Bullying and Its Effect on Today’s Youth

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to see how bullying affects high school students both socially and psychologically. The social bonding theory argues that those youths who have both strong peer and family ties are less likely to commit crimes or to be involved in deviant behavior. For those youths who have distant and weak relationships with their family and peers, they often tend to associate with others who share the same deviant behavior. The research question is: What are some of the social-psychological effects bullying has among high school students? Two focus groups of ten former high school students were studied to answer this question. Race and envy played a big part in why ten of the participants were bullied, followed by physical appearance, sexual orientation, abusive relationship, size and poor family structure. Participants were bullied regardless of family income, age, gender, or race. Bullying had several effects. Some were low self-esteem, suicide attempts, trouble trusting people, making friends, and becoming social outcasts or loners, just to name a few.
Introduction

On January 14, 2010, Phoebe Prince’s body was found hanging in the rear stairwell of her family’s apartment. Phoebe had apparently committed suicide. She was fifteen years old (Eckholm & Zemima, 2010). On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold of Columbine High School opened fire on their fellow classmates and school officials. They killed about twenty-five students and teachers and injured many others. Both Eric, eighteen, and Dylan, seventeen, would later be found dead with self-inflicted gunshot wounds (Lamb, 2008). In August of 2010, Asher Brown’s lifeless body would be found in his parents’ home. He was only thirteen years old (Eliason, 2011). What do these young people all have in common? They were all victims of bullying. This leads people to wonder and ask what was so devastating about the bullying that led these individuals to take their own lives. In this paper I will discuss some of the socio-psychological effects of bullying.

Bullying not only has an impact on the victim, but it also has an impact on both the bully and bystanders who witness the bullying incidents (Holt, M. K., & Espelage, D. L., 2007). Students who bully their peers engage in anti-social behavior, defy adults or authority figures, are guilty of alcohol abuse, and are likely to drop out of school and to be convicted of some sort of criminal behavior (O’Moore, M. & Kirkham, C., 2001). Witnesses and bystanders may also suffer from nightmares, guilt, and fear (Swearer, Siebecker, Johnsen-Frigerichs & Wang, 2010). Bullying leads to eating disorders in some females. Girls who are persistently bullied because of their weight may develop an eating disorder. This disorder can happen either during the bullying period or during young adulthood (US Center for Disease Control, 2010). The solution to bullying seems to be eluding policymakers.
Social Bonding Theory

Social bonding theory argues that people need to be socially connected to live well-adjusted and meaningful lives. To those adolescents who are developing their identity, this is especially important to them. Adolescents who maintained weak and distant relationships and who are unattached or unconnected to important social groups and institutions in their lives are more likely than others to engage in deviant behavior such as bullying, delinquency, and/or criminal activities. The behavior of those who had commitment to conventional values like refusing to drink or doing drugs and who strove to get a good education was indicative of conventional behavior. These adolescents who were involved in conventional activities such as homework, social clubs, etc., were less likely to engage in criminal behavior or delinquency. Those adolescents who are different and/or unconnected with little social bonds to peers are more likely to be victims of bullying (Hirschi, 1969).
Bullying

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves the balance of power or strength. Children who are victims of bullying are not just bullied once or twice, but over time (Macklem, 2005).

Bullying can be committed in many different forms. Physical bullying involves unwanted touching, hitting, and pushing or shoving. Social bullying is sarcastically or rudely excluding someone from a group, public humiliation by way of graffiti or gestures, and scapegoating. Verbal and emotional abuse involves name-calling, spreading rumors, and teasing (Wilmshurst, 2010). Internet and online bullying, also known as cyber bullying, is the use of internet to harass or spread rumors about someone or to tease them (Axelrod, 2009).

Bullying can have both short-term and long-term effects. It is also immediate. Bullying is harmful to both the bully and the victim, and leads to emotional and physical health issues. In the early stages of bullying, the victim may avoid going to school, walking the halls alone, or going to the restrooms. Outside of school, the victim may walk down another street or avoid a particular area to avoid the “bad guys.” This will eventually become social isolation (Ginsburg, G. S., La Greca, A. M., & Silverman, W. K., 1998). At this stage, the victim feels alone, scared, unhappy, isolated, ashamed, and battered. Many victims have physical illnesses, especially right before school, and some have low self-esteem. If these feelings and issues are not handled or dealt with, it could lead to depression and thoughts of suicide (Chavira, Stein, Bailey & Stein, 2004).

