTQQ respondents were significantly more likely to experience harassment compared to heterosexual respondents, and also to have more negative views of campus climate (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010).

As a result of Clementi's death, the state of New Jersey instituted the nation's most strict anti-bullying law that requires colleges to formally recognize cyberbullying as harassment and also provide funding for universities to establish or expand programs that

help to prevent bullying (Williams, 2011). Two New Jersey lawmakers introduced the

Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act to Congress in 2011 which will

extend this law to the rest of the country if passed. The bill was reintroduced to Congress

on March 27, 2014, but has not yet been passed ("Human Rights Campaign," 2014).

Despite the positive sentiments regarding the spirit of the legislation, controversy

exists over the application of this potential law to higher education institutions.

Opponents of the legislation state that institutions already provide anti-harassment

clauses in order to receive Title IX funding and that this legislation would be redundant

and unnecessary (Majeed, 2010). In addition, opponents argue that online harassment is

already addressed in institutional student conduct codes under general harassment

provisions (Majeed, 2010). This controversy highlights the confusion regarding bullying

behaviors among college students and whether harassment and bullying should be

considered under the same provisions or if they should be addressed separately in

institutional policies and student conduct codes.

It is also unclear whether or not peer bullying is underreported at colleges and

universities. Speculation exists that cases of bullying are not reported because of

students' distrust of the university's disciplinary process and what impact it will have on

the students involved in bullying (Karim, 2010). One way that institutions are addressing

the distrust of the disciplinary process is a movement towards incorporating restorative

justice into the student conduct process as a way to highlight movement towards conflict

resolution and away from traditional punitive methods. For example, the Spectrum of

Resolution Options Model, provides a variety of informal, less punitive channels to

resolve conflicts such as through conflict coaching, facilitated dialogue, and mediation (Schrage & Giacomini, 2009). The option for adjudication is present, but not the main focus. In addition, the term "judicial" is being removed from conduct offices in order to develop a more student development focus.

Definitional issues about what should be classified as bullying, along with possible underreporting issues, highlight some concerns about studying bullying behaviors in higher education. As described in Chapter One, the 2010 Dear Colleague letter and AERA report err on the side of including hazing in the discussion of bullying in higher education, although hazing related behaviors are centered on organizations versus individuals. It provides an additional prospective, however, to consider the influence of group behaviors, along with individual behaviors, especially since hazing is a well-documented area of concern. At the University of Minnesota, hazing is defined in the *Student Conduct Code* as "any act taken on University property or in connection with any University-related group or activity that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of an individual (including, without limitation, an act intended to cause personal degradation or humiliation), or that destroys or removes public or private property, for the purpose of initiation in, admission to, affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in a group or organization" (University of Minnesota Board of Regents, 1970, p.6).

Fraternities and sororities are considered one of the leading organizations associated with hazing activities, along with marching bands, military organizations, and athletic teams (Ellsworth, 2004). Higher education hazing incidences commonly reported

in the media include activities such as forced drinking, deception, sleep deprivation, and beatings with paddles (Sweet, 1999). Similar to bullying, inconsistencies in the definition of hazing often lead to unclear state laws and institutional policies in regards to hazing (Ellsworth, 2004).

Data from a large, national, survey of over 11,000 undergraduate students from 53 institutions conclude that hazing extends beyond fraternities and sororities and is found among all types of student groups at colleges and universities (Allan & Madden, 2008). The study also addresses confusion around the definition of hazing and also students' perceptions of being hazed. Nine out of ten students who reported participating in an activity that is considered hazing did not believe that their personal experience was actually hazing (Allan & Madden, 2008). Although students recognize that physical hazing, such as forced alcohol consumption or beatings, are hazing, there is less understanding about more subtle types of hazing, such as being made to wear a specific type of clothing or carry an item with them at all times. Students were most likely to talk with other peers or family members about any hazing experiences (Allan & Madden, 2008). The review of information that is available on hazing is helpful to providing a foundation for studying individual bullying behaviors.

Differences from K-12 Literature

When considering the study of bullying behaviors at postsecondary institutions, several differences stand out from the K-12 literature. Some strategies for addressing bullying behavior at the K-12 level are not appropriate for college students due to the difference in circumstances. Additionally, it is unclear whether or not the term "bullying"

continues to resonate with students once they are in a college setting (Andre, Ellsworth, Saunoi-Sandgren, Spanks, & Xenos, 2010). Clearly some form of peer bullying behavior extends into higher education institutions, whether or not students identify it as "bullying." Some unique considerations for higher education institutions include:

- Student relationships with parents are different for college students than K-12 students.

- University monitoring of student behavior is different than K-12.

- Lack of precedence in holding students accountable for online or off-campus behavior.

- Lack of emphasis put on student-student bullying compared to other types of bullying within higher education.

Student relationships with parents are different for college students. The parental role is quite different for students in college versus elementary, middle or high school, which is important to consider because parents play a major role in preventing and addressing bullying for K-12 students. Although many parents and families continue to be very involved in their students' lives after high school, most college student parents are not directly involved in their students' behaviors and exposure to other people on a day-to-day basis. Many students are now living on campus or with friends in an off-campus setting and not in the same household as their parents (Carney-Hall, 2008). Whereas K-12 institutions rely heavily on parents for monitoring bullying behaviors, laws surrounding student privacy, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

(FERPA) affect the magnitude of parental involvement in college and limit the university's ability to utilize the parental role in addressing bullying.

Although college students today continue to communicate with their parents often, the ability and expectation for parents to monitor student behavior is very different. Many parents are involved prior to the start of college by being actively involved in the college recruitment and selection process, as many have a vested interest based on the financial support they will provide during the students collegiate experience. The high cost of tuition, use of technology, change in parenting styles, demographic shifts, and characteristics of the current generation of students plays a role in how today's students view their parents (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Yet, within higher education expectations for parents and families are not as clear. Although parents are recognized as important allies in the educational process, students are encouraged to take the ultimate responsibility for their educational experience, which is often a shift in family culture for some students and their parents. For parents used to daily reports on their children and day-to-day monitoring of activities, this can be quite an adjustment. Institutions are encouraged to share the goals of student success and growth with parents, address the concept of student development with parents, and recognize that they play an important role in the student experience (Taub, 2008).

University monitoring of student behavior is different than K-12. Studies on youth show that students perform better in a structured environment (Fried & Sosland, 2009). Students in the same grade level in an elementary, middle, or high school receive instruction in a more similar and uniform fashion than in higher education. There is more

required content for educators and less variation in how the content is shared in K-12 schools than in the higher education environment, which is substantially less-structured. College students learning experiences can be vastly different depending on type of higher education institution, majors, classes, professors, involvement opportunities, and employment. College students are encouraged to seek out resources and ask for help when needed, which is a more hands-off approach than in K-12 schools.

One significant way in which higher education institutions address the goal of providing a safe learning environment is through their student conduct codes that apply to behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. Institutions are not required to have anti-bullying language, policies or strategies, and often the student conduct codes are considered the primary document to promote a safe environment (McDougall, 1999). Student conduct codes address expectations regarding standards of behavior that students are held to while attending the institutions. Students are held to a higher standard than non-students and have additional responsibilities to uphold these standards of behavior.

At the University of Minnesota, the second guiding principle of the *Student Conduct Code* states that "the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community" (University of Minnesota Board of Regents, 1970, p.1). This statement addresses the institutional responsibility of faculty, staff, and students to provide a safe and positive community, which includes addressing bullying behaviors at the higher education level.

As discussed in Chapter One, one of the disciplinary offenses outlined by the *Student Conduct Code* at the University of Minnesota protects against bullying behaviors. Although the disciplinary subdivision within the conduct code provides the institution the jurisdiction to respond to any bullying or aggressive behavior that is brought forward by faculty, staff, or students regarding another student, this is a more reactive versus proactive approach to providing a safe environment.

With the increasing discussion by policymakers on institutional, state, and federal responses to bullying, it is important for higher education institutions to examine their current landscape and determine programming and policy steps for the future. Unlike K-12 institutions, most higher education institutions do not have comprehensive programs or policies designed to address bullying behavior (Andre et al., 2010). The Step UP! Bystander Intervention Program, however, is being increasingly utilized by colleges and universities. The purpose of the program is to encourage students to be more proactive about helping others ("About," 2014.). The program, which was developed at the University of Arizona, is now utilized at hundreds of colleges and universities. The goals of the program are to raise awareness of helping behaviors, increase motivation to help, develop skills and confidence to respond to concerning behaviors, and to ensure the safety and well-being of self and others ("About," 2014). Although it is not specifically described as a bullying prevention program, the basic principles of the program address the importance of facilitating positive and proactive behavior among college students.

Another anti-bias training program called A Campus of Difference, provided by the Anti-Defamation League [ADL], is also being utilized more widely on college

campuses. According to the ADL website, over 56,000 administrators, faculty, staff, and students on over 900 college campuses have participated in A Campus of Difference which is designed to "identify effective strategies to respond effectively to bias, implement effective policies on campus, and inspire students to speak out and become the advocates and voices of positive change on campus" ("Anti-Defamation League," 2014, para 1).

Lack of precedence in holding students accountable for online or off-campus behavior. The increase in technology and the use of social media sites adds complication to the ways in which students interact with each other. Although social media sites encourage students to remain connected to other students both at their institutions and at other institutions, it provides a new level of complication in regards to institutional monitoring and providing a safe learning environment. One of the few studies at the college level found that of 131 undergraduate students at a U.S. institution with less than 10,000 students, 11% of respondents indicated experiencing cyberbullying at the institution. Although 50% were cyberbullied by classmates, 43% did know the person cyberbullying them (Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011).

Court cases for K-12 schools highlight the controversy over whether or not schools have jurisdiction to punish students for incidents that occur when a student is not physically on school grounds. The results of these court cases have varied by state. One of the original court cases used to define whether or not a school has jurisdiction over students behavior when they are off-campus was applied in the Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District in 1969. The Supreme Court ruled that a school

district may limit or discipline student expression if school officials reasonably conclude that the expression will substantially disrupt the work and activities of the school (Lomonte, 2012). The lack of physical location makes it more difficult to define jurisdiction and arguments over whether or not online statements are protected by the first amendment are made on both sides of the issue. In regards to off-campus online speech, the courts have ruled that there must be a substantial and material threat of disruption on campus (Mason, 2008). The use of the Tinker standard has resulted in varying responses in the courts when applied to on-line misconduct situations in K-12 schools. In Layshock vs. Hermitage School District from 2006 the court ruled in favor of the school for demonstrating that a student's creation of an online MySpace profile of the principal affected the high school's day to day operation. However, in Emmett vs. Kent School District in 2000 the court ruled that the school did not show how the creation of an alternative school web site home page by a student, featuring mock obituaries for students and a voting mechanism to vote on which student should die next, resulted in a significant disturbance to the school (Mason, 2008).

Confusion over whether universities have authority to discipline students for bullying that occurs online also applies at the higher education level. The argument can be made that universities are able to address these types of situations through their student conduct codes that typically apply both on and off campus. The Tatro vs. University of Minnesota case provided one of the first cases at the higher education level regarding off-campus speech via social media and first amendment protections.

In this case, the Mortuary Science department assigned a student, Amanda Tatro, a failing grade for a class after discovering Facebook posts that were determined to be threatening and also disrespectful to the cadaver that she was using for laboratory work. Although Tatro argued that her online speech was protected by the first amendment, the University of Minnesota claimed that her messages were a violation of laboratory rules which she agreed to uphold as part of her academic program. The Minnesota Supreme Court ultimately decided on behalf of the university, which provides a precedent for freedom of speech related to social media use within a university setting, which can be applied to cyberbullying situations in the future. Prior to this case, there was no published court decision to help determine whether or not it is a violation of the first amendment for a university to impose disciplinary sanctions for determining that a student's use of social media violated academic program rules ("Tatro v. Univ. of Minn.," 2012).

Moving forward, higher education institutions need to address expectations regarding social media use by formulating institutional polices in conjunction with faculty, staff, and students (Junco & Chickering, 2010). Junco and Chickering (2010) state that "the fundamental reason for creating policy statements, and for working through the intellectual and emotional challenges involved, is to encourage a civil institutional culture that values and respects differences and learns from them" (p. 17). Faculty and staff are responsible for modeling appropriate social media behavior and also challenging students to fully understand the positive and negative ramifications of their social media use and online presence.

Lack of emphasis on peer to peer bullying compared to other types of bullying. Discussions regarding the concept of academic incivility and bullying are not new to higher education. The focus of previous bullying studies has largely focused on faculty-to-faculty bullying, faculty-student bullying (most often graduate students), and academic incivility in the classroom. The lack of empirical research on bullying in higher education, however, results in much confusion about the nature and definition of bullying, the specific impact bullying has on students, including different sub-groups, ways to best address the behaviors, as well as legal and ethical implications (Lester, 2013).

Academic incivility is defined as, "the intentional behavior of students to disrupt and interfere with the teaching and learning process of others" (Morrissette, 2001, p. 1). In general, the concept of academic incivility is understudied, but has gained increasing attention in the past few years due to the increase in technology and its use in the classroom. Faculty are often unprepared to handle classroom disruptions, fellow students often feel uncomfortable and that their learning experience is compromised, and university staff often become involved in developing a resolution to this behavior (Morrissette, 2001). Morrissette (2001) believes more needs to be done to examine the causes of student incivility, implications associated with the behavior, and prevention strategies. All of these suggestions are useful for studying peer bullying outside of the classroom as well.

Faculty-to-faculty bullying is an on-going issue within higher education. In general, younger faculty members are often bullied by older faculty and men tend to

bully more than women (Schmidt, 2010). In addition, "mobbing," or the ganging up on one person, is common among higher education faculty due to factors such as high-job security and few objective measures to evaluate job performance (Schmidt, 2010). Faculty members are most often bullied by others in regards to their personal accomplishments. Although third-party mediation regarding bullying situations in academia is becoming a more popular option, most faculty members that are bullied tend to either leave their positions or put up with the bullying (Schmidt, 2010).

Several recent studies address the rise in uncivil behaviors for all constituents within higher education (Hollis, 2012; Lester, 2013). Hollis (2012) explains that in a study of faculty, staff, and administrators at over 175 four-year higher education institutions, employees were likely to mentally disengage from the institution as a way to deal with bullying from other staff members. In addition to negative impacts on the victim, there are also cost and accreditation implications due to employee disengagement from workplace bulling in higher education (Hollis, 2012).

Faculty-student bullying is also an area of concern. In a 2011 survey of over 3,300 graduate and professional students at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 565 students (17%) responded that they experienced harassing behavior such as hostile electronic communication and verbal abuse ("Student Conflict Resolution Center," 2011). Only 20% of those experiencing harassment reported it to another person, most commonly their advisor or a department head. Of those that reported the harassment, there were varying responses regarding the satisfaction of the handling of the complaint. Although 45% of the students were somewhat or completely satisfied with the response

to their complaint, 47% were somewhat or completely unsatisfied with the response. For the respondents in this study, the most common source of the harassment was by a faculty member (46%) who was not their advisor. The second most common source of harassment was by a fellow student (39%) ("Student Conflict Resolution Center," 2011).

The changing student relationships with parents, the role of universities in providing a safe learning environment and monitoring student behavior that occurs off-campus and online, and the lack of emphasis put on peer bullying compared to other types of bullying, are all factors to consider when studying peer bullying in a university setting. These factors are important to learning how students experience bullying behaviors and developing a theory reflective of these experiences while also determining how administrators can provide a supportive and civil environment.

Other Considerations for Studying Bullying Behavior for College Students

As shown by prior research, bullying behaviors are considered a result of complex interactions between individuals. In addition to considering differences from K-12 bullying literature, considerations regarding the student development process, ways in which students interact with others, and overall connection to the higher education environment are foundational to studying bullying behaviors among peers.

College student development. Students entering higher education are often moving through a complex process of psychosocial and identity development that influences how they interact with others and develop a more mature perspective on those interactions (Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh, 2002). Psychosocial theories address the developmental issues that individuals encounter over the course of their life span. The

theories address how individuals define themselves, how they relate to others, and what they do with their lives (Hamrick et al., 2002).

For many students, college is the first time in their lives that they have considered their own psychosocial and identity development aside from the values instilled by their families. Several different theories addressing specific aspects of identity development for college students such as racial identity, cultural/ethnic identity, and sexual orientation, play a role in how students learn more about themselves and interact with others (Cross Jr., 1995; Phinney, 1992; D'Augelli, 1994; Helms, 1995).

Ethical and moral development is also an important part of the college student development process. Hamrick et al. (2002) states that, "many of the decisions that college students must make with regard to interacting with others have moral implications" (p. 62). Most students come to college with ethics and beliefs influenced by their parents or environments in which they were raised. Progression in cognitive reasoning occurs through the process of integrating new knowledge into existing ways of thinking and then creating new ways of thinking (Perry, 1970). To acquire a more advanced state of moral reasoning, a student is required to see others' viewpoints and to reason logically (Kohlberg, 1976). Research on men and women moral development shows that men tend to make moral decisions centered on rights and rules, whereas women focus more in interpersonal relationships and being sensitive to the needs of others (Gilligan, 1982). All of these different developmental processes should be considered as part of studying bullying behavior among peers in college.

Student interactions with peers, faculty, staff and parents. When framing bullying and aggressive behavior through the social cognitive theory, there are three primary origins of aggression: the family structure, the mass media, and the subculture in which people reside (Bandura, 1978). The higher education subculture in which a student lives, studies, works, and interacts is of primary importance to consider when studying bullying behavior among peers. Students live in multiple living situations including: residence halls, fraternities and sororities, off-campus with parents or families, and off-campus with peers. Students living at home with their parents do not live in close proximity to peers and their main source of peer interaction does not come from their living situation. Students living in residence halls live in close proximity to peers. This is most often the first living situation a student will experience away from living with their parents and families. Students living in the local off-campus areas often live with peers they have met through previous living situations or interactions in the classroom or engagement opportunities. Fraternity and sorority members that share housing live in close proximity to peers and often navigate challenges associated with large numbers of people living in one space.