Bullying behavior can have negative consequences for both the bully and the victim. The bullies are more likely to engage in criminal and other anti-social behavior such as stealing, fighting, truancy, dropping out of school, and getting involved in using illegal drugs and alcohol. Males who are identified as bullies are four times more likely as their peers to have more than
Bullying and Its Effect on Today’s Youth

one criminal conviction by the age of twenty-four. Victims at school may suffer from anxiety and fear. This situation may cause the victim to lose focus and disengage from classroom activities (Chavira, Stein, Bailey & Stein, 2004).

Victims of bullying experience all types of negative effects. Some of these effects are anxiety and panic attacks, decrease in quality of schoolwork and performance, anger and bitterness, feelings of revenge, suicidal thoughts, feelings of worthlessness, difficulty with concentration and staying focused, low self-esteem, and social withdraws or becoming a loner (Roland, 2002a).

Victims of bullying have a higher rate of suicide ideation than non victims. Unfortunately, many of the victims make good on their rumination and eventually take their own lives. These same victims have trouble sleeping and/or staying asleep. Those who are fortunate to sleep may have nightmares. These nightmares may be vivid and may also involve incidents of bullying (Roland, 2002a).

Bullying victims may get sick or may pretend to be sick in order to avoid bullying situations where they may come in contact with the bully. Bullying can also trigger eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa, especially when the teasing involves making fun of the victims’ weight, body shape, or physical appearance. These victims internalize the effects of bullying (Roland, 2002a).

Verbal bullying is the most common type of bullying and is experienced by both girls and boys. Boys are more likely to be victims of physical bullying by their peers (Olweus, 1993; Nansel, et al., 2001), whereas girls are more likely to report being targets of sexual comments or rumor-spreading (Nansel, et al., 2001). Girls are also more likely to bully each other by social exclusion (Owleus, 2002).
There are other differences in gender based bullying. With males, the bullying tends to be direct verbal or physical aggression. The bully almost always tends to be older. But with females, the bullying is sometimes more indirect and may not easily be detected because females are more sneaky. Females may socially isolate the individual and may convert their aggression by spreading rumors. They may also try to manipulate the friendship relations that the victim may have with other individuals by depriving them of that friendship. They will do this by inviting the victims’ friend over to eat with them during lunch or to events such as a party or out shopping, etc. Females usually target other females who are about the same age. Unlike males, females will include both sexes when pursuing a victim. When a victim is bullied or harassed by a group of peers, it can be even more devastating (Pepler, Rubin & Centre, 1991).

Everyday there are thousands of teens who are afraid to go to school. One of the reasons is that they are bullied by one or many of their peers. Bullies tend to bully others either because of their appearance or social class. For some apparent reason, they seem to believe that the victims don’t fit in either because of their religion, race, or alternative lifestyles (gay, lesbian, transgender, etc.). Bullies seem to attack their victims both physically and verbally. Physical bullying can be a simple shove or tripping, to outright hitting such as punching or slapping (Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005).

Many teenagers who are part of a popular clique may gossip, taunt, or tease their target, which is a form of verbal bullying. Verbal bullying can also include writing blogs, posting comments, instant messaging, or sending malicious emails to the intended target. These practices are also known as cyber bullying (Smokowski & Holland Kopasz, 2005).
Relentless bullying puts the victim in constant fear. Many of the teens start to have problems with their schoolwork and, slowly, their health. Many teens were known to have experienced diarrhea and stomach pains, which would later be diagnosed as a digestive condition called irritable bowel syndrome. This would be brought on by the stress that came from being bullied. For many, the bullying would take place during lunchtime or physical education, and because the teen was so afraid of going to the lunchroom or to gym class, they could not concentrate on the work needed to be performed in the class they were in. It is also believed that when teenagers are bullied at the hands of their peers, they are at risk for other issues such as mental health. The victims also suffer from anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem. Many of these teens also become so depressed that they have thoughts of suicide (Chavira, Stein, Bailey & Stein, 2004).
Method

Sample

A convenience sample of twenty freshmen college students from various backgrounds was chosen. These recent high school graduates in New York City were selected because they would be more willing to than high school student to talk about their experiences of bullying.