It is important to not only consider students' living situations, but also examine the additional contexts in which students interact with each other on a daily basis; both inside and outside of the classroom. At a large, public institution with many different types of students, the classroom may be the main source of interaction with peers for some students. However, equally as important as in-class experiences, students often interact with other students through work opportunities, service learning opportunities,

student groups on campus, and other engagement experiences. Students learn to navigate relationships, address conflict, and work with different types of people through these engagement opportunities outside of the classroom. Lastly, it is important to note that online behavior is an increasingly common area for bullying behaviors to exist and to examine students' interactions within this subculture.

Within those subcultures, peer interactions are a powerful source of influence on an undergraduate student's academic and personal development (Astin, 1993). Research from the 1990's indicates that peer interactions, especially those that expose the student to diverse racial, cultural, social, and intellectual perspectives, are most beneficial for student development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In addition, the amount of interaction among peers has effects on nearly all areas of student learning and development. Astin (1993) measured student-student interaction with items such as working on group projects for classes, discussing class content with other students, tutoring, participating in intramural sports, being a member of a social fraternity or sorority, participating in campus protests, being elected to an office, and hours spent per week involved in these activities. Student-student interaction had positive effects on leadership development, overall academic development, self-reported growth in problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, and cultural awareness (Astin, 1993). College students are more likely to persist when they feel comfortable and connected to other students with similar interests and aspirations (Tinto, 1993).

Although the behavior may not take place in the same ways as it does in K-12 schools, it is important to consider how peer interactions affect student success in college,

especially during the complex process of identity development. As indicated before, students' interaction with parents is important to their higher education experience. College students identify parents as the most influential people in their lives and often benefit from parental advocacy during the transition to college life (Levine & Cureton, 1998). Positive interactions with faculty and staff, along with peers, are also an important part of satisfaction with the overall college experience (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Examining interactions with peers, faculty, staff, and parents from a social cognitive perspective is useful when assessing bullying behavior among college students. It is vital to study if student responses are influenced by interactions or modeling from the people that they interact with on a day-to-day basis.

Connection to the environment. Bandura (1978) argues that bureaucratization, automation, urbanization, and high social mobility lead people to relate to each other in anonymous and impersonal ways. Higher education institutions are often challenged to create an atmosphere where students feel connected to the environment. For institutions, it should be a priority to provide opportunities, whether through programs or reflection on values, for students to feel connected to the environment. An example of proactively encouraging a connection to the institution is to have an honor code separate from an institution's student conduct code and disciplinary process. At the University of Colorado-Boulder, the honor code "relies on the conviction that the personal and academic integrity of each individual member strengthens and improves the quality of life for the entire academic community" ("Honor code office: University of Colorado Boulder," n.d.).

Campus ecology is a framework for understanding how students and their environment interact with each other (Banning & Bryner, 2001). Banning and Bryner (2001) explain that although campus ecology is not considered a student development theory, it is a method of conceptualizing the processes associated with student development. From this perspective, it is critical to examine how the interaction with a person's environment affects his/her behavior. Environmental perspectives need to be considered for determining student success in addition to individual developmental growth. Banning and Bryner (2001) state that environmental concerns are often neglected in a traditional developmental theory that focuses on individuals, which overlooks the importance of environmental impact on individuals. The campus ecology approach is a useful way to study the environmental factors as part of the social cognitive theory. This perspective provides a more system level examination of peer bullying in higher education.

Student connections to an institution through academic and social integration are paramount for college student retention. Colleges and universities have a complex structure of formal and informal groups (Tinto, 1993). The relationship among the groups in which one chooses to participate, the general perception of the group's importance within the campus structure, and the degree to which a student feels connected and involved in the campus community can affect a student's desire to persist at an institution (Tinto, 1993). It is important to note that Tinto's theory was originally created based on white, residential, traditionally-aged students. Critics of Tinto's theory have argued that the concept of "departure" is not applicable to minority students because

the model describes developmental progression within a culture, rather than assimilation from one culture to another (Tierney, 1992; Guiffrida, 2006).

Research also confirms that larger institution environments seem more impersonal and passive to students than smaller institution environments (Kezar, 2006). Large campuses must work to provide a campus climate where students feel connected to the institution. Kezar (2006) describes how large institutions with more complex missions, such as the University of Minnesota, often use structured activities and programs to achieve engagement whereas smaller institutions tend to use values and philosophy related to their mission to achieve engagement.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed literature on bullying from K-12 as well as workplace situations outside of higher education. I then reviewed the limited information available on bullying among peers in higher education, including differences to consider in the form of relationships and monitoring conduct from K-12 literature. I also discussed how the college student development process and connection to the campus environment while learning to navigate interactions with faculty, staff, and fellow students are important considerations for studying bullying among peers in higher education. In the next chapter I highlight the research questions, discuss the conceptual framework used to guide the study development, and then discuss the design, participants, procedure, analysis, and my reflections as a researcher.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study examined undergraduate students' experiences with bullying behaviors by other students while in college. The review of literature highlighted bullying research done in K-12 and the workplace, along with limited studies completed on peer bullying behaviors in higher education. Although bullying behaviors are being increasingly discussed within higher education, the focus is mainly among other constituents and not focused on peer to peer bullying. Thus, I found it important to conduct an exploratory study focused on identifying and describing the bullying experiences students have experienced or witnessed by other peers while in college. The goal of the study was to identify a coherent concept and grounded theory of how bullying behavior occurs among peers in college. The information is helpful for student affairs practitioners that are determining how to best support students that are experiencing this type of behavior and to evaluate the campus ecology for providing a more positive environment. In addition, the study is useful in better defining how students describe this behavior and for developing a national, quantitative study regarding bullying behaviors among college students.

Research Questions

To engage in an exploratory study for better understanding undergraduate college student peer bullying behaviors, the following research questions were considered:

- How do students describe bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience from peers?

- How do students address bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience

  from peers? What university resources do they use, if any?

- To what extent do students perceive that resources, either from the university

  or elsewhere, are appropriate and adequate?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study emerged from reading about Bandura's

work developing the social learning theory and then later the social cognitive theory,

along with student development theories and campus ecology work. Social learning

theory emerged in the 1960s and focused on the learning that occurs within a social

context. According to the social learning theory, people learn from one another through

methods such as observational learning (modeling) and imitation (Bandura, 1978). In

1978, Bandura applied the social learning theory to understanding aggressive behavior by

people. In 1986, the social learning theory evolved into the social cognitive theory,

which became a comprehensive theory that describes the role of cognitive, behavioral

and environmental factors in psychosocial functioning and person and societal change

(Bandura, 1986).

The social cognitive theory recognizes that development is a life-long process; it

is concerned with the psychosocial functioning through a lifetime (Bandura, 1986). In

this theory, behavior, cognitive and personal factors, and environmental influences all

operate as interacting determinants that influence each other (Bandura, 1989). A model

based on the social cognitive theory that considers the college student development

process and the higher education environment was useful for developing an approach to

studying bullying behaviors. Bandura (2005) describes that the "value of psychological theory is judged not only by its explanatory and predictive power, but also ultimately by its operative power to promote changes in human functioning" (p. 12). An increased focus on the personal, behavioral, and environmental conditions surrounding higher education is useful for educators, administrators and policymakers when examining bullying behavior among college students.

The social cognitive theory utilizes a model of causation involving "triadic reciprocal determinism" through behavioral, personal, and environmental sources of influence (Bandura, 1989). Personal sources of influence include psychosocial/identity development along with knowledge, expectations, and attitudes, including a commitment to social norms. Behavioral sources of influence include students' perceived self-efficacy or confidence in regards to interactions with peers, faculty, staff, and parents. Environmental sources of influence include students' perception of social norms and connection to the environment as well as influence on others. The sources of influence do not have to be of equal measure and do not have to occur at the same time; different influences can affect people differently (Bandura, 1989).

These factors operate together in human self-development, adaptation, and change (Bandura, 2005). The reciprocal causation of personal influences and behavior shows that what people believe or think about something affects their behavior (Bandura, 1989). The causation of the environment and personal factors shows that expectations and beliefs are developed by social influences that convey information and emotions through modeling in the environment (Bandura, 1989). The interaction of behavior and the

environment shows that behavior alters environmental conditions and then behavior is altered by the environmental conditions it creates. The social cognitive theory holds to the belief that people influence their own life function and circumstance; they are contributors to their life paths based on the influence and interplay of behavior, personal factors, and the environment (Bandura, 2005). When adapted to analyze bullying behaviors, this framework illustrates the relationship between a student's personal development, behavior towards peer interactions, and connection to the environment and social norms, and how these factors affect their role as the person affected by bullying behaviors from another peer (or peers).
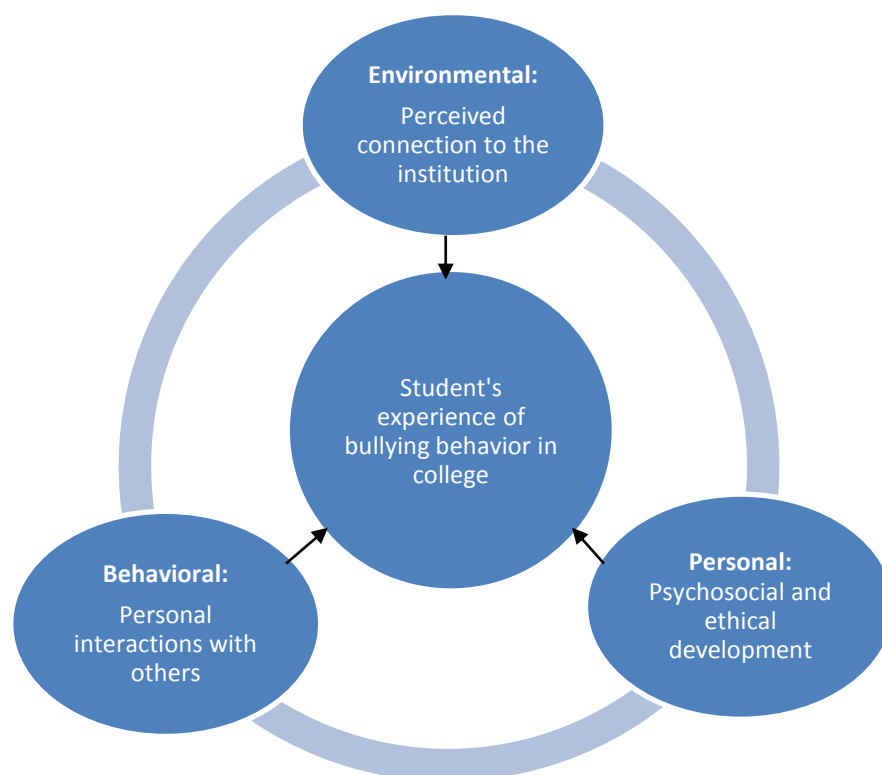

Figure 2: Social Cognitive Model Adapted to Understanding Bullying Behaviors**.**

Adapted from Bandura (1986).

From the social cognitive perspective, aversive situations affecting individuals are likely to produce varied emotional responses in different people. For example, when faced with a negative situation, some people will seek help and support, some will withdraw and accept defeat, others will intensify efforts to overcome the distress, some will use drugs or alcohol, and some will become aggressive towards others (Bandura, 1978). Within the higher education context, it is important to better understand how college students respond to aversive situations when the student believes that he/she is being bullied by another student.

Design

A qualitative approach was used for this study as the main purpose was "to gain an in-depth understanding of purposively selected participants from their perspective" (Patten, 2010). Qualitative research is often recommended for new areas of research about which there is little previous knowledge. There is currently a lack of knowledge on bullying behaviors among peers in the college setting, so a qualitative approach was appropriate to develop a deeper understanding of the topic. This study also utilized the grounded theory research methodology, based on the emphasis on developing a theory that emerges from the data rather than finding data to support a hypothesis (Merriam, 1997). The inductive approach in this study focused on developing a hypothesis that was drawn out of the research (Merriam, 1997). In addition to developing a substantive theory, another goal of grounded theory is for the study to be "grounded" in the real world (Merriam, 1997). The process of conducting interviews allows the researcher to gain information from the subjects' perspectives when observation is not possible. For

this study, it was not feasible to observe individuals experiencing or witnessing bullying behavior, so I relied on reflective interviews. This method was useful as a practitioner that would like to strengthen the student experience and address bullying issues among peers in higher education.

Strengths of the qualitative, grounded theory approach were that I was able to focus on individual experiences, look for common themes among the subjects, and begin to develop a useful theory regarding peer bullying in higher education. The weakness of this approach is that the results are limited to the University of Minnesota and students from other types of colleges and geographical areas were not involved in the current study. The lack of statistical data and small sample size also makes it difficult to be applied to other institutions, however the size and scope of the study could be replicated at other institutions that are interested in developing an initial understanding of how students experience bullying in college.

This study was approved by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) after a full review in July 2013. I had several stipulations to meet prior to final approval from the committee. The committee instructed me to provide a clear explanation for potential subjects that the research was separate from my official professional duties within the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity and that there was no overlap. I was also asked to clarify that all pending cases or people on record in my office would be excluded from participating in the study. In addition, the committee asked for the list of colleagues that I was requesting to send recruitment emails to students and that I initially contact them to ask if they

would be willing to send out the e-mail on my behalf. If colleagues agreed to send it out,

the IRB committee determined that the recruitment email that was scripted by me could

then be forwarded from colleagues to potential subjects. In addition, the IRB committee

asked that I confirm that I would provide all study subjects with counseling resources

after participating in the study. After agreeing to meet these stipulations, I was granted

final approval to begin recruitment for the study. A copy of the approved IRB

application form is found in Appendix A. I was asked to submit an application for

continuing review in May 2014 and it was approved in June 2014. A copy of the renewal

approval is found in Appendix B.

Participants

As identified in the literature review, the higher education subculture in which a

student lives, studies, works, and interacts is of primary importance to developing an

understanding of bullying behavior among peers in higher education. For the purposes of

this study, undergraduate students were recruited based on peer bullying they have

experienced in any higher education setting including the classroom, living situation,

work, student group, online, etc.

The participants were selected through the use of non-random purposive

sampling, meaning that individuals were picked because of their experiences with

bullying behaviors that made them good sources of information (Orcher, 2005). Patton

(1990) describes that the purpose of this type of sampling is to focus on "information-

rich" cases. Rather than focusing on a large, randomized sample to represent the

population, this type of sampling is appropriate because of the focus on developing an in-

depth understanding of the information and to "illuminate the questions under study" (p. 169). If a random sample of the population were to be completed, there was no guarantee that students would be able to provide an in-depth understanding of this topic, which was the goal for this interpretive and grounded study. The main criterion for the purposeful sampling was that students experienced some form of bullying behavior by any other peer while in college.

Participant recruitment. Patton (1990) describes several different strategies for finding "information-rich" cases and provides guidelines for determining the most appropriate strategy based on the purpose of the study. The study relied on my relationships with colleagues in order to recruit participants for the study. I wanted to conduct a minimum of 20 individual interviews with students that had self-disclosed that they had experienced bullying behaviors by other peers. I personally contacted higher education colleagues working with students in several different areas at the institution and asked them to send out e-mail notice to their student populations regarding participant recruitment for the study.   A copy of the e-mail that was used to contact colleagues is included in Appendix C. When colleagues confirmed that they were willing to assist me with participant recruitment, I sent them an e-mail to forward to their student contacts on my behalf. A copy of the e-mail that colleagues sent out to their respective students contacts is included in Appendix D. I contacted colleagues in the following departments to send out requests to students on my behalf.

- Housing & Residential Life – This office provides staffing and services to the nine residence halls and three apartment buildings that are on-campus.

- Office for Fraternity & Sorority Life – This office works with the 33 social fraternities and sororities, and 13 multicultural fraternities and sororities on campus.

- Student Conflict Resolution Center – This office assists students with informal resolution of all types of campus conflicts; including peer-peer situations.

- Office for Student Affairs - This office serves as the central office for the 16 units within student affairs.

- Student Unions & Activities – This unit within student affairs works with all registered student groups on campus. SUA also supports a large number of student employee positions.

- Leadership Minor – The leadership minor is a 17-credit undergraduate minor that includes students from all different types of majors.

- Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence – This office promotes an inclusive atmosphere to enrich multicultural understanding among the university community.

- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Ally Programs Office – This office is dedicated to providing a more supportive university environment by supporting a more inclusive understanding of gender and equality.

In addition to the departments listed above, I sent an e-mail to colleagues on the list serves for the Academic Advising Network and the President's Coalition for a Respectful U which provided additional opportunities to recruit students. The President's Coalition for a Respectful U is a group of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and

community members committed to providing a safe and inclusive campus climate for all members of the university community and visitors. The instructors for the online courses Alcohol & College Life, Sleep, Eat & Exercise, and Success Over Stress, posted the recruitment information on their class website which reached over 1000 students in their courses. In addition, I visited a psychology class to explain the study and provided my contact information for students to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study.

In the recruitment e-mail notice, I offered a $10 gift card to a local coffee shop as an incentive for participation. After employing my initial recruitment strategies, I was contacted by 33 undergraduate students who were interested in participating in the study. I utilized purposeful random sampling to narrow down the number of cases to a manageable size (between 20-25 cases) by identifying the respondents' year in school and specifically reminding students that I was interested in learning more about peer bullying that they had experienced in college and not in high school. Several prospective participants were eliminated through this follow up reminder and no first-year students were included in the study, primarily because the study focused on bullying experiences within college and the data was collected early in fall semester 2013. First-year students would have had limited experiences with bullying behaviors at this point in time.

The final breakdown for participant year in school was five sophomores, ten juniors and six seniors, for a total of 21 interviews. Most of the students that participated were considered "traditional" students in that they were 18-22 years old with a primary focus on completing their degree, although two were "nontraditional" because they were

older or had competing family responsibilities. Five people identified themselves as people of color and at least one indicated that race affected how she perceived and experienced bullying type behaviors.

Seven students were from the College of Education and Human Development, seven were from the College of Liberal Arts, two were from the Carlson School of Management, two were from the College of Biological Sciences, and one participant each came from the College of Science and Engineering, the College of Design, and the College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences. Eleven of the students were participants in the bullying; meaning that they were the person directly affected by the bullying behaviors. Ten of the students considered themselves to be witnesses; meaning they have observed the behaviors between peers. Eight of the situations were ongoing at the time of the interview; meaning that the students were in the process of experiencing or witnessing on-going behaviors. Ten of the situations were completed and unresolved, meaning that the students were no longer experiencing or observing the negative behaviors, but they had not addressed the situation or found any sense of resolution to the behaviors. Only three of the situations were considered completed and resolved, meaning that the students were no longer experiencing the negative situation and had addressed the issues to find a resolution. When interviewing the students, I assigned each student a pseudonym in order to protect anonymity. A summary of this information is presented in Table 1 below and a description of all of the participants can be found in Appendix E.

Table 1

General Description of Participants

STUDENT	SEX	RACE	YEAR & COLLEGE	BULLYING LOCATION	ROLE IN BULLYING	BRIEF OVERVIEW	ONGOING OR COMPLETE R=resolved NR= not resolved
Ayana	F	Black	SR: College of Design	Class group	Participant	Excluded from class group	Ongoing
Beth	F	White	SR: College of Liberal Arts	On campus job	Participant	Ignored at work	Ongoing
Cindy	F	White	SO: College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences	Sorority	Participant	Excluded by some sorority members	Ongoing
Dalal	F	Asian	SR: College of Education and Human Development	Off-campus apartment	Participant	Harassed by neighbor	Complete (NR)
Ellie	F	White	JR: College of Education and Human Development	Sports club	Witness	Leader of group was bullying her friend	Complete (NR)
Fae	F	White	JR: College of Education and Human Development	Off-campus apartment	Witness	One friend bullying another	Complete (NR)
Gigi	F	Black	JR: College of Education and Human Development	Intercollegiate athletic team	Witness	Teammates were bullying another teammate	Complete (R)

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STUDENT	SEX	RACE	YEAR & COLLEGE	BULLYING LOCATION	ROLE IN BULLYING	BRIEF OVERVIEW	ONGOING OR COMPLETE R=resolved NR= not resolved
Hailey	F	White	JR: College of Education and Human Development	Social settings	Participant	Feels excluded because she is not in a sorority	Ongoing
Irene	F	White	JR: College of Liberal Arts	Residence hall/class	Participant	Bullied by student in class	Ongoing
John	M	White	SO: College of Education and Human Development	ROTC/ Women's Crew	Witness	Bullying in ROTC/observing Women's Crew Team	Ongoing
Katie	F	White	SO: College of Liberal Arts	Social settings	Witness	Seen friends bullied by significant others	Ongoing
Lauren	F	White	JR: College of Liberal Arts	Social media	Participant	Target of online bullying	Complete (R)
Mary	F	White	SR: College of Education and Human Development	Class group/ residence hall	Witness	Friend was bullied by classmate in group/male student was excluded in residence hall	Complete (NR)
Nell	F	White	JR: College of Biological Sciences	Friend group	Witness	Female friend bullies male friend	Ongoing

STUDENT	SEX	RACE	YEAR & COLLEGE	BULLYING LOCATION	ROLE IN BULLYING	BRIEF OVERVIEW	ONGOING OR COMPLETE R=resolved NR= not resolved
Olivia	F	White	SO: College of Liberal Arts	Residence hall/band	Witness	Student was left out in residence hall/girl in her section of band left	Complete (NR)
Pei	F	Asian	SR: Carlson School of Management	Residence hall	Participant	Bullied by next door roommates through semester	Complete (NR)
Quinn	F	White	JR: College of Biological Sciences and College of Liberal Arts	Residence hall	Witness	Friend was being made fun of by other girls in residence hall	Complete (NR)
Raymone	F	Black	SR: College of Liberal Arts	Sorority	Participant	Other member verbally abused her over semester	Complete (NR)
Samantha	F	White	JR: College of Liberal Arts	Residence Hall	Participant	Bullied by other student in residence hall	Complete (NR)
Tim	M	White	JR: Carlson School of Management	Student group	Witness	Observed bullying behavior in student groups	Complete (R)
Uma	F	White	SO: College of Science and Engineering	Student group	Participant	Experienced bullying in student group	Complete (NR)

Procedure

I provided all of the participants with informed consent statements via e-mail and asked them to review the statement prior to our in-person interview. At the beginning of each interview, I engaged in a thorough review of the consent form with the student and ensured I had a signed copy prior to starting the interview process. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix F. I stored data from the interviews on my computer in a locked office. I kept the interview recordings and paper documents with participant names and contact information in a locked file and destroyed all of the interview recordings at the end of the study.

I interviewed each participant for one-to one and a half hours and the interviews were audio recorded by a digital voice recorder to ensure accuracy. I assigned each student a letter, (Student A, B, etc.) while conducting my interviews. The letters were assigned in the order that each student was interviewed in order to protect anonymity and later switched to pseudonyms to help with ease of reading the student experiences. During each interview, I took brief notes summarizing the interview and making note of any important comments or theoretical implications that arose during the interview. This technique, which is recommended in grounded theory research, allowed me to refine my thinking as I conducted the interviews. I also asked follow up questions when appropriate to ask for clarification or to expand on a subject. The questions for the interview were semi-structured and open-ended to allow for me to explore in different directions and follow emergent themes based on the answers to the initial questions. In addition, this method allowed for adjustments within the interview protocol as the

process continued and more interviews were completed. For example, about half way through interviews, I realized that I was not specifically asking participants for their definition of bullying, although some of the students were providing it through their different responses. I added this as a formal question to ensure I was able to formally attain this information for the remainder of the interviews.

The interview questions were based on the factors highlighted by the complex model of understanding bullying and aggressive behavior in higher education through the social cognitive perspective. The background questions were designed to provide context to the study and ease the participant into the interview process. The interviews took place during fall semester 2013 in a separate office space within the Office for Student Affairs. Although I had a closed office space in the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, I interviewed students in a different location in order to avoid confusion regarding my role as a student and not a staff member for this specific study. A copy of the final interview protocol can be found in Appendix G. The table highlights the initial interview questions and what elements of the social cognitive theory (personal, behavioral, and environmental) the questions referenced.

Analysis

After my interviews I reviewed the notes and added more details as needed so that I would be able to accurately remember each interview. I utilized a transcriptionist to assist me with transcribing the data. I provided a document to the transcriptionist for developing the transcripts which included columns on the right side to provide for coding space. Each interview was transcribed verbatim by the transcriptionist and then I

reviewed the data for a more general sense of content and developed some initial codes. After initial transcription I sent the transcripts to the interview subjects to confirm that they were representative of our conversation. I received confirmation from five of the participants that the transcripts were accurate.

From there, I conducted an in-depth review of each interview looking for major themes that emerged as part of the interviews. In order to develop a grounded theory, data was grouped together on similar dimensions and then categorized according to distinct themes through an open coding process. Merriam (1997) explains that the overall goal in grounded theory is to seek patterns in the data and arrange them in relationship to one another to develop the theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest combining coding with analysis to help locate and build grounded theory, and to begin coding the data into as many categories as possible. Coding categories emerged from the researcher, but others came from the language and data collected by the interview process.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe that the coding process should stop as the researcher begins to refine ideas about the category. The grounded theory emerged as the interviews were compared less to each other and the focus shifted to developing the properties of the coding categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Codes were merged and expanded as necessary to create useful categories of meaning. I started with a large number of codes and eventually merged them into about 20 themes clustered in five broad areas, which were defining bullying behaviors, inability to decipher between bullying and conflict, structured group experiences leading to exclusion, role of identity in understanding bullying, and addressing perceived bullying behaviors. There were fewer

changes to the theory as the interviews continued and the theory solidified. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain that the researcher will find ways to generalize the theory more as the interviews continue. This inductive approach resulted in a developmental theory that will need further testing and refining through additional studies.

Once I completed the in-depth coding and review of the transcripts, I engaged in member-checking to enhance validity, by sending my analysis of the interview transcripts to the participants for review to ensure that my interpretations were correct (Creswell, 2009). I provided the preliminary findings and asked if there were any major points that I needed to revise or if anything was interpreted incorrectly during the initial review. I received responses from only three of the participants and they all confirmed that the analysis of the interview transcripts were an accurate reflection of our discussion. None of the students provided any comments or indicated that changes needed to be made to my analysis of the transcripts.

Reflections as a researcher

As part of qualitative research, the researcher is an active part of the data collection process as there is no way to completely separate the researcher from the research. During the interviews, I attempted to be aware of how I come across to others, given my race and age. I am a white, female in my mid-thirties, who is also a mother of two children. I was the subject of bullying by my "best friend" in grade school, although I did not realize that I was being bullied at the time. I was not bullied in middle school, high school, or college. The concept of bullying in college, however, fascinates me as I engage with students about violations of the *Student Conduct Code* at the University of

Minnesota and look into allegations related to bullying for my professional position. As a student conduct professional, I encourage students to resolve conflicts or other issues with fellow peers if at all possible. I had to be mindful during the interviews that I was to learn more about the bullying behaviors and share counseling resources at the end of the interviews, but separate this experience from my professional role in the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. This was challenging at times, because my natural role within the university is first as a student affairs professional and as a graduate student second.

My field notes indicate that at times I did not think that the experience that a student was describing seemed like bullying. The intentionally vague parameters about the definition of bullying meant that I needed to be open to hearing about the students' experiences and their perceptions on what they were experiencing without making a judgment on whether or not the experiences were actual bullying behaviors. I was hopeful that the research participants would gain self-understanding as part of the interview process in order to better address bullying behaviors in the future. Lather (1991) describes this concept as catalytic validity; meaning that through the interview process, participants are re-oriented and moved to action to make changes for the better.

In this chapter I highlighted the research questions that were central to the study. I discussed the conceptual framework that was used to provide a foundation for the study. I then discussed the design of the study, the recruitment of participants, the procedure for interviewing students, the process for analyzing the data, and my reflections as a researcher.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of interviews with undergraduate students who experienced or witnessed peer bullying at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. I first provide a brief description of the participants and their descriptions of the bullying behavior. I then summarize the analysis according to themes guided by the three research questions that were outlined in Chapter One.

Introduction

As part of the interview process, participants were asked about the location, description and status of the bullying behaviors they encountered, including whether the situation was on-going or resolved as of September and October 2013, when the interviews were conducted. Most of the students that were interviewed described bullying within a structured student experience, such as a student group, on-campus job, class work group, and residence hall living situation, although there were a few instances where this did not apply. For the most part, these experiences occurred within groups of people with established relationships, rather than individuals who did not know each other. The diversity of locations and groups provides an opportunity to examine bullying behavior from a variety of perspectives and experiences. All of the students selected for the interviews were involved in at least one on-campus engagement activity even if that is not where he/she experienced or witnessed the bullying behaviors.

Although my e-mail indicated that I wanted to interview students to define and understand how students experience bullying type behaviors by other peers while in college, I did not specify that the person affected by the bullying had to be the person that

I interviewed. Eleven of the students who chose to engage in the study were not directly

bullied by another peer, but rather were a witness to the bullying within a student

experience. This adds a unique perspective to the study in that some of the participants

were directly affected while others were able to assess the dynamics of the situations and

attempt to assist their friends if possible. Many of the witnesses in this study chose to

participate because of their concern for watching this happen to other students.

As indicated in the previous chapter, although I gave parameters in the

recruitment e-mail to provide some structure for the types of bullying that I wanted to

study, I did not challenge students' determinations about whether or not their experiences

were "true" bullying. Rather than work with a strict definition, I was curious to see how

students actually define bullying themselves. I ended up with some descriptions of events

that would be unlikely to qualify as bullying under most circumstances. Thus, I focused

on studying how people interpret the process of interacting through negative situations

and what reasonable expectations are of behaviors in student living, working, and group

situations.

Before describing the findings of the interviews, three different student stories

demonstrate the variety of experiences that were described as part of this study. The first

story involved Gigi, who was a black, female, junior in the College of Education and

Human Development and also a member of a women's intercollegiate athletic team. Gigi

witnessed a bullying situation between teammates and saw how this was negatively

impacting the team dynamic. She specifically inserted herself into the situation to assist

the student that was being bullied by several other teammates. She helped the other

student realize what was happening and assisted with helping her figure out how to address the situation. She coached her teammate on what to say to her teammates and the bullied student individually addressed the concerns with the teammates. The experience that Gigi provided was one of the rare situations in which the bullying experience was successfully addressed.

Unlike Gigi's situation, many were not resolved in such a positive manner. The second story highlighting student experiences with bullying behaviors is of Cindy, who was a white, female, sophomore in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. She joined a sorority during her freshman year of school and was excited at the opportunity to have instant friendships with a wide network of people. The experience did not live up to her expectations, however, and she quickly found that you cannot count on instant friendships by simply joining a group. In addition, the feelings of exclusion that Cindy repeatedly felt throughout the first year affected her connection with the sorority and the opportunities that it offered. During the time of the interview she resided at the sorority house and had tempered expectations entering her second year of involvement. Rather than addressing the feeling of exclusion, she focused her efforts on the new friendships she was going to develop and ignored those that did not treat her well.

The last story, highlighting the unique perspective each student had of bullying situations, was Hailey, who was a white, female, transfer student in her first semester at the University of Minnesota. Hailey felt excluded and judged by other women she met in her classes because of her choice to not be involved in a sorority. She described the

nervous excitement of meeting other people in her classes during her first semester, especially fellow female classmates. She said that she was very excited about the conversations she was having with the women in her classes and thought she was making friends for outside of the classroom, but that this changed once they found out that she was not in a sorority. The positive feelings of connection were replaced with the feeling of being judged by these other women for her choice to not be in a sorority. Hailey never addressed these feelings with the women in her class, nor asked them to do anything in a social capacity. Instead she quietly worked through the rest of the class and did not engage with those women unless it was part of class activities.

These three stories highlight the different experiences of students related to bullying behaviors by peers in college. In addition to the varied experiences, the students in this study struggled to find words to describe their experiences as times, which is apparent in the direct language of the students. The use of filler words, such as "like" and "um" are important to include in this chapter to demonstrate the difficulty and challenge associated with describing bullying behaviors by students.

Emergent Themes

Several prominent themes emerged as a result of studying students' perceptions of experiences that they classify as bullying. First, there is a lack of a common definition to describe the "bullying" behaviors that students experienced, and many of them would not be classified as bullying based on the definitions found in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. I will review some of the definitions provided by the students as well as words that students used to describe the behavior. Second, most of the students felt that

they had limited capacity to affect the situations they described and as a result they were

uncomfortable assessing if they were engaged in or witnessing a conflict or actual

bullying. A major concern of powerlessness emerged as part of this discomfort. Third,

structured group experiences emerged as a major way in which students experienced

exclusion. Students were often surprised to experience negative behaviors as part of

these groups in which they thought there would be acceptance. Fourth, the role of

identity and how students made sense of their prior bullying experiences affected their

interpretations of current experiences. Lastly, students consulted with peers and reflected

on prior bullying experiences in order to prepare to address current bullying situations,

resulting in a variety of strategies for addressing, or not addressing, bullying behaviors.

Although students felt that the university provided resources to support them, they were

unlikely to utilize those resources to address bullying issues. Students felt that even more

could be done by the University of Minnesota to promote a positive and respectful

environment for undergraduate students.

Participant's Descriptions of Bullying Behavior

What constitutes bullying turned out to be a difficult concept for students to fully

understand and describe. As a consequence, the implicit definition of bullying ranged

widely among participants. I did not originally ask students to provide a specific

definition of bullying as part of my initial interview protocol, because I assumed that it

would naturally evolve as part of the conversation. When it became clear that many of

the participants were describing interpersonal situations that would not normally be

classified as bullying, I determined that it would be beneficial to ask the remaining ten

participants for their personal definition in order to get the best understanding of participants' perceptions of the behavior. When I began asking students for their specific definitions, some of the participants did not hesitate to immediately provide a definition that reflected elements from the definitions provided in K-12 literature, while others had less specific descriptions of negative behaviors that they were associating with bullying behaviors.

Key elements. Some of the students were confident that the behaviors they had witnessed or experienced were definitely considered bullying. Several students said that although people may not intend to exhibit bulling behaviors, this does not mean that they should not be held accountable for those behaviors. Quinn said, "I would love to limit it to intentionally hurtful words, phrases, or actions towards another person, but I think unintentional does need to be included in there because a lot of people are not mindful of how hurtful what they do or say can be." Samantha described intent in a similar way as she said, "I guess I define bullying in any way that one group or a person psychologically or physically abuses someone else and puts their own selfish insecurities before another, like before somebody else's either psychological or physical well-being." Some students were also confident in describing that bullying behavior contained an imbalance of power of one person over another. Nell said, "I guess it's, like, the same as like I've been talking about, just, like, making someone else feel small and getting something out of it, like, a sort of power."

A couple of the students recognized the importance of a repeated nature in bullying situations, which is consistent with definitions provided in K-12 literature.

Raymone said that she defined bullying "as any case where another person consistently makes another person feel bad about their self in a way that can be detrimental to their health." She explained that being called a name or being treated poorly was just as harmful and powerful as being hit physically. Mary said that her friend indicated that she was repeatedly being "singled out" by another classmate in their class group. Mary said that she "put it together" that her friend was experiencing bullying due to the repeated nature of the interactions and the continued attempts by the other person to have power over her friend and downplay her contributions to the group.

> I think definitely the repeated…um…it needs to occur multiple times…and again I think a lot of times it is an individual thing, um…and really anything that's happening a lot and to one person that makes them feel, like, attacked in any way, whether it's like I can't hang out with you cause I'm not good enough or, you know, you don't think I'm as smart as you are or whatever (Mary).