Procedure

I contacted a family member and asked for their assistance. This family member recently graduated from high school and had the necessary connections to help me find participants. My relative contacted some friends and acquaintances, and asked if they would be willing to participate in the research. I informed the participants that their story would remain confidential and that they would remain anonymous. Each participant signed a consent form. I conducted two focus groups of ten participants each. I also conducted six individual interviews.

All participants completed demographic questions before the interviews. Also included in the questionnaire were questions that asked specifically the types of bullying the participants experience, reasons for why they believed they were being bullied, how often the incidents occurred, and how bullying has affected their lives. After the participants completed the interviews, I collected the signed consent forms and thanked them each for their time, patience, and participation.

The types of questions that were asked on the questionnaire where things like how old are you, what is your age, gender, family income, etc. Then there were questions that were more geared toward the topic of bullying. Demographic questions were asked, as were questions such
as: When did the bullying start, how often did it occur, was the bullying reported, what were the reasons for bullying, and what were the effects of the bullying?
Results

There were fifteen females and five male participants. For the participants’ age, M=18.5, SD = 0.151299. The youngest age of the participants is eighteen years and the oldest is nineteen years. In terms of income, M= $48,625 and SD=13635.16641. The highest income is $75,000 per year, and the lowest income is $15,000 per year. There were two Latinos, two Asians, one White, and fifteen Blacks. These participants reside in the state of New York, in the boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Manhattan (see table 1).

There were several categories of reasons why the participants felt they were being bullied (see table 2). These were: height, poor family structure, envy, race, physical appearance, sexual orientation, and abuse. Race and envy were most popular, with sexual orientation coming in third. Four of the participants reported that they were bullied because of physical appearance. Things like long hair, pretty skin, eyes, etc. Five stated that they were bullied because of their race and were either poor or didn’t speak English well. Five other participants said that they were not sure why they were being bullied. They stated that they were not really popular, they didn’t wear the latest fashionable clothing, and they were not obese or thought to be ugly. One of these five participants stated that she felt there was a sense of jealousy with her tormentor because her mother worked and the bully’s mom did not. The bully at one time was her friend and would borrow her clothes, but then would make negative comments about her to her friends, whether or not she was present.

Three of the participants say they were bullied because of their sexual orientation. One female had begun to dress more like a male, one of the males was openly gay, and one had recently come out that he was gay. One participant was in a very abusive relationship and had attempted to commit suicide, but luckily her mother found her and she survived. This young
lady and her boyfriend attended the same school and spent a good portion of their day together before and after school. The boyfriend basically controlled whom she was able to talk with and what she wore. He also controlled her throughout the day. One participant reported that she was bullied because she was in foster care and her mother was a known crack addict. One male participant stated that he had been the victim of bullying because he was short for a boy his age, and the older and taller boys (boys who were even younger than he) would harass, beat him up, and pick on him (see table 2).

Many of the participants’ family incomes were above the poverty level (see table 1). Many of the participants whose parents had fairly decent incomes actually suffered from bullying. The victims didn’t necessarily come from broken homes, nor did they suffer from low socio-economic status. Students from all social classes were targeted. Bullies selected their targets at will.

For many of the participants, the bullying not only left them with physical and/or emotional damage, but also caused their social lives to become unbearable. Some of the participants were ostracized from many social events, even if the event was held at school. For instance, two of the participants who were bullied due to their sexual orientation were not allowed to participate in the prom because they wanted to bring their same-sex partners as their dates. One participant was not allowed on a camping trip that was mandatory because of his sexual orientation. The participant who had been in foster care was not allowed to handle the money at fundraising events, and was not allowed on exclusive trips such as trips to the museum and the White House. The participant who was bullied because of his height did get to join the basketball team, but was never allowed to actually play during a game; and although he was part
of the team, he was never treated as an equal team member by both his teammates and his fellow peers.