Bullying as a "feeling." In contrast, some of the participants were not confident that their experiences were technically considered bullying, but felt that the negative behaviors were worth being included in the study because of the uneasiness that they felt. These students were less concerned about the specific definition and more concerned about what to do in a situation that caused discomfort for them and others. Participants in the study brought forth multiple examples of conflicts between friends or acquaintances in which one person belittled the other person. Many of the issues focused on divided loyalties, and students' inability to communicate with someone they knew well who has acted in a way that made them feel uncomfortable.

Fae and Nell described situations in which their friends were exhibiting negative behaviors towards other peers and it caused them to be uncomfortable. Nell said that she was unclear about what "crosses the line" into bullying, but that she felt uncomfortable with the way her female friend repeatedly makes fun of her male friend. She said that the male friend will not say anything to the female friend about it, so Nell is unsure of how involved to get in the situation. She described the "bystander effect" in that she wishes someone else would help address the problem, as the rest of the social circle of friends is unsure of what to do as well, which leaves them all feeling uncomfortable when they are around these friends.

> I mean….like the bystander effect—someone else will take care of it. It's awful to say that, but, I mean… or maybe he'll be the one to take care of it because he's the one that's being really affected, but this has gone on for a long time and talking about it now makes me realize how silly it's been that I haven't done anything (Nell).

Fae said that she did not know how to talk with her about her behavior without feeling that she might lose her friendship.

> It was stressful being stuck in the middle…..I don't want to take either side but then again, she should have paid money, but then again, it's mean to kick someone off a lease, all of a sudden, no place to live and then, like, all of our friends were just....didn't know what side to pick (Fae).

The varying perceptions of how to define bullying reinforce a concern that bullying is often used as a "catch all" term to describe a variety of negative behaviors.

Katie said that she classified negative interactions between people in dating relationships to be bullying, rather than a form of relationship violence, if one partner was "rude" or "mean" to another and there was no physical violence. Irene described a situation in which she witnessed a student that was exhibiting bullying behavior towards her in a non-academic setting also exhibit similar behavior towards an instructor and a student in a class that they had together. Irene was able to identify it as more of a "chronic pattern of putting other people down" versus an individual bullying issue with her. Hailey felt excluded by sorority members in her classes because she is not in a sorority. Hailey described "being judged" for not being a part of the Greek system. She said that although this may not be typical bullying behavior, there are many sides to bullying and that "being judged" should be classified as a type of bullying behavior.

> Um…just in class, like the first day, I was talking to them and I was, like, oh, yeah, I'm making friends. I texted all my roommates I'm making new friends, and then they were, like, oh, what sorority are you in and I said I'm not in one, and they're, like, oh… (Hailey).

Hailey said that her classmates did not directly treat her negatively and she did not talk to them about her feelings of exclusion. Although these are examples of difficulties and conflicts within relationships, they would not be classified as bullying based on definitions provided in Chapter Two. The repeated nature of these conflicts among students, however, highlights a problematic trend that students are unable to resolve their own conflicts or feel empowered to work together to facilitate a resolution. Instead, the behaviors are labeled as bullying, without a specific action plan for moving forward.

Lastly, a few of the students included in the study were not sure if the behaviors they witnessed or engaged should be considered bullying. John said that he was not sure if what he witnessed in ROTC would be considered bullying because in that context, where students are expected to live up to high expectations, public "harassment" or name-calling was used to "help hold people to high standards." The two students that self-identified as international students were not entirely confident that the situations they were experiencing were considered bullying, but both felt that "bullying" is a term often utilized in American culture to describe negative behaviors. Bullying behaviors are often difficult for domestic students to identify and define, so it must be even more difficult for students from another culture to make sense of negative interactions and experiences.

Uncomfortable but Unable to Act

As shown with the problems defining the negative behaviors, many of the students described a feeling of powerlessness to appropriately address the situations they were experiencing or observing. An underlying theme among most participants was feeling troubled but also feeling that they were unable to change the situation. Rather than addressing the social dynamics that they were experiencing, the majority chose to avoid the perceived problem and hope it went away. Several of the students who experienced or witnessed bullying behaviors were genuinely surprised that this type of behavior exists in the college environment. More than one respondent indicated that they expected that this kind of behavior ended after high school and were unprepared to address it in a college setting. Raymone expressed a common sentiment when she explained that she was surprised to see that bullying existed when she came to college

because she had expected that this was her opportunity to start fresh and not experience bullying any longer.

> …it's just a little bit different because we go to a bigger school and because you think that's not going to happen—there's too many people for there to be cliques, and it still happens anyway. So that's what I meant when I said wow I can't believe that still happens in college. I consistently said since I got here that college is just like high school except the books are more expensive and you have to pay for it (Raymone).

In addition to general feelings of surprise that bullying behaviors occur in college, nearly all of the participants indicated a level of confusion and frustration with the situation they were experiencing or witnessing.

Confusion/frustration leading to powerlessness. Most asserted that although the nature and scope of the behaviors were milder as compared to bullying that they experienced in high school, it was frustrating that they were experiencing bullying behaviors at all. Students who experienced rude behavior struggled with how to define it within a college setting, where they expected more maturity. Feelings of confusion and frustration surrounding negative behaviors and interactions were repeatedly brought up in the interviews.

Mary, an observer of bullying, who "put it together" that her friend was experiencing bullying said that her friend was confused about why she was the target of the behaviors because she had no prior relationship with the person. The confusion thus stemmed not only from a lack of understanding of what caused the situation, but also not

understanding how to respond. Mary said that her friend did not feel that she could address the behaviors since she did not have a relationship with the other person so it made her class experience negative for the entire semester.

International students were particularly confused because they had difficulty determining whether culture or other factors were at the root of the problem. Dalal, an international student, was genuinely confused about the behaviors she was experiencing when she was treated poorly by a student who she did not know. Dalal said that the reason she considered this experience bullying is because of the on-going nature of the interactions and the fact that she recognized the term "bullying" in my recruitment e-mail. She said that she told her apartment manager what was happening, but that she was not given help to remedy the situation. Not only was she unsure of whether or not she had experienced bullying in this situation, she felt powerless to resolve the situation.

> We called to the manager and let her know that someone was knocking our door
> so hard and came to me and said, like, bad words. But I think it didn't change any
> and I don't have power to make it stop (Dalal).

Pei, also an international student, described a similar situation with her on-campus residence hall neighbors, although she felt that she had handled her concerns in the best way possible. She was frustrated that her attempts to handle the situation face-to-face were not met with a positive response from her next door neighbors. She said that although her two female neighbors would be pleasant to her when she knocked on the door asking them politely to be quiet, she could hear them make derogatory racial comments through the walls when she would leave. After trying to facilitate

conversations on her own, which she said was already difficult to do given that this was not within her cultural norm, she went to her Community Advisor for help, but the Community Advisor was unable to help her because the residents continued to be loud and also did not respond to the Community Advisor's requests. Pei was frustrated that there was no formal action taken by the university to resolve the situation. At this point, Pei felt that the only way to find resolution was to deal with the noise for the rest of the semester and request to move rooms when one opened up.

Quinn described her frustration about her good friend in the residence hall who was made fun of by other females in the hall for studying too much. She said that her friend spent a lot of time in the study lounge and a group of females would continually make comments about her studying habits as they would leave the hall each night to go socialize. Quinn said that her friend brushed off the comments and said that it did not bother her, but as a witness, Quinn was upset at how her friend has being treated. She said that this same group of females also made fun of another one of their friends for her clothing choices. She felt stuck in the middle; frustrated with the females that were making fun of her friends and frustrated that her friends did not stick up for themselves or attempt to confront the behaviors.

Most students experienced or described bullying behaviors in face-to-face settings. One person, however, experienced on-line bullying, which was particularly upsetting because it was one-sided with limited consequences for the person exhibiting the behavior. Lauren described how after she became the target of anonymous bullying through Facebook, including highly degrading and sexual comments posted about her,

she was happy to see the comments removed, but felt like there was no further

consequence for whoever put those comments up in the first place.

> It was taken down, which was great, but then I felt like there was no consequence,
> so, like, I feel like what happens a lot with bullying is that it's so one-sided, so,
> okay, it's stopped, but then what happens after (Lauren).

Additionally, she was frustrated about the lack of power she felt in her ability to

make it stop. Unlike face-to-face bullying in which she could confront a person about

their behavior, she had no way of determining who was posting the comments and this

left her feeling frustrated and powerless.

Structured Group Experiences Leading to Exclusion

Students were particularly dismayed by bullying that occurred as part of groups,

which seemed to reflect the behaviors that they had observed in high school. Seven of

the participants described the behavior that they experienced or witnessed as exclusion or

alienation from a structured group experience rather than direct or physical bullying,

continuing feelings of frustration and confusion. Although previous examples showed

that students were surprised that negative, bullying behaviors existed in college, students

were especially concerned when those behaviors occurred within contexts where there

was an assumption that everyone would be accepted and included, such as student

groups, on-campus jobs, intercollegiate athletic teams, the marching band, and class work

groups.

Cindy and Raymone described negative situations as part of their sororities on

campus. Cindy said that she was shocked to find that she felt excluded when she joined

her sorority, especially since she was recruited to join based on common interests with other members.

> Which I think exclusion can be a form of bullying…if it's been voiced that you're supposed to be a part of the group and then people are intentionally leaving you out…I don't know if it's intentional or if it's just nobody's noticing, but from the way it's made me feel, it's not very welcoming and it's a little bit of a putdown because it's kind of getting me to look at myself and be, like, what am I doing wrong, which last year I can't think of anything (Cindy).

Although she felt less excluded when certain members graduated after her first year, she entered her second year in her sorority with tempered expectations compared to the previous year. Raymone said that the bullying she experienced from a member of her sorority stemmed from an embarrassing and negative incident that she was "working to overcome." I attempted to probe deeper into exactly what the issue was, but the student declined to elaborate. Raymone said that as a result of "the incident", the other student capitalized on her feelings of shame and made fun of her to her face and through social media rather than assisting her in moving forward like her other peers in her sorority. She said that the verbal abuse from the other student became so severe at one point, that she had serious thoughts about ending her life. She said that as a normally passive and quiet person she did not know how to deal with the situation, especially since she and the student had been friendly prior to this incident. The rest of the sorority members were put into an awkward position between the two members, and rather than ever working together to resolve the issue, Raymone said that the rest of the members went out of their

way to ensure the two members were not together in the same room. As evidenced in the definition section, the problem was never resolved because rather than working to resolve the conflict, the student and her bullier were separated, which did not effectively resolve the situation.

Gigi, an observer, described a similar sentiment regarding the group context. She said her experience as a witness to bullying was especially frustrating because it occurred as part of an intercollegiate athletic team in which relationships are supposed to be valued in order to be successful as a team. She said that although this behavior might occur between individuals, she was taken aback to see her teammates bullying another teammate because they thought that she was overly positive and too "happy."

> It was really frustrating me because I felt like we're all on the same team, we should be friends rather than, like, trying to down someone else and I also felt, like, okay, we're in college—I really didn't expect to, like, see this stuff in college, I'm, like, we're not in high school anymore. So I was just really frustrated for … for their immaturity (Gigi).

Ellie provided an example of watching the leader of the student group she was involved in bully another student in front of other members. This student noted that it undermined her credibility as a leader, when she was trying to present herself as the experienced leader of the group by "calling out" this member in front of the rest of the group.

> Um. I really think…the biggest thing is immaturity. There's no reason to, like, you're trying to build yourself up by tearing someone down and it's…it really just

makes you look little and it makes it look like you haven't developed yet in your, like, adult kind of thing. If you're going to be a leader, you should have empathy, you should know when to stand up for yourself, and you should know when to back down. You should also know when something's getting frustrated, [its], frustrating that you need to maybe bring in someone else, maybe a mediator or something, and it's just….I think there's also a lack of intellect within just how people work…you can't blame everyone for that, but it does make you look at, like, look everybody has their problems, leave them alone [laugh] (Ellie).

Beth indicated that she experienced the "silent treatment" from peers at her on-campus job, which meant that she was unable to complete her work as the other students left her too much work to do or did not tell her what needed to be completed. Ayana explained that she was purposefully left out of her small group class discussions and outside-of-work meetings, despite clearly communicating her schedule and times she was available. Although she was never able to figure out exactly why this happened, she thinks that the fact that she was older than average and the only person of color in the group might be factors. She described the culmination of feeling excluded, including her frustration with her instructor for not helping her address the situation, and how it came out during their group's final in-class presentation:

So I had no clue as to what was going on. I felt so out of my element, you know, and so when I went to present I had an energy and it was not a good energy and I just stared at each woman when they did their presentations, like, angrily, you know, and then I gave my teacher a really bad look. I'm not proud of my

behavior, but emotionally and physically that's where I was at, you know, and I

was giving gestures and that was not professional at all, but I just wanted them to

feel all the anxiety, the anxiousness, the frustrations that I had to go

through for an entire semester (Ayana).

Olivia also described the different bullying behaviors that she has witnessed as

exclusion. However, unlike other students who felt that they should gain immediate

acceptance into a group, she said that as a member of the marching band it is the

student's general responsibility to ensure that he/she is included with their section and

actively getting involved with the band culture. She said that most people are able to do

that and are generally accepted by the other section members. However, she said that

there are cases where members are more reserved or less likely to interact outside of

required band practices, and these are the people that end up leaving the band; they are

not directly bullied, but they just do not fit in with the rest of the group.

Like, indirect, and it was…it's very much you're just suddenly left out— you're

not actively ostracized, but I think exclusion is, like, a good word for it. You

know what, no one is intending to make you feel bad about yourself or make

you not feel part of the group, but just in the end you don't kind of…it's hard to

explain (Olivia).

Being a part of the bullying circle. In addition to structured group experiences

serving as a locus for feelings of exclusion, these groups provided a setting for students to

discuss their experiences as serving different roles as part of the bullying circle described

in Chapter Two. Several students talked about their experiences with being bullied, but

also with exhibiting these types of behaviors towards others, which is consistent with the

bullying circle described by Olweus. In this way students can play more than one role in

the cycle of bullying.

As Ayana was reflecting on her bullying experience, she told me about a situation

in which she played a different role in the bullying circle. She said that she had a

situation with a group member who was not contributing to the group in a previous class

group project. However, rather than approaching the group member about the concerns,

she went along with the rest of the group and talked about her lack of participation

without her knowledge. Later, the group members learned that she was struggling with

depression and anxiety that was seriously affecting her ability to be a contributing group

member. Ayana was embarrassed that she did not inquire about the student's lack of

participation earlier and joined the rest of the group in complaining about her. When

analyzing this student's role according to Olweus (2001), she participated in two very

different roles in the bullying circle. She went from a lead role in the bullying to a

possible defender all within the same situation. Ayana said that reflecting on this

experience helped her identify how easy it is for people to exhibit bullying behaviors

without realizing it or possibly considering themselves as bullies.

> So later we all found out and I was very apologetic and I told her that I was really
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> sorry and I apologized. And she said "thank you" and "at least you cared enough
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> to apologize" because the other kids—I'm scared for this new generation because
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> they were like "so, if she had personal issues she could have dropped…she could
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> have did this…she could have did that…I just feel like she was trying to bring

everybody down". I would say "that's probably part of it….that she did not realize that she needed help or that she was this far off and so now she just wanted to end things". They had no empathy for that. They were just, like, "okay, then, if you know you have so much going on and you know school is going to be stressful and you know design is going to be stressful, then why wouldn't you take a semester off." But it's, like, maybe she didn't know that yet (Ayana).

Olivia said that she believes that people are both engaged in bullying and the victims of bullying at some point in their lives, but that there is social stigma attached to admitting that you might have bullied another person.

I feel like in the world—this might just be my own personal philosophy—in the world everyone is bullied at points and is the bullier at other points, but it's not socially appropriate to admit that you have bullied people even though everyone does it. And it's not a good thing, but it's taboo to say it, so that puts up a wall on what can be discussed—you can only discuss when it's happened to you and only if it's been a certain amount of time in the past (Olivia).

A couple of the students who were not directly affected by bullying behaviors felt that experiencing bullying is a part of life and that people should expect it. This perspective described by Olweus (2001) could be viewed as a passive supporter, meaning that this student seems to accept that bullying happens but does not take an active part. Uma explained that bullying occurs as being part of a competitive major in which there are limited numbers of females. She said that she was not surprised that this was going to

happen in college and figured that if she were in a less competitive field it might be different.

> I think given we are a bunch of women within a male-dominated field, we will all be the bulliers and be bullied at some point. We are a competitive bunch and I think people expect that. In a way, it makes sure that we are all doing our best job and it pushes us. I have seen bullying happen between girls within some of my student groups, but I think we realize that this happens in the real world so we should get over it (Uma).

John, one of two male students, did not feel that he had directly been impacted by bullying in college, but did believe that the people that were made fun of in high school were now the ones in "power positions." He explained that those that were bullied in high school have now come "full circle" and are actually the people in a better position. This trivialization of bullying experiences by a disengaged onlooker, as classified by Olweus (2001) in that he does not get involved or take a stand, is concerning, especially when insinuating that a person who has been bullied is better off because of it.

Role of Identity in Impacting Bullying Experiences

A major theme that emerged from the interviews with students is that identity impacts how students see and experience bullying. As described in Chapter Two, college is an important time for learning more about their identity and how they interact with others as part of this development. Examining identity through the lens of gender, race, sexual orientation, and previous experiences with bullying, highlights students' views on understanding bullying behaviors.

Perceived gender differences. Over half of the participants indicated that gender plays a role in how bullying behaviors show up in the college environment as the bullying often occurs within social situations and relationships. More than one student indicated that females are more likely to engage in this more "mild" type of bullying behaviors than males. Hailey described the feeling of "being judged" by sorority women in her classes for not being a part of a sorority. Gigi said that as part of the bullying on the women's intercollegiate athletic team, the person being bullied initially made excuses for the teammates' behavior towards her because she thought that was just the way that females acted.

At first she was, like, oh, this is how girls joke and she was, like, it's no big deal, they're just kidding and they're joking, and I'm, like, okay, the first time it was, like, sure, it might just be a joke and I might be overreacting but then, like, it kept happening and I'm, like, no, it's not a joke, they're actually bullying you and then she said. .she, like, started telling me it was making her feel bad and makes her… "it makes me not want to smile…it makes me want to change who I am" and I'm, like, they're bullying you, you shouldn't feel that way and if they're your friends they shouldn't make you feel that way (Gigi).

Samantha said that reading *Queen Bees and Wannabees* has given her a new perspective on female bullying and how it is often political and social, given the perceived nature of how women are supposed to act according to society's norms.

This was like a companion book but was a lot more psychological rather than sociological and really talking about how we don't identify that as bullying, it's

just like boys being boys…well, that's just like girls being girls and girls are catty

and do these kinds of things when we don't really call it what it is cause it's not as

easy to see, whereas "masculine bullying" is really—it's like one guy saying "I'm

going to go beat you up" or something like that, whereas girls it's all political and

it's all about ostracizing, so it's a lot more subtle, just because, you know, we

have…we've had this culture where women aren't supposed to show anger

because women's power comes from their relationships as caregivers… women

are natural caregivers, therefore women have to care about relationships and to

show anger is to put a relationship in danger, so now we have…women are more

culturally passive-aggressive cause you can't show that…(Samantha).

In group situations, whether within the classroom, a student group, or other group

situation, several participants described one person, which was always a female, as the

"ringleader" to organizing the exclusion or bullying while the rest of the group followed

along. Some of the students felt that the ringleader was potentially jealous of them,

especially those that are in similar majors and taking the same coursework, while others

felt that it might be a power seeking issue. In these situations, the ringleader was exerting

power over the other people in her group by influencing the other students' behaviors

towards the person being bullied.

For example, Beth felt that one peer advisor specifically tried to alienate her and

exclude her from the group. This peer advisor would intentionally make her feel inferior

in front of others and did not acknowledge her presence if they were in the same room,

which made everyone feel uncomfortable. When the "ringleader" was not around, the

other peer advisors would talk to Beth and allow her to get her work done, however, when the "ringleader" was present, the rest of the peer advisors followed suit with ignoring Beth.

Ellie was particularly aware of the public display of bullying from one student towards another student within the same student group. She was infuriated that what could have been addressed as a one-on-one situation was brought to the attention of the whole group, which only made the bullied student feel more alienated. Ellie said that she lost respect for the leader because of her lack of empathy in handling the situation.

Or one time Sarah was crying in practice from an outside reason and she, like, publicly announced that people need to leave their stuff at the door and not bring it in and some people just don't work that way, I guess, and so she…it was kind of disrespectful for her to be announcing it to the whole group because the whole group knew that it wasn't really anyone else that Missy was talking about…she was talking about Sarah but in a way she thought covered it up and it really didn't—everybody knew who she was talking about (Ellie).

Samantha said that another girl in her residence hall, Maggie, had the "queen bee" mentality and would seek out friendships from other girls who she perceived as less popular so that she could act as though she was taking care of them and then they would follow her. She said that she saw this developing in her residence hall floor and made an effort to not get involved. Samantha said that she "upset the power balance" when she moved in a month into the semester, because Maggie had set herself up as the ringleader

of the floor by that point and she did not let Maggie treat her in the same way that she was treating others on the floor.

> …so me moving in apparently upset the power balance, according to my guy friends, who I asked…cause I was…cause later on I was just like "why did Maggie hate me so much?" And they said "you upset the power balance because you have a confidence in a different way than…" Maggie has that queen bee confidence…false confidence, but they're like "you just like go do what you want, you say what you want, you don't really care what people think about you" and they're like "Maggie…she was threatened by that" (Samantha).

Male perspective. John indicated that he had witnessed "drama" on the women's team equivalent of his sport and that is seemed much more persistent than any type of negative interaction by the men's team. As the second white male in the study, Tim explained that his personal experience with bullying was limited other than what he has witnessed between female group members as part of some Carlson School of Management student groups. He said that he sometimes takes a step back from the group dynamics and observes the behavior because he is interested in it.

> It is just fascinating to me because I'm trying to figure out what is going on… I mean sometimes I can just see how these girls interact and how they are all happy to each other's faces and then later I hear them both talking about each other. I've seen it more than once and it just surprises me…guys really don't seem to do this to each other, it is really only females in college that I can see (Tim).

Ellie felt that in her situation, the bullier responded better to a male friend confronting her about her behavior versus a female friend. Ellie said, "The guys are really good at, like, they can pull themselves out of these drama problems but the girls for some reason pick a side and I think it's a girl thing, really." Ellie also said that as women become more empowered as they grow older, they will be more likely to bully, which is why she thinks it becomes more apparent for some women in college. Fae said that women are more likely to engage in bullying behavior because girls are more "catty."

> Guys are more, like, chill about things, they just, ah, whatever, man. They're fine the next day. But girls, like, keep going with things, they just keep, keep and they want to bring everyone into it and they want to turn everyone against you and stuff like that (Fae).

In fact, a couple of female students said that their male friends became involved in the situation and attempted to help address the bullying situation as it was occurring.

> There was the friend who, um, he actually pulled her aside and said "look, you were being too aggressive about this…we all know that some of the stuff that's going on in Sarah's life is, you know, some of the stuff that she's created herself but you don't need to add to it." He's, like, "you don't need to add to it to make sure that she knows that she's made mistakes." Like it's not your place and then other people noticed. They more turned away because she was the oldest and you don't really want to piss off the president and so…but I would say the best response from someone would have been from him because he actually pulled her aside and said "look…" (Ellie).

Treatment based on racial identity differences. Some students felt that their racial identity impacted how they experienced or witnessed bullying behaviors. Ayana said that although she has not experienced direct racism, she and her entire family are keenly aware of how their racial background impacts their collegiate experiences by often feeling marginalized in the classroom. Ayana explained that in regards to bullying:

> I don't think that it helps when we're minorities and then there you're in a classroom where no one looks like you and you just feel like…you already feel different and then when you start getting treated differently I think that really…sets in (Ayana).

In Ayana's experiences, she believes she is already being treated differently as a minority student in the classroom, in addition to being older than most undergraduates. When she was being actively excluded from her class group, she was not sure if the bullying was related to her racial identity or some other reason; however, it made the exclusion feel even more intentional and hurtful.

Pei described that when she was having issues with the noise coming from her neighbors in the residence hall she decided to go talk to them in-person to ask them to quiet down rather than avoiding the situation, which would have been her preference. As an international student from China, she challenged herself to talk to them face-to-face, which was stretching outside of her cultural norms. However, based on the negative reaction she received, including hearing them call her a "stupid Asian" through the residence hall wall; she said that she is not sure she would ever feel comfortable approaching people in a direct manner again.

I think the reason I wasn't too powerful is because the culture—I'm from China

and I'm an international student—and my English wasn't that fluent. Maybe they

just think I'm weak, so they just…it might be part of the reason (Pei).

Raymone said that as a child of immigrants, she has always looked different and sounded

different than others, but that most of the bullying behaviors that she experienced related

to her identity occurred prior to coming to the University of Minnesota. It is pertinent to

note that although many of the participants felt that bullying was based less on racial

identity in college than in prior experiences; the majority of participants were white,

American-born, females commenting on this perspective from a position of white

privilege.

Treatment based on sexual orientation. None of the students involved in the

study provided personal examples of bullying based on sexual orientation, but a couple

did discuss their perspective on how people are treated based on sexual orientation in

college. Because I did not specifically ask students to disclose their sexual orientation,

and no students voluntarily shared this information, it is unknown if this perspective

comes from a majority, heterosexual perspective or if students were speaking from the

perspective of a gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender student.

Quinn said that her prior bullying experiences in high school were focused more

on sexual identity than they are now in college, and the bullying she is witnessing now is

generally less severe, but more focused on being disrespectful and rude.

I think different as in a lot of the truly hate-filled or bullying because of your

sexual orientation that is meant to be incredibly hurtful, they know exactly

what they're doing—that was more high school. Cause I feel like honestly a lot of those kids are not the type of kids that go on to college so…um…there's a lot more of a respectful environment here compared to my high school of differences in cultures, which I think is something that the university actually has done a really good job of…but I think there's a lot more subtle forms like snide comments and stuff like that which you never know what someone is going through behind the scenes of their life and I might be the one comment that just sends them home in tears that day and you have no idea (Quinn).

Olivia had a similar perspective in that she believes there is more tolerance for accepting "different types of people and sexual orientations" than there was in K-12, which may have to do with the size of the institution.

I think it's really similar in terms of the personalities not meshing where people just go, well we don't work so I'm not going to try. I feel like what I've seen in college hasn't had that active "I'm going to let you know that you don't work with me by saying mean things" but that might just be more because you don't have to interact with people as much…um…with the guy from high school and stuff, you saw him every day and you were with classes with him year in year out. Here it's odd if you have a class with someone twice cause it's such a huge school. So I feel like that need to let people know that they are different is less (Olivia).

Reflection on prior experiences. In addition to analyzing how gender, race, and sexual orientation impacts students' perceptions of bullying, students' prior experiences

with bullying impacted their perception of current situations. Almost all of the students had experienced some sort of bullying behavior in a previous setting before coming to college, with large variations in the scope and nature of the bullying. More than half had these experiences in high school. The students that had tangible, personal experiences with bullying in previous settings were the students that described more well-defined bullying situations in college and the ones that I had more in-depth interviews with as part of this process. These students may have had a more clearly defined mental picture of what bullying behaviors look like given their sensitivity to prior experiences versus students experiencing this behavior for the first time in college. These students were able to express their understanding of bullying more clearly than those that did not feel that they had much prior experience. In addition although these students felt better prepared to handle bullying situations in college based on their prior experiences, these students were the most surprised that bullying behaviors continued to exist into college.

For example, Beth provided clear examples of physical bullying from elementary and high school years, including being locked in a classroom and taunted by peers in the fourth grade and having a carton of milk thrown at her head during her senior year of high school. Ellie said that as part of a social group in high school, she would be included and then isolated repeatedly; she referred to it as a "cycle of inclusion and isolation." Quinn described several situations from high school: a friend being bullied for coming out as a lesbian, a male student who was a general target of bullying through high school, and a friend who was bullied and blamed for her boyfriend's death, leading to her suicide. She explained that based on these experiences she is committed to identifying

bullying and helping her friends address negative situations, even though she has not been directly affected by bullying behaviors.

Lauren said that other students used fake accounts on Instant Messenger in high school to make negative comments towards her online. She said that reflecting on her experience with cyberbullying in high school helped her respond to the similar experience she had while in college. Ayana and Raymone provided examples of being bullied based on their racial identities in previous settings and how those experiences framed their interactions with people in college. Gigi said that her experiences being bullied in high school were helpful in assisting with the situation on her team as she is used to defending herself.

> Yes. In high school it was, like, all the time I seen this. And sometimes it was, like, under the table cause even though I lived over North I went to [High School], which is in [City], so there was times when people, like, tried to bully me…students of other races…I was always quiet, I kept to myself, so I'm like, well, if I just keep to myself people won't say anything. But people used to say, like, these snide comments, like, you from North, you gotta be ghetto, loud…you talk the same way, you're not that smart…and people used to try to, like, say, well, comments, like, under the cover comments to me and I'm, like, I used to, like, stop it right there, like, no, I'm sorry…just because where I'm from does not define who I am. So it was like what our group lived in…I'm used to, like, defending myself (Gigi).

Although prior experiences were helpful to serve as reference points, they did not

necessarily translate into a positive resolution for the current situations. Pei tried to

intervene based on her previous experience from high school, but it did not work as she

had planned. She was surprised that she was unable to get her neighbors' behaviors to

stop when she attempted to talk to them face to face. She said that she was paired up to

live with another international student in high school and that she experienced a similar

situation. The difference, however, was that when she asked her roommate to quiet

down, she responded and the situation was resolved. She said that she was surprised that

this tactic worked in high school, but not in college where people are supposed to be

more mature.

Samantha said that she experienced a situation in high school in which a female

student who was her friend decided to intentionally leave her out of the group, so that she

needed to make all new friends her senior year of high school. This experience has

affected her ability to develop close friendships and trust other people now that she is in

college. She has been able to use this experience to analyze her interpersonal

relationships with others, but she feels that she is unable to develop meaningful, deep

relationships with others, especially women, which impacted her connection to the

institution.

> So on the one hand I'm able to see it a lot easier and again able to avoid it a lot
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> easier because I…I've been really hyperaware of it, going through that
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> experience. On the down side, I'm a little bit…I have trust issues with people.
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> I'm pretty…it makes it a lot harder for me to open up to people. But that is

those, you know, long-term effects that…and you don't want those things to define you, you want to be able to define what happened and move on from it (Samantha).

As noted before, some of the students did not feel that they had experienced or witnessed bullying prior to college. Fae said that although she cannot think of specific instances of being bullied in high school, there was much more emphasis put on anti-bullying campaigns than in college. Hailey said that she had no real prior bullying experience in high school, which is why the feeling of being excluded and judged by sorority women in college now "feels like bullying." Although most of the participants who were able to identify bullying behaviors had previous experience with bullying, this student indicated that she was able to identify potential bullying behaviors because of her lack of experience. This is one of the examples, however, of when a student's perception of bullying behaviors does not match up with definitions provided in the literature and is based more on perception.

Addressing (or not Addressing) Perceived Bullying Behaviors

For the participants that were directly experiencing bullying behavior from another peer, the most common response to addressing the situation was to avoid the conflict all together. For those who did approach the other person, there was wide range of responses from the bullier or bulliers. Only one student described a successful approach to directly confronting bullying behaviors, and this person was assisting another peer and not the direct target of bullying. Several students described situations in which

their concerns were downplayed by the person exhibiting bullying behavior towards them.

Students explained that when preparing for how to address bullying behaviors with the perceived bullier, they would commonly consult with peers first before moving forward. Many of the observers in this study were approached by those that were being directly bullied by another peer to assist with handling the situation, so I was able to gain the perspective from the students asking for consultation and the students providing consultation on how to approach perceived bullying behaviors.

The students directly impacted by bullying were surprised at the apathetic responses that they received, whereas others were able to find the support that they needed to address the situation. Ayana indicated that her peers said that she should just "go with it" and enjoy the fact that she was doing less work for her group project. She expressed frustration about how they downplayed her concern about the situation. Irene had a similar reaction by peers as Ayana. She said that when she talked with other peers about the negative behavior of another female towards her, those friends said that she should consider the other student's background "and all she had been through" as part of the reason that she acts the way she does. This student's friends made it seem that the bullier should be allowed to act in a certain way because she had difficult life circumstances.

Beth on the other hand said that her friends listened to her concerns and were supportive rather than offering any direct advice. She said that it is more difficult now, however, that her support system is more spread out than it was in high school.

Well, like when I was younger it was a lot more direct, you know, abuse, or, you know, people would literally make fun of me to my face and egg me and it was, like, you know, it wasn't …. It was something, like, yeah, I'm being bullied, whereas …. and then in high school, I mean, if I got the silent treatment it was kinda, whatever, I don't care, I've got other people [laughs], I have a support system and I have all these people here, but, like, now my support system, like, is kind of spread thin…like, my best friend is talking about…she goes to [College]. We used to see each other maybe once every few months, and so, you know, I can't, she can't support me all the time (Beth).

Peers not directly affected by bullying often tried to offer direct advice, but were asked by their friends experiencing the behaviors to listen, but not act. Raymone explained that based on her bullying experience, the rest of her peers in the sorority know that she cannot be in the same room as the other student. She said that they are supportive and helpful in making sure that the two do not cross paths and are able to avoid each other, even in public spaces. Although they encouraged her to stand up for herself when the bullying was occurring, she said that they have respected her wishes and stayed out of the situation, other than helping her avoid the other person. Some of the peers that provided consultation, including Mary and Quinn, were frustrated that their friends did not want to address the behaviors despite seeking consultation.

Avoiding the behaviors. After consulting with peers, different tactics were used by students to address bullying behavior. The most common tactic used in these situations was to not do anything about it. In these situations, the students affected by the

bullying behavior decided that they would rather "wait it out" or let the situation pass rather than directly talking to the person about their behavior towards them. Most of this had to do with those students' preference for handling conflict. For example, Raymone explained that as a passive non-confrontational person, she did not handle it face to face at the time.

> And so I have a duty to myself to just grow up and little bit and, you know, handle it in a better way. Looking back on it I don't think I did anything that would have helped the situation…I mean, you can cry, you can do whatnot, but that shouldn't be all you do. And just talking around the issue doesn't solve the issue. So if I could do it over and go backwards in time I might do something different in the sense of I probably would have stood up for myself more as opposed to just taking it all (Raymone).

Hailey said that although she feels that she is being judged by the sorority women in her classes, she has never approached them about her concerns or asked them to do anything socially outside of class. She recognized that until she is willing to take a step to address her concerns, the situation is not likely to change. Irene said that now that she is a Community Advisor she is able to help others have difficult conversations about treating each other with respect, but that for her individual situation, she chose to avoid the situation. Irene felt that the best way to handle the situation with the other female exhibiting negative behaviors was to try to stay out of her way and not give her a reason to interact with her. Although she realized this is not the most proactive way to address the issue, she felt that it was the best way to help her move past the negative behavior.

This example demonstrates that gap that exists in knowing what to do to directly address a situation and implementing the behavior. Giving advice to another person is much easier than personally acting on the advice.