Although some of the participants did socialize, they only had a handful of friends. About 80% of the participants admitted to having trust issues and problems making friends. Other participants eventually became loners. These participants kept to themselves and spoke only when spoken to and participated only in events that warranted a grade. The participant who nearly killed herself is still in therapy. She has stated that she deals with low self-esteem on a regular basis, and from time to time does find herself slipping back into unhealthy relationships with men she knows are obviously using and abusing her. However, the abuse has not reached to the physical stage, as it did in the past.
Discussion

This study examines the negative influence bullying has on high school students and the negative impact it has on their social lives even up to young adulthood. Some people look at bullying as just another form of teasing. I totally disagree. Teasing is an occasional comment or gesture made towards an individual or group to basically irk someone’s nerves. The teasing may be hurtful to the individuals, but it is for the most part harmless. Bullying, on the other hand, can be just as harmful, depending on which side you are on, or it can be brutal. Bullying is when you deliberately and maliciously continue to berate, torment, or cause physical harm to someone on a consistent basis for reasons sometimes only known to the bully/bullies, or for no real reason at all.

Many victims subjected to hazing or bullying may at some point suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder is an anxiety disorder in which the individual’s ability to function is impaired by the emotional responses to a memory of a traumatic event (Yehuda, 2006).

Reasons for bullying

The twenty participants of this study gave seven reasons for why they believed they were being bullied. These were race, envy, physical appearance, sexual orientation, abusive personal relationship, height, and poor family structure. Race and envy accounts for 50% of the reasons why participants felt they were being bullied. Physical appearance accounts for 20%, and the remaining reasons accounted for 30%.

Some students’ race was a stigmatized social identity category and so they were bullied. This meant that members of another race teased and chastised these participants purely because
of the color of their skin and background. A few of the participants were African and were
teed and bullied because they either didn’t speak English well, their skin was very dark, or they
were teased about how they do not believe in bathing and using deodorant because they are from
Africa. One of the participants stated that they were teased and bullied because it was believed
that his race (he is Indian) took the jobs that the bully’s parents should have had.

Some of the participants stated that they were bullied because the bullies envied them.
Competition caused bullying of those more fashionable and a bit more artistic in their mode of
dress. One participant always had the latest sneakers, designer handbags, etc. She had a friend
who would borrow her clothes to fit in with the in-crowd, and that friend would participate in
teasing and spreading rumors about this participant. Needless to say, once the participant found
this out, she cut all ties with that individual.

Those participants who were physically attractive or more handsome were bullied
because they were simply too much competition for the bullies. One participant stated that she
couldn’t afford the latest fashion and wore simple clothing. But she had very nice skin, hair, and
eyes, and the boys took fancy to this. This, of course, did not sit well with some of her
schoolmates and she was picked on by having her hair pulled. There were attempts made to try
and cut her hair and face.

Three of the participants stated that they had been bullied because of their sexual
orientation. Members of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Association are at
times bullied because they are members of a stigmatized/marginalized social identity group.
These participants were direct targets because of their sexual/gender identities. One participant
described how she was sexually abused by a group of boys because she dressed very masculine.
She also described how she was taunted by having vibrators piled in her locker; other females
lied and stated that she tried to come onto them or that she was eyeing them in the locker room as they changed into their gym clothing.

One other participant was brutally beaten one day after school because of his “feminine” ways. When it was time to go to the prom, he wanted to invite his boyfriend at the time and was not allowed. He was prevented from attending the prom if he showed up with a male escort.

A female participant described how her bullying experience was unlike a normal bullying experience. She had been involved in an abusive relationship. When one is involved in an abusive relationship, it is believed that the dependent partner is abused because he or she never had important social ties. This female participant had very low self-esteem and entered into a relationship looking for refuge. When the abuse became too much for her to handle and she wanted out, the only way she saw to end the pain was to commit suicide. This female participant slit both her wrists and sat in the bathtub. Luckily, her mother returned home and called 911. This participant is currently in therapy and still suffers from low self-esteem and depression. She still enters into abusive relationships, but gets out of them before they became too physical.

One of the male participants was rather short for his age. He believed that his height is what made him an outcast. His bullies were much taller than he was, and he was even bullied by peers who were younger than he. He has had his sneakers taken from him (off his very feet) and he was snuffed by a couple of boys one time: after they asked him for the time, when he looked down, they punched him about the face and body and ran off.