Mary said that although she encouraged her friend to reach out to the student doing the bullying, her friend said that she would rather not mention anything and "suffer through it." Mary expressed frustration over her friend's passive response to the situation, but recognized that this is probably common for many people experiencing this type of behavior. She said that her friend did not want to draw attention to the behavior and have the other student think it was a "sign of weakness." Olivia explained that her honorary band sorority has a rule that if you have a problem with another person you need to "suck it up" and keep it to yourself.

> Like, keep it to yourself…we all have to be civil with each other. We all need to
> work together, so if you have an issue with someone, you know, don't let it show
> because we have to get stuff done (Olivia).

Directly addressing the behaviors. Gigi took a different approach to handling the situation and decided to talk directly to the people that were bullying her other teammate. Similar to the experiences of other students in this study, the initial reaction of the bulliers was to downplay the feelings of the person being bullied or in this case, the witness's perception of the interactions that were occurring on the team.

> Well, it was some of 'em I got in a group, some I pulled aside one on one. I just
> basically told 'em, like, we're not in high school any more, we're in college,
> we're teammates, we shouldn't be putting each other down cause it brings

negative effect on the team and you're making her feel bad. And then they were just, like, well, she's not complaining, she's not saying, so we can't really be bothering her. Yeah, I'm, like, even though she's not saying something, you guys are making her feel bad cause she's telling me about it and then I explained to them, like, how would you feel if somebody was doing that to you or if it was your sister? And they said well, I understand what you're saying, but it's just she's so happy and it just bugs us. And I'm like, well, you can't bully somebody because of who they are. You can't get mad cause she's happy. [They were], like, yeah. So, I really brought it to them as basically being a group of bullies (Gigi).

After pointing out this behavior to the teammates that were bullying, Gigi encouraged the bullied student to talk to her teammates about their behaviors towards her and she talked with them individually. The teammates apologized to her and stopped the bullying altogether. As a result of Gigi's ability to identify the negative behavior, tactfully approach her teammates, and encourage the bullied student to talk with teammates about their behavior, the situation was positively resolved.

On the other hand, Pei tried to directly address the behaviors with her neighbors in the residence hall and was not able to resolve the issue. She ended up enduring the behaviors throughout the rest of the semester until she could move rooms. This example shows that although sometimes students attempt to resolve negative behaviors in a direct manner, it does not always end with a positive resolution.

Downplayed feelings. A few participants indicated that when they approached the bulliers individually about their behaviors towards them or others, the bulliers acted as if they did not know what they were talking about or downplayed the situation. Ayana said that she tried to talk to her group members individually but that they did not acknowledge her concerns, so she let it go. Beth described this behavior as getting "the brush off." This left her confused that maybe she was misinterpreting the situation and she was frustrated that the students would deny that they were acting differently towards her.

> I've tried to [talk to them]. I was like, do you have, like, a problem with me—you
>
> don't ever make eye contact with me. And they're just like "no…it's fine."
>
> They just brush it off…. (Beth).

 Fae said that she was in a difficult position as she was actually better friends with the student exhibiting the bullying behavior than the person experiencing it. She said that although she and her other friends recognized that their friend was bullying another person they were not sure what to do about it. When Fae did mention to her friend that she thought she should stop posting negative comments about the other student on Facebook, the student brushed her off.

> I mean, I, like, all of us that are in the middle were like that's mean, but you have
>
> a reason, but, like, you didn't need to take it as far as you did. There's no reason
>
> to post online and try and get people to talk bad about her to her other friends and
>
> stuff like that. I mean, simply saying, like, you're off the lease and stuff like that
>
> is mean enough in itself and so you didn't need to take it to a whole other level
>
> with bullying and, like, bringing other people in and bringing in social media and

… um, she just blew it off, like, I'm gonna do what I wanna do, it wasn't fair that

she owed me money, so I'm just gonna act how I want to act (Fae).

Samantha decided to talk to Maggie the "queen bee" at one point because she was

noticing that the rest of the girls on her residence hall floor were not inviting her to hang

out and starting to ignore her. Maggie downplayed the situation and said that there was

nothing wrong, which left Samantha confused about what exactly she was experiencing.

Samantha said that despite her attempts to have a discussion about the behavior, she

eventually realized the situation was not going to change and that she should just accept it

and move on.

Reflection. Several of the students indicated that looking back on their situations

they wish they would have had the courage to approach the person exhibiting the bullying

behavior and handle the situation directly. The students who were friends with both of

the parties described how they felt stuck in the middle between the two parties and the

difficulty with navigating the situation and ensuring that they did not negatively affect

their friendships.

Although most indicated a need to be more straightforward and comfortable

approaching people about their behaviors, a couple other students indicated the opposite.

Ayana said that in order for her to be more successful in the future, she is going to

relinquish control and not going to fight back when feeling that she is being bullied by

others. She said that being involved in these types of situations is not worth the

frustration. Cindy said that she would rather put her energy into building positive

relationships with others in her sorority rather than focus on establishing a relationship

with the students that are bullying her. This student also said that she is now more selective at getting to know people. Beth felt that she had exhausted all of her options by talking with the peers and also supervisors and not getting any sort of response to her concerns, so she felt that in order to make it through this experience she would just need to "suffer through it."

Response from the university. Although most of the students did not go to their instructors/advisors/supervisors to assist with the situations, some students did let them know about their difficulties with bullying behavior. There was a general sense that instructors/advisors/supervisors did not provide much help with the situations and that students needed to deal with it themselves.

> So it's affecting me off work and the fact that I don't know what's being done because no one's telling me. And then if I tell my bosses and all, they're, like, well you need to go figure out what's been done ….but, like, I've already gone to them and I believe from what I understand they talked to their boss—or, our boss— about it, so there's nothing I can really do because, like, those are the only two people I had_____ and both of them are aware of the situation but haven't, like, done anything, so… (Beth).

Gigi has approached the team captains and the coach about the behavior she was witnessing and although the captains made a general announcement to the team about respecting each other and treating each other well, they did not pursue the issue further. The coach did not address the situation at all, which is why Gigi eventually handled the situation herself. She said that bullying is not a behavior that people feel comfortable

talking about at the college level and that "everybody just sweeps it under the rug... like, you're adult, you're grown, just get with it" (Gigi).

In Lauren's situation, she felt that her supervisor on campus was extremely helpful to getting the Facebook page removed and attempting to figure out who had made the comments. Olivia explained that the band directors are vigilant on ensuring that hazing activities do not occur within the band, primarily due to the media surrounding cases at other universities, but that they are not as aware of individual interactions between members of the band. She said that she would feel comfortable approaching them with an issue, but that they generally are more hands off with the individual interactions between band members, primarily due to the large number of people in the band. However, outside of band, she does not believe the university addresses bullying well.

> I feel like our…the university doesn't have very many opportunities to connect with other students, period…um, just cause, like, I have classes all the time and it's only once I have a class with someone three times that I actually get to know their name…um, cause it's just so large. I think there's a bit of…and I don't know if this is a wider culture thing or a university culture thing, but there's a bit of a stigma against talking about bullying…um…because everyone agrees it's an issue, no one has really a good solution that has been shown to work, and everyone participates on both ends but doesn't want to admit it (Olivia).

Most of the students generally felt that the university has resources to prevent and address bullying behaviors but there is a disconnect with the likelihood to utilize those

resources. Gigi felt that her personal experiences with bullying were a better resource than anything the university may have to offer. Although some of the students are aware of different resources on campus that can be utilized for help, only a couple of the participants actively utilized those resources beyond their instructors or Community Advisors.

The students that were aware of campus resources did not feel that these situations raised to the level where they need to use those resources or did not think that they would be able to directly assist with the situations, especially if the bullying situation did not occur on campus. Katie said that students need to figure out how to deal with it on their own if they are feeling bullied by someone else. Tim said that he knows the University of Minnesota has great resources for students, but a lot of the bullying behaviors he has witnessed need to be worked out between the two individuals rather than including someone else. He said that it is not serious enough to get an advisor or another staff member in Carlson involved. Uma provided a similar response and said that the College of Science and Engineering is always willing to help students solve their issues if needed, but that this was not the type of experience that most people would go to their advisor or a staff member to help with because they need to figure it out for themselves. Ellie said that she utilized Boynton Health Service for personal reasons in the past, but did not think that her friend was interested in using university resources to assist with her situation. Quinn said that since she didn't perceive the bullying she was witnessing to be at a level where she would see a need to involve anyone from the university.

And I think with a lot of these I think there are levels to the bullying. That's not

to say that the levels of hurt aren't equal for different people but all of these

situations in my mind didn't come up as really severe, so I didn't think it was

necessary to involve any…like, I can be an adult. If that really bothered me I

could have walked into their room "I don't appreciate what you said about myself

or my friend…can you please go apologize to her" cause I was, like, you know,

it's frustrating but I know that Kayla [took it] a little bit more to heart than I

do. So I could have dealt with it that way but I just didn't think it was necessary.

But it wasn't ever in my mind at that level that I needed to involve the university.

And I know that there are resources for that too (Quinn).

Samantha had a very similar situation to Quinn in that she did not feel that the bullying

she was experiencing rose to a level where she needed further assistance, although she

knew the resources were available.

Many of the participants remarked that the sheer size of the institution makes it

difficult for people to engage with those resources, especially if the incident occurred off

campus. Students also explained that it is easier to avoid bullying behaviors in college

since the university is such a large place and you are likely to not have class with the

same people over and over unless you are in the same major

Yeah, I mean in high school you pretty much see the same people all day and

everyone pretty much knows everyone, so you're all friends on Facebook and you

write something on Facebook [and] everyone in high school knows it. Like here

no one knows who that person is…you could write something and no one would

know….who that person is cause there's so many (Fae).

Quinn said that she was surprised to read the negative comments that are shared

on social media sites and online forums between fellow students. She said that she was

really surprised at the overall negativity and incivility that can be shown on those pages

when people are able to hide their identity. Quinn also said that although she does not

know the exact resources available to help with bullying behavior at the University of

Minnesota, she is confident that she could find the resources by looking at the university

website. She observed that the university provides a set of expectations on treating others

respectfully during Welcome Week, but after that there is a limited discussion on the

topic, other than certain professors who focus on it as part of class expectations.

I think it's more the attitude that if you need it, it's there, but it's not necessarily a

conversation that's brought to the forefront of matters. I think…I remember there

being anti-bullying stuff when I first started in freshman year, like Welcome

Week—you know, just be respectful of everyone around you, you're coming into

a place with different cultures or belief systems, etc. So it was more like it

was…bullying was talked about there but since then I haven't really noticed much

in the way of…(Quinn).

Raymone said that overall the university promotes a positive environment of

"maroon and gold, first and foremost." She said that she felt appreciative that a professor

recognized that she could benefit from counseling services and helped her get connected

to resources. Other students indicated a need for the university to do more to encourage

students to resolve negative situations. Ayana expressed the importance of the University of Minnesota taking more of a stand on inclusiveness saying, "I guess I couldn't stress it enough for like the faculty and staff to … let it be known that you need to collaborate and include people and again stand behind their diversity, you know" (Ayana).

Hailey said that more emphasis should be put on being a good neighbor and standing up for your friends and other students that you do not know well. She said that although she has learned that she needs to be more confident in her interactions with others through this experience, she feels that the university should put more emphasis on caring for each other and essentially described the importance of bystander intervention without specifically identifying the program.

> I know…there's, like, situations even…like last weekend in…last weekend I was out and there was just friends that were doing dumb stuff and, like, all my other friends..like this girl, she's my friend, and everyone's, like, oh, that's so embarrassing and they're all just sitting there talking about her and stuff but no one got up and was just, like, that's sad, maybe we should just, like, help her, not, like, have people talk about her but no one…no one got up and, like, said anything to, like, make people stop, so that's obviously like a form of, like, putting people down. And she, like, didn't even know that they were talking about her. I guess it just follows you wherever you go (Hailey).

Irene said that although she is a Community Advisor and aware of resources through training, more needs to be done to enhance the bystander intervention awareness on campus.

Like I said, I think if I wasn't a CA I would be kind of confused…um…there is

Bystander Program posters, which I think is a nice start, but I think there's

definitely space for more, like, sharing information through the various [

Facebook] outlets and things like that…cyberbullying is real (Irene).

Conclusion

In this chapter I summarized the analysis according to themes guided by the three

research questions. Due to the lack of common definition to describe the "bullying"

behaviors that students experienced, many of the situations that were analyzed in this

chapter would not be classified as bullying based on the definitions found in K-12

literature. Students indicated that they were uncomfortable assessing if they were

engaged in or witnessing a conflict or actual bullying, and felt a sense of powerlessness to

respond to the situations. Structured group experiences, such as classes, student groups,

and on-campus jobs, emerged as settings in which students experienced exclusion. The

analysis also demonstrated that the role of identity and how students made sense of their

prior bullying experiences affected their interpretations of current experiences. When

determining how to address a possibly bullying situation, students consulted with peers

and reflected on prior bullying experiences, resulting in a variety of strategies for

confronting bullying behaviors. Overall, students felt that the University of Minnesota

provided resources to support them, but were unlikely to utilize those resources to

address bullying issues. Despite the sense of support, students felt that even more could

be done by the university to promote a positive and respectful environment.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I review the research questions and the importance of the study. I then summarize the main findings of the study and discuss how what was learned can be used by higher education professionals to address bullying behaviors. I present a preliminary grounded theory of students' experience with bullying based on the analysis from the previous chapter. I also address implications for practice as well as the need for further testing of the grounded theory in order to develop a national, quantitative study. The chapter ends with a discussion of limitations to this study that can be addressed by future studies.

Review of Research Questions

The study began with three distinct research questions:

1. **How do students describe bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience from peers?** As Chapters One and Two suggested, bullying in higher education is not currently well defined or described, making it difficult for students, staff, and faculty to often recognize and address in a unified manner. The results of this study are important for two major reasons: 1) the results provide initial context to the study of bullying behavior among peers in college and 2) the results provide a foundation for developing a more comprehensive study of bullying in college based on the development of a grounded theory.

2. **How do students address bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience from peers? What university resources do they use, if**

any? This study provides a foundation for starting the conversation about how students experience bullying behaviors when they enter the higher education environment, which is important given the expectations of higher education institutions to provide positive campus ecology and also respond to bullying and harassing behavior as outlined in the 2010 Dear Colleague letter.

3. **To what extent do students perceive that resources, either from the university or elsewhere, are appropriate and adequate?** Given the need for an environment where individuals feel a sense of belonging, feel safe and able to participate, and where there is a mutual sense of support among people in order to build community as described by McKinney et al. (2006), this study provides an important foundation to understanding how higher education institutions can respond to incidents of bullying behavior among students in order to provide a more supportive environment that empowers students to address issues and utilize resources.

Rather than summarizing the key findings separately for each question, the summary of findings will be integrated across four main areas, pointing to the ways in which each finding addresses one or more of the questions.

Key Findings

The study led to several key findings about how students experience bullying behaviors from peers in college including: a) certain common behaviors exist; b)

structured social contexts serve as the primary location; c) confusion exists in deciphering between conflict and bullying, including a lack of norms about inclusion/exclusion; and d) uncertainty about how to hold people accountable.

Common behaviors. Students were able to identify some commonalities about the bullying behavior experience in college. First, in all of the situations, students viewed the bullying experienced in college as more subtle or less egregious than their previous experiences. The only discussion of physical bullying came from students describing prior experiences of bullying from high school. There was consensus that physical bullying would not be tolerated in the higher education environment. Although students do not have one unified definition used to describe bullying behaviors, they do have common words used to describe their experiences such as confusion/frustration, exclusion, and immaturity. This shows that although students may define bullying in a variety of ways, they utilize similar terms to describe the behaviors. As Pellegrini and Long (2002) described for the K-12 setting, bullying is considered one way in which adolescents manage peer relationships and exert dominance as they make the transition into new social groups. Many of the participants in this study identified that the person (or people) exhibiting these behaviors seemed to feel better about themselves when they were able to bully another person. The participants were also able to identify the role of a ringleader or "queen bee" and describe how this one person often takes a lead role in facilitating a bullying culture among peers.

Without being specifically told about the concept of a bullying circle, some of the students were self-aware enough to identify that they have or they will participate in

bullying in a different role at some point in their lives. In addition, most of the people specifically identified bullying in college as more of a female than male issue, without being specifically prompted to discuss gender. A future in-depth study with a more balanced gender distribution will be useful to see if this phenomenon accurately describes the majority of perceived bullying on college campuses or if this was limited to this study based on the large number of female participants.[1] It would also be useful to study the concept of bullying for students that identify outside of traditional male/female binary gender descriptors as well as a study that specifically considers bullying related to students racial identities.

Structured social context. The findings suggest that bullying occurs in a variety of settings related to the student experience, but most commonly related to a structured group experience, such as a classroom, student group, or an on-campus job. In most of these settings, the ways in which students might approach a faculty member or a supervisor to express concerns about bullying are unclear. Although extensive resources such as counseling services, ombudsman services, and other student affairs services are offered for students, especially for students in these social contexts, higher education is clearly a less structured environment with less supervision and training for faculty and staff on how to help students address bullying behaviors. The level of university involvement in addressing bullying is clearly less defined and less recognized than in K-12 schools. There is also clearly less parental involvement in addressing bullying situations given the nature of student privacy, especially at a large research institution.

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[1] Interactions that I have had with male students in my professional capacity following this study indicate that peer bullying does occur for males in college, but that social stigma prevents males from talking to others about it.

Although some of the students mentioned that they informed their parents about their situations, there was little discussion about how parents were involved in any bullying that occurred within the higher education environment. Thus, students were left with a sense that there was no easy way to determine how they should report or obtain assistance in dealing with the conflict they experienced.

Confusion between defining conflict and bullying. Andre et al. (2010) indicated that it is unclear whether or not the term "bullying" resonated with students once they were in college. This study showed that although the term "bullying" may not be the best word to describe all of the behaviors identified in this study, it provided a common foundation to start discussions about the behavior they were experiencing or witnessing, even when those behaviors do not align with traditional definitions of bullying defined in K-12 literature. Future research could further look into the specifics of what terminology best describes the behaviors.

The study also shows that there is currently a lack of norms about whether exclusion should be considered a form of bullying. Although few experts define simple exclusion as a form of bullying,[2] several participants strongly felt that this was definitely a form of bullying. Many of the students, however, were describing situations in which there was an expectation to be included since there was a relationship, albeit not a strong one, with other peers (in the same work group/class project group). Many of the students in this study were struggling with what they should expect in regards to being accepted

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[2] There are, of course, more complex situations where exclusion is clearly identified as a form of "punishment" for social offenders. The instances that students raised in this study did not fall in to this category.

and included. To define all exclusionary behavior as "bullying" is clearly inappropriate, but that does not mean that negative, exclusionary behaviors should be tolerated.

In addition, the study highlights another issue with identifying and addressing bullying in higher education: When is the sense of being excluded because the person in question does not understand other people's expectations? If a student does not try to pursue a relationship with others and in return the other students exclude that person from activities, should that be considered bullying? There is no clear answer to these questions and is often left up the interpretation of the people involved in the situations.

Throughout Chapter Four it was evident that students experiencing or witnessing bullying behaviors are often confused about whether they are involved in an actual bullying situation or a conflict that is not being managed correctly. The results indicated that either way, students want to be able to help each other facilitate a positive resolution, but that they often do not know the best way to do so. The result is often a student feeling bullied who does not know what to do so she/he retreats and does nothing or a witness that listens, provides encouragements, but does not take action. The struggles that students are going through to manage these situations is an example of the complexity of the college student development process. This study showed that students are working towards managing and learning acceptable behaviors, while moving through a significant time of growth and development.

Sensitivity to holding people accountable. Throughout the study it was obvious that the lack of norms regarding expectations people should have of each other affected students' abilities to hold other students accountable. In certain situations, students were

quick to identify "bullying" behavior in situations where another person was displaying interpersonal influence. For example, in one of the cases a student group leader was setting the expectation that personal matters were not to be brought into the student group and the student that I interviewed identified that as bullying. The study showed that there is a balance between holding people accountable and setting expectations for appropriate behavior and being viewed by peers as a "bully." Lack of empathy or demonstrating influence to hold people accountable should not be confused with bullying, but it often is according to this study. A major conclusion from this study is that the "bullying" identified by students is often not in defined behaviors or events, but in the people's experience of how it made them (and sometimes others) feel.

A surprising number of the incidents that were reported were unresolved. In particular, most participants were more likely to ignore the bullying behavior or "wait it out" and less likely to directly discuss the behavior for a more immediate resolution. They were, nevertheless, left with a strong sense that there was no appropriate answer to what they should have done. Those that directly addressed the incidents were much more likely to find the situations resolved than those who ignored the situation.

Although students generally felt that the University of Minnesota has resources to assist them, most could not identify specific names or offices. Even if they were able to name the resources that assisted them, they often felt that their situation did not warrant the need to utilize those resources and that those resources are best utilized by "others" with more severe situations than their own. In other words, although they did not have

the skills to resolve the situation, they did not believe that their issue warranted asking for help.

In addition, students felt that although certain individual professors or advisors provide help, the overall message is that students should "figure it out on their own," which is likely due to the size of the institution. The most likely way that students obtain university involvement seems to be consulting with their Community Advisor in the residence hall. Even at this point, most students indicated that they would prefer to handle it on their own or through consultation with their peers, rather than utilize the services of a university office. Future studies could address whether or not regional context or a more equal gender distribution impact the likelihood for a more direct approach to handling the situations. In addition, since many instances were unresolved, peer consultation was, at least for many of the participants, not particularly effective.

The key findings of this study highlight areas for consideration in further studying how bullying behaviors are present in the college environment. Although further testing needs to be done to determine if the key findings can be applied beyond one institution, it is helpful to decipher commonalities of behavior and location as well as the need to further understand the negative behaviors experienced by peers in college in order to help students resolve their conflicts.

Developing a Grounded Theory on How Students Experience Bullying

The findings from this study suggest that although bullying prior to college and bullying in college may have some familiar characteristics, there are different ways in which students experience perceived bullying behaviors in college. The resulting

bullying behaviors occur in a variety of settings, including living situations, work situations, and engagement opportunities, although the majority of bullying type experiences were within structured group settings.

The following model shows the interplay of how students experience bullying in college according to the sources of influence outlined by the social cognitive theory.
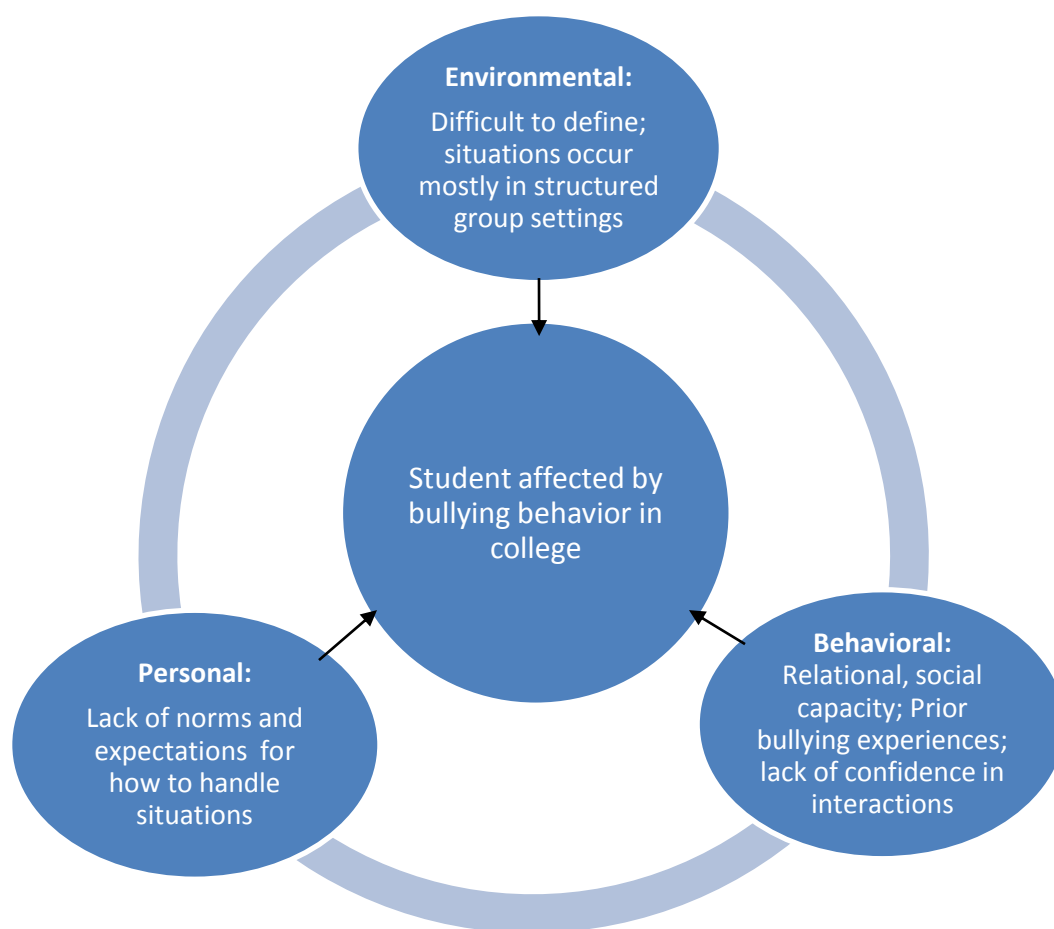

Figure 3: Student Experiences of Bullying Aligned with the Social Cognitive Model. Adapted from Bandura (1986).

The student experiences aligned with the Social Cognitive Model help provide a descriptive theory for how students are affected by peer bullying in college. The emergent theory results in the predominance of unresolved conflict. The interplay of environmental, personal, and behavioral factors show that the lack of social norms about responding to negative behaviors, coupled with the lack of personal skills for engaging in difficult conversations results in a lack of self-efficacy about how to handle negative interactions or bullying behaviors in college.

Although these themes emerged as a descriptive grounded theory for how students experience bullying in college, there is a need for future studies to lead to further development and refinement of the theory. In addition to developing a grounded theory, the results of the study are useful for assisting higher education professionals in addressing bullying behaviors among peers in college and will be discussed in the implications section.

Future Research

This research study adds to initial understanding of how students experience bullying behaviors in college. As stated before, the goal of the study was to identify a coherent concept and grounded theory of how bullying and harassing behavior occurs among peers in college. I used the social cognitive theory to assist in developing a grounded theory of how students experience this type of behavior, although it needs to be studied further beyond the scope of a limited, qualitative study at one institution in which the primary participants were female. The results of this study could be used as a

beginning ground for future research on this topic with the goal of being expanded to a national, quantitative survey regarding bullying behaviors among college students.

There is a definite need for further examination of the preliminary grounded theory that was developed in this study. The results identified the components that contribute to the experience of bullying, but do not indicate the circumstances under which one component might be more important than another. In addition, as stated above, studies of college student bullying need to be produced and replicated at a variety of institutions in order to see if the grounded theory tenets identified in this study are accurate for all institutions or specific to the institution in this study.

Other topics may require more detailed recruitment in order to determine the generalizability of the results presented above. It is important to identify if bullying occurs more frequently between females than males. Few students identified sexual harassment in the study, which, given the attention given to this topic in the media suggests that students may be excluding it from their definition of bullying. In addition, given this study's finding that bullying tends to occur in structured group settings, it is worth pursing whether bullying generally occurs as a result of social, relational experiences, among those who have a prior relationship in some way, or is more or less likely to affect college students who have had prior, but generally more severe experiences than what is occurring now. In addition, it would be beneficial to further explore the role that race and identity play in the perception of bullying behaviors, including the role of white privilege. Many of these questions would require a broader

recruitment and data collection effort, and possibly surveys rather than the methods that were used in this study.

Implications for Practice

In addition to identifying key findings that will be useful for developing a more comprehensive study on bullying, the results of this study can provide an initial foundation for policy and practice to strengthen the university's role and response to bullying behaviors. The study highlighted several implications to assist colleges in strengthening the support provided by institutions including: a) setting expectations; b) encouraging utilization of campus resources; c) capitalizing on the power of peers; and d) providing training on conflict management to faculty and staff.

Setting expectations. Several of the student respondents indicated that the University of Minnesota does a good job of introducing the concept of respect for others and creating an inclusive environment during Welcome Week, but that this does not continue in a fluid way throughout the remainder of a student's experience. Because Welcome Week only occurs once before school starts and does not include transfer students, there needs to be a more unified way to ensure a culture of treating people with respect and the importance of addressing conflict in order to overcome bullying behaviors. Through the research process, students reiterated the importance of positive campus ecology described by Banning and Bryner (2001).

Utilizing current policy is a way to promote this type of positive culture. For example, the *Student Conduct Code* at the University of Minnesota outlines the guiding principles of the institution which can be used as a guideline for framing conversations of

respect among students. The guiding principles of the *University of Minnesota Board of Regents Student Conduct Code* (1970) are:

(a) The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University.

(b) The University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

(c) The University is dedicated to responsible stewardship of its resources and to protecting its property and resources from theft, damage, destruction, or misuse.

(d) The University supports and is guided by state and federal law while also setting its own standards of conduct for its academic community.

(e) The University is dedicated to the rational and orderly resolution of conflict.

Utilizing this set of expectations that is already outlined in the *Student Conduct Code* through different messaging during the entire student experience may be a way to emphasize the university's commitment to a respectful environment.

In addition to the *Student Conduct Code*, the University of Minnesota should continue to work on fully engaging students in the student development outcomes that are provided as a foundation for the outside of class student experience. The student development outcomes are: 1) responsibility and accountability; 2) independence and interdependence; 3) goal orientation; 4) self-awareness; 5) resilience; 6) appreciation of

differences; and 7) tolerance of ambiguity ("Student Development Outcomes," 2011).

The outcomes were designed to "assist students to become lifelong learners and engaged

and effective citizens when they leave the University" ("Student Development Outcomes,

2011," para. 3). Furthering a commitment to the student development outcomes is

pertinent based on the findings of this study. Although instructors and professors are

clearly responsible for meeting student learning outcomes, there is less accountability for

the student development outcomes. As student affairs professionals we need to push

students to develop through their interactions with others, especially through structured

group experiences, so they are prepared to enter the workforce and address conflict and

potential bullying behaviors.

Also, new to the University of Minnesota in fall 2014, is a campus climate

website dedicated to providing current resources on campus that can assist all

constituents in addressing concerns related to civility. The main page of the campus

climate website states:

> "The University of Minnesota supports a welcoming campus climate in which all
>
> persons are treated with civility and respect. Toward that end, the University will
>
> facilitate, sustain and advance a culture that supports equity, inclusion and
>
> community by fostering dialogue, respect and personal growth. These purposeful
>
> activities and shared responsibility provide an environment that allows everyone
>
> the opportunity to succeed" ("Campus Climate," 2014, para. 2).

In addition, the website highlights "World Café" events in which faculty, staff, and

students are invited to come together on discussions about making the community a more

respectful environment. These resources are in-line with participant feedback from my interviews in which they mentioned more consistent messaging on providing a civil and positive university environment. In addition to incorporating these expectations throughout the student experience, it is important to identify ways to address the emphasis on respect when recruiting potential students starting with campus tours and through orientation so that students are not hearing messages of respect for the first time during Welcome Week.

Encourage utilizing campus resources. It is important to recognize that students seem to know that resources exist to help them on campus, but that there may be hesitancy to utilize those resources for low-level bullying situations. With rising mental health cases and increased utilization of counseling resources, this is an area for future advocacy and funding by higher education institutions. It is concerning that counseling services are filling to maximum capacity knowing that there are still students out there who are not utilizing those resources, either due to lack of knowledge or lack of availability. Staff members need to increase efforts to specifically ask students the best ways to engage students in utilizing university resources to address bullying situations, rather than assuming students will utilize resources as long as they are advertised. This study highlighted that it is not enough to provide resources on campus, but that creating buy-in to utilizing those resources is just as important.

The power of peers. It was apparent in this study that students prefer to utilize other peers when dealing with bullying situations as a main source of support. This supports Astin's assertion that peer interactions are powerful for students. This also

emphasizes the importance of increased bystander training sessions in which students are taught and encouraged to stand up for their peers in different situations. In addition, it is important for university staff to consider training more student ombudsmen to assist with dealing with conflict and helping connect students to resources. Future studies are needed to determine if students are willing to utilize university resources if they feel that other students are involved in the resolution process rather than university staff or faculty members. In the meantime, it is crucial for university staff to foster relationships with students, especially those involved in student group leadership positions. Students in these positions will be able to refer their peers to resources if they have made meaningful connections and trust that the resources on campus will help students resolve their concerns.

Training faculty and staff. As Morrissette (2001) describes, faculty are often unprepared to handle classroom disruptions and students often feel uncomfortable and that their learning experience is compromised when academic incivility occurs in the classroom. Whether or not the bullying behaviors that occurred in the classroom should be characterized as academic incivility, the assertion that bullying behaviors occur in the classroom was apparent in this study. Several students in this study indicated that although they had a few instructors that seemed to care about the individual students and their situations, there was a general consensus that the students needed to "figure it out themselves" if they were having issues with other students in the class. It is not apparent whether this assumption is due to the fact that faculty members do not want to handle negative behavior-related issues in the classroom or if they are unprepared to do so due to

a lack of training. Faculty and instructors need to feel empowered to understand

university resources and how to ensure students get connected and also where they can go

for individual consultation on situations in their classrooms so that they are able to

resolve incidents at a low level and focus on class material. This study showed that not

only is it important to provide support to students, but to faculty and instructors as well.

Bridging the gap between academic and student affairs will help ensure students are

being supported in all areas. At the University of Minnesota, sharing these results with

the Center for Teaching and Learning will be a key step in bridging this gap and

supporting our instructors as well as our staff members. Future studies are needed to

determine the best way to train faculty and instructors on non-academic concerns that

arise in the classroom.

Limitations

Several limitations arose as part of this study. One of the major limitations was

that although efforts were made to recruit both male and female students, 19 of the 21

interviewees were female. After the initial round of respondents to my interview request

was all female, I consulted with my doctoral committee on how to proceed. The

committee suggested that I attempt to recruit more male participants by specifically

contacting the Interfraternity Council and also informing colleagues that I was searching

for more male participants. I re-contacted my colleagues to let them know that I was

interested in male participation and specifically asked my colleague in Fraternity and

Sorority Life to re-send my request to the leadership of the Interfraternity Council. The

recommended efforts to recruit more males was unsuccessful, however, so my committee

determined that I should move forward with the participants that I received and discuss the lack of male response in my findings.

An unintended side effect of utilizing purposeful random sampling was that three additional male respondents were excluded from the study during this process. The males all indicated that they did not have any specific bullying experiences from college, but that they were attracted to the study based on physical bullying they had experienced in high school. Although it would have been useful to have additional male viewpoints in the study, it would not have addressed the main goal of examining peer bullying experiences in college, so I chose to not include them in the study. The two males that did participate indicated that they had observed bullying among women more than men, but it would have been helpful to have more men as part of the initial study to provide insight to determine if the emphasis on female bullying was due to the large numbers of females in the study or if there is truly a culture of bullying more around women than men in college. Future studies with more equal gender distribution, or bullying studies of college-aged males, needs to be completed in order to verify this finding.

In addition, due to the fact that the study was set up as a one-time, one-hour interview study, I was unable to develop an ongoing rapport with the interview subjects, which impacted the depth of the study. Creswell (2003) describes the limitations associated with an interview study, which include relying on participants to reflect on an experience in a non-natural setting after the experience has occurred. For example, I noted during several interviews that the student that I was interviewing seemed to be providing limited information or not engaging in deep reflection. Despite my efforts to

encourage the student to open up by providing a neutral site and being inviting in my verbal and nonverbal cues, the students did not always want to share all aspects of their deeply personal experiences, which impacted the overall depth of my results. In addition, one of the research subjects alluded to a significant experience with bullying, but was embarrassed to go into detail other than say that the event was significant enough that she considered suicide at the time. The data in this study was limited by whether or not the bullying type situations were accurately described by the students and the lack of perspective from the "bullier" in the situations. In the future, it may be useful to employ a case study approach in which the researcher develops a more long-term and ongoing relationship with the participants.

Another limitation is that about half of the participants were not directly bullied in a situation, but witnessed a friend being bullied. Despite the usefulness of providing an additional perspective on the bullying experiences and an added element of triangulation due to the perspective of a different person involved in the situation, the role of a witness was an additional step removed from the direct experience, which is a limitation. In addition, there is no absolute way to determine whether or not the students that participated in this study as witnesses were actually witnesses or used this as a cover to describe their direct experiences.

This study also did not specifically measure how students who are bullied are affected based on outlined student success factors, such as academic performance, self-esteem, alcohol use, and view of the environment. Although these factors were discussed anecdotally, there is a need for future research in higher education to identify specific

student success factors, such as those outlined by Twyman et al. (2010) and Nansel et al. (2001) that were identified for K-12 students.

The study was limited by the lack of online situations that were described. Although I did not specifically recruit based on cyberbullying or negative social media experiences, I assumed that online bullying would be a major focal point of the study. Cyberbullying was only described in depth with one student, so therefore future research needs to be conducted to determine if the grounded theory that was developed can apply to online or social media bullying as well as in-person experiences.

As a result of the interviews with students, it is clear that several problems arise with allowing students to self-define "bullying" for the interviews. I was careful to not question the students' definitions as part of the process, however, I indicated in my field notes whether or not the students were describing actual bullying situations. After even more careful analysis, I find that very few of the cases contained situations that followed the definition of bullying in K-12 literature, which means that they included repeated behavior in which one of the parties felt an inability to stop the behaviors. Rather most of these cases contained conflict situations in which students felt ill-prepared to address their peers and to stop the conflict that was occurring.

Finally, due to the relatively small number of students that were interviewed within one, public research institution, the results for this particular study may not be applicable across different types of institutions and to the larger college student population. The number and scope was appropriate for this particular study, however, given the research approach which was designed to provide in-depth information and to

develop a grounded theory regarding how students describe and experience bullying type behaviors by peers. It would be useful to have a national study developed that can reach a wider variety of institutions to see if there is similarity in the experiences described by the students in this study. The results could vary greatly depending on several factors such as institution size, geographic location, mission, vision, religious affiliation, etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as I highlighted in this research, bullying behaviors do exist among students in higher education at varying levels and in varying contexts, although the phenomenon under study was not fully defined as a result of the research process. This study reiterates the concern that bullying is not a well-defined term, but rather often described through the perspective of those experiencing it or those that have experienced it in a previous setting. The lack of guidance on defining bullying and allowing students to self-define their negative interactions with others as bullying provides a unique perspective on the issue. Although students in this study generally described more "mild" experiences than bullying in K-12, there was confusion and frustration that these types of behaviors exist in college at all, especially among students who are in contexts in which the students involved in the study have developed relationships. Students reflecting on the bullying experiences felt that the behaviors were more likely to occur among women and were to be social and relational in nature and not physical. For the most part, the students felt that the University of Minnesota provides resources to assist students, although most were not able to name the specific resources or actively utilizing those resources. In addition, there is a sense that although individual faculty and staff sometimes assist students with a situation

and refer to resources, the culture in general is for students to figure it out themselves.

More should continue to be done by universities to set a tone for a respectful environment

and promote positive campus ecology in order to encourage our students to facilitate skills

related to conflict resolution and addressing potential bullying situations.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

August 8, 2013

Laura J Knudson
Office for Student Affair 3505A
Room 109 ApH
128 Pleasant St SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

RE: "Developing an understanding of college student peer bullying behaviors:
A social cognitive perspective"
IRB Code Number: **1307P37901**

Dear Ms. Knudson
The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval at 45CFR46.111 and the requirements set by the IRB, final approval for the project is noted in our files. Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes the consent form received August 6, 2013 and recruitment materials received July 8, 2013.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 25 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

For your records and for grant certification purposes, the approval date for the referenced project is August 2, 2013 and the Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal; approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to:

*Inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects, changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received.
*Report to the IRB subject complaints and unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others as they occur.
*Inform the IRB immediately of results of inspections by any external regulatory agency (i.e. FDA).
*Respond to notices for continuing review prior to the study's expiration date.
*Cooperate with post-approval monitoring activities.

Information on the IRB process is available in the form of a guide for researchers entitled, What Every Researcher Needs to Know, found at
http://www.research.umn.edu/irb/WERNK/index.cfm

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at 612-626-5654.

Sincerely,
Jeffery Perkey, MLS, CIP
Research Compliance Supervisor
JP/bw

CC: Karen Seashore

Appendix B

IRB Renewal Approval

TO : klouis@umn.edu, nyrex001@umn.edu,

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee renewed its approval of the referenced study listed below:

Study Number: 1307P37901
Principal Investigator: Laura Knudson
Expiration Date: 06/05/2015
Approval Date: 06/06/2014

Title(s):
Developing an understanding of college student peer bullying behaviors: A social cognitive perspective

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This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota HRPP notification of continuing review approval. You will not receive a hard copy or letter. This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

You may go to the View Completed section of http://eresearch.umn.edu/ to view or print your continuing review submission.

For grant certification purposes you will need this date and the Assurance of Compliance number, which is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Childrens Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date.

In the event that you submitted a consent document with the continuing review form, it has also been reviewed and approved. If you provided a summary of subjects' experience to include non-UPIRTSO events, these are hereby acknowledged.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems and adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur. Results of inspections by any external regulatory agency (i.e. FDA) must be reported immediately to the IRB. Research projects are subject to continuing review.

If you have any questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

The IRB wishes you continuing success with your research.

Appendix C

Initial Recruitment E-mail to Colleagues

Dear Colleagues,

My dissertation research study, "Developing an understanding of college student peer bullying behaviors" was recently approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota. I would like your help in recruiting potential subjects for my study, because I believe interviewing students for this study will help provide more knowledge on what peer bullying behaviors look like on college campuses and help with the overall goal of creating a more positive campus environment.

If you are willing to assist me in recruiting students, please let me know and I will forward you an e-mail to send out to your list serve or to students you may have contact with (I would ask that you BCC potential subjects to protect student privacy).

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns or if you'd like me to stop by to talk to you in person about the study.

I also want to clarify that I am completing this research as part of my student role and not my professional role. Any pending cases or people on record in OSCAI will be excluded from participating in the study.

Thank you,

Laura

Appendix D

Recruitment E-mail Forwarded to Potential Participants

Hello,

I am Laura Knudson, a graduate student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study to better define and understand how University of Minnesota students experience bullying behaviors by other peers while in college. If you choose to take part in the study, you will be compensated with a $10 gift card for your time.

The bullying behavior (that you have experienced or witnessed in college) should include one or more of the following elements:

• The behavior has included social media in some way

• The behavior has occurred more than once

• The behavior occurred (or is occurring) between two or more individuals and not between groups

• The person being bullied felt (or feels) a lack of power or inability to make the behavior stop

• The behavior occurred (or is occurring) in any setting (e.g. classroom, student group, residence hall, off-campus apartment, on-campus job, etc.) related to the student experience.

As a participant, you will be asked to participant in a 1-1.5 hour, in-person interview that will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. You will remain anonymous throughout the process. There are limited risks to being involved in the study, but you may feel uncomfortable when talking about personal experiences. Again, you will be compensated with a $10 gift card for your time.

I find it also important to let you know that I am a staff member in the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (OSCAI); however this research is being completed in the context of my student role, not my work role. Any pending cases or people on record in OSCAI will be excluded from participating in the study.

If you would be willing to participate in this study, please contact me at nyrex001@umn.edu. If you have questions, please contact me at nyrex001@umn.edu or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Karen Seashore at klouis@umn.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Laura Knudson

Appendix E

Brief Descriptions of Interview Participants

Ayana. Ayana was a black, female, senior in the College of Design. Ayana was considered a nontraditional student in that she is older than average with two college-aged sons; one of whom is attending school at another local private university and the other who used to attend the University of Minnesota. Her husband also recently finished his undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota as an older than average student. In addition to describing how she has experienced bullying within in-class groups, she also described how her identity has influenced her experiences. Her experience was on-going and unresolved exclusion from a class group.

Beth. Beth was a white, female, senior majoring in the College of Liberal Arts. She has been at the University of Minnesota all four years and has been involved in a variety of student groups and on-campus jobs. Her first experience with bullying behaviors started in summer 2013 within her on-campus job. Her situation was ongoing and unresolved at the time of our interview.

Cindy. Cindy was a white, female, sophomore in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. She has experienced bullying behavior as part of her involvement with her sorority on campus, which is where she currently resided at the time of the interview. Her experience was ongoing and unresolved at the time of our interview.

Dalal. Dalal was an Asian International student majoring in the College of Education and Human Development. She was a senior and a recent transfer student from

Seattle. She said that she had been bullied by her male downstairs neighbor, who she did not know, during spring semester 2013 at her off-campus apartment. Although Dalal did not feel that she was still affected by the bullying behavior, the situation was unresolved from her perspective.

Ellie. Ellie was a white, female, junior, majoring in the College of Biological Sciences, although she was currently working to transfer into the College of Education and Human Development. She did not personally experience bullying behaviors, but as part of the athletic-based student group she is a part of, she personally witnessed this behavior between two females. Although the situation Ellie observed was complete, she was looking into ways to better help peers with situations such as this in the future.

Fae. Fae was a white, female, junior in the College of Education and Human Development. She said that she had recently witnessed one of her friends bully another friend and that she felt caught in the middle of the situation. Fae alluded to the situation being over, although she did not know how to talk to her friend about what she witnessed.

Gigi. Gigi was a black, female, junior in the College of Education and Human Development and was also an intercollegiate athlete on a women's team. Gigi was considered a nontraditional student in that she was also a student parent, raising a 10-month old daughter at the time of the interview. She was witness to a bullying experience between teammates and specifically inserted herself into the situation to assist the student that was being bullied by several other teammates. Gigi was one of the rare situations in which the bullying experience was complete and resolved with a successful result.

Hailey. Hailey was a white, female, transfer student in her first semester at the University of Minnesota. She was a junior in the College of Liberal Arts. She said that she feels excluded and judged by other women she met in her classes because of her choice to not be involved in a sorority at this point of her college career. The situation was ongoing and unresolved at the time of our interview.

Irene. Irene was a white, female, junior in the College of Liberal Arts. She said that she experienced bullying her freshman year in college by another student living in the residence hall that was in her same major. This student continues to treat her poorly, make fun of her, and talk to her in a condescending manner, although she does not see her as much since they do not live in the same residence hall any longer. She did not find resolution for this situation other than avoiding the other student. In addition, this student has assisted other students with addressing bullying situations in her role as a Community Advisor in a residence hall.

John. John was a white, male, sophomore student in the College of Education and Human Development. During his first year of school last year, he was a member of Army ROTC as well as the men's crew team. This year, he has decided to not pursue Army ROTC due to the time constraints of being involved with both activities. He said that he has not personally experienced any bullying behavior as part of the men's crew team, but he has seen it occur as part of the women's crew team.

Katie. Katie was a white, female, sophomore in the College of Liberal Arts. She said that she has seen bullying occur between students that are involved in dating relationships. The situations she was describing were ongoing and unresolved.

Lauren. Lauren was a white, female, junior majoring in the College of Liberal

Arts and the College of Biological Sciences. She described her experience last year when

she was the target of social media bullying. She said that it was done anonymously

through a Facebook page for the residents of her residence hall in which she was the

Community Advisor. The situation Lauren described was complete and she had

attempted to resolve the situation despite not being able to directly confront her bulliers.

Mary. Mary was a white, female, senior in the College of Education and Human

Development. She has a nontraditional path at the University of Minnesota, in that she

attended the University her freshman year of school, returned to an institution close to her

home for her second year, and then decided to come back to the University to finish her

degree. She said that she has a friend who was continuously bullied in a class group

throughout last year and had witnessed exclusion of a male student in the residence hall.

Both of the situations she described were complete, but she wanted to determine how to

better handle her role as a witness in the future.

Nell. Nell was a white, female, junior majoring in the College of Biological

Sciences. She was involved in a variety of student groups and was also a teaching

assistant for a large lecture class, but has not experienced bullying in any of these

settings. She said that her experiences with bullying were observing a female friend of

hers who bullies their male friend. The situation was ongoing and unresolved at the time

of our interview.

Olivia. Olivia was a white, female, sophomore in the College of Liberal Arts.

She was involved in a multitude of student groups, most of them connected to her

experiences as part of the University marching band. Olivia felt that the marching band leadership works hard to ensure that no hazing is occurring, but that individual sections and their leaders are responsible for working out student to student issues.

Pei. Pei was a female, Asian, International student in the Carlson School of Management. She described her experience with having two next door neighbors in the residence hall who bullied her last year after she asked them to keep the noise level down. She said that she asked the Community Advisor for assistance but that it did not help, so she did not find a resolution for the behavior for a semester before she could move out.

Quinn. Quinn was a white, female, junior in the College of Biological Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts. She said that one of her friends was consistently made fun of in the residence hall by another group of women. The situation was over at the time of our interview, but Quinn did not feel that it was ever resolved properly.

Raymone. Raymone was a black, female, senior in the College of Liberal Arts. She said that a member of her sorority verbally abused and bullied her last year. The situation was complete, but unresolved.

Samantha. Samantha was a white, female, junior student in the College of Liberal Arts. She described her experience of being bullied by another female student in the residence hall. The situation with Samantha was over and resolved.

Tim. Tim was a white, male, junior student in the Carlson School of Management. He described his experiences with bullying behavior as part of his

participation within a couple of student groups. As an observer, he was not personally experiencing this behavior.

Uma. Uma was a white, female, sophomore in the College of Science and Engineering. She has experienced bullying behaviors as part of her experiences within female engineering-related student groups. The situation was ongoing and unresolved.

Appendix F

Consent Form

**Developing an understanding of college student peer bullying behaviors:
A social cognitive perspective**

You are invited to be in a research study of how students experience bullying behaviors by peers in higher education. You were selected as a possible participant because of your role as a student at the University of Minnesota. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Laura Knudson, Higher Education Doctoral Student, Organizational Leadership and Policy Development. (Please note: The researcher is also a staff member on campus in the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, but this research is not being done as part of her professional role.)

Background Information

The purpose of this study is to examine University of Minnesota students' experiences with bullying related behaviors by peers while in college. The bullying behavior should include the following elements:
- The behavior has included social media in some way
- The behavior has occurred more than once
- The behavior occurred (or is occuring) between two or more individuals and not between groups
- The person being bullied felt (or feels) a lack of power or inability to make the behavior stop
- The behavior occurred (or is occuring) in any setting (e.g. classroom, student group, residence hall, off-campus apartment, on-campus job, etc.) related to the student experience.

The research questions are:
• How do students describe bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience from peers?
• How do students address bullying or harassing behaviors that they experience from peers? What University resources do they use, if any?
• To what extent do students perceive that resources, either from the University or elsewhere, are appropriate and adequate?

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in a one time 45 minute to 1.5 hour one-to-one interview. The interviews will be audio recorded by a digital voice recorder to ensure accuracy.

The interview questions will be approximately 15 open-ended questions that explore your experiences with bullying behavior. An example of a question that might be asked is: Did you have a prior relationship to the student that is exhibiting these behaviors towards you? If so, can you describe the relationship?

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

The risks from participating in this study are minimal. You may experience mild stress and discomfort from discussing your experiences related to being bullied by other peers. If at any time you are feeling discomfort from the study you are free to skip questions or end the interview. Additionally, I have a list of campus resources for you.

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study

Compensation:

You will receive a $10 gift card to a local coffee shop for your participation in the study. This will be given to you when you meet for the interview.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Study data will be encrypted according to current University policy for protection of confidentiality. The data will be kept in digital recording files and then transcribed to paper data. The data will be kept in locked storage in the primary investigator's home office. The data will be destroyed after dissertation publication is completed. The investigator and advisor will be the only people with access to this information and the advisor will not have access to any personal identifiers.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Laura Knudson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at nyrex001@umn.edu or 952-913-2431. You may also contact her advisor, Karen Seashore, at klouis@umn.edu or 612-626-8971.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____   Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____   Date: _____

Appendix G

Interview Protocol

Interview questions	**Main element of focus**
Tell me a little bit about your experiences at the University of Minnesota – more specifically, how long have you been a student here? What is your major?	Personal
What year in college are you?	Personal
Are you involved in any engagement opportunities outside of the classroom? (student group, intramural sport, community service, service learning, on-campus job)	Personal, Environmental
Can you tell me about the experience or experiences that led you to volunteer to be part of this study? How did this make you feel at the time? How about later?	Behavioral
Where did these experiences occur? (e.g. classroom, residence halls, fraternity/sorority, student group, online, etc.?)	Environmental
How often has this behavior occurred*?*	Behavioral
Did you have a prior relationship to the student that is exhibiting these behaviors towards you? If so, can you describe the relationship?	Personal
Have you talked with the other student about their behavior towards you?	Behavioral
Do (did) you feel prepared to engage in this conversation? If so, how will (did) you prepare?	Behavioral
How did you respond to this situation? (If it is still occurring, what has been your response so far?)	Behavioral
To what extent do you feel that university officials would help you navigate this experience? Do you know where you can go for assistance?	Environmental

To what extent does the university environment support your ability to have these conversations with other students about behavior?	Behavioral, Environmental
Have you ever observed or experienced anything like this before you got to the university? How was that different than your experience in college?	Personal
What have you learned about yourself through this experience?	Personal
Added after initial interviews: What is your definition of bullying?	Personal, Environmental