A female participant came from a broken home. She was in foster care because her mom could not take care of her. Her mother was the neighborhood “crack head” and was very well known. Now, although this participant did nothing to make others not like her, her peers
continued to tease her about her mom’s drug addiction and the fact that she was not living in a normal living situation. She would constantly get into fights at school because she was always defending herself against the taunts and teasing from her peers.

**Effects of bullying**

Participants in this study expressed the many different social-psychological effects the bullying had on them. Some of the effects were feelings of isolation and depression, difficulty making friends, difficulty trusting people, staying in abusive relationships, and suicidal thoughts and attempts. As with my study here, other studies such as Roth, et al (2002), has found that students who attend universities and who recalled their own stories of being bullied showed an increased risk of suffering from both depression and anxiety. A more recent study conducted by Lund, et al., showed that bullying in the adolescent years of men has been associated with prevalence for depression symptoms even up to some twenty years after leaving school.

Each one of the participants suffered some sort of effect in their social lives because of the bullying they experienced. A few suffered and still suffer from depression. This depression consisted of prolonged sadness that would cause a decline in their cognitive ability and learning. This depression would also affect their grades such that they could not effectively concentrate on schoolwork and, instead, lived in constant fear of what their interaction with the bully would be like the following day at school. Because the fear was so great, the participants and other victims alike would fake getting sick or become sick for real and would avoid going to school if at all possible. Some participants had difficulty making friends and trusting people. Some of the participants stated that they would spend a portion of their high school life almost in total isolation.
The Bystander

What many studies seem to be neglecting is the study of how bystanders are affected by witnessing acts of bullying being carried out by the bullies on the victims. Bystanders either get caught up in the cross fire and grow up to become desensitized to the violence, or they are ridden with guilt that they did nothing to help the victim. Bystanders may also actively engage in the bullying activities with the bully by engaging them and therefore causing more stress or distress to the victim being targeted (Holt & Espelage, 2007). The bystanders also suffer from anxiety and depression. They are afraid of getting hurt and becoming the new target for the bully. Many feel that if they intervene when the bullying is taking place, they will make the situation worse, and some just don’t know what to do. The lack of skills and fears can then turn into apathy (Holt & Espelage, 2007).

Many bystanders can also become bullies themselves. Those who do not speak out or react don’t do so because the bully is either their friend, feel it’s not their problem, feel the victim is not their friend, or that the victim is a loser. They may also feel that the victim may deserve to be bullied. The bystanders who do not speak up may also not do so for the fear of being called snitches. And to many, it is better to be in the “in” group than to take the side of the victim who is considered to be a social outcast (Holt & Espelage, 2007).

Limitations to the study

What I am not quite satisfied with in my findings is that my participants were between eighteen and nineteen years of age. As I stated earlier, these students were freshmen college students, and for some of them the bullying had happened during freshman and sophomore year in high school, so their memories of the incidents they experienced and the details may have faded over time. I really would have liked to have interviewed students as young as thirteen and
fourteen years of age. These students would have been freshmen in high school and probably would have been subjected to more incidents or victimized by the older and bigger students who would have already been in attendance at the school prior to their attending.

During the forums, I noticed that some of the participants seemed to be more interested in pleasing me by making their stories seem more dramatic than not. This caused me to believe that some of the participants still suffered some sort of social dysfunction because they were trying to be socially desirable to me. I seemed to be excited by what they were telling me, and so as long as I paid attention to them, they told me what they believed I wanted to hear. There are thousands of college and high school students attending school, and my convenience sample of twenty participants is not at all a good representation of adolescents who have experienced bullying while in high school. Therefore, generalizations as to why students felt they were being bullied could not be accurately made.
Conclusion

As I sit here writing this, I pick up my cell phone and notice that there is a new email alert. The title reads, “14 year old commits suicide after being bullied because he was gay.” I only wonder to myself, how many more children have to die because of the nonsense of their peers. It was reported that some of the blogs that the young man received were sent to him anonymously and stated things like, “You were not born that way, in fact you should not have been born at all. You should go ahead and kill yourself!” What the hell would make one human being say this to another? These young children/young adults are supposed to be our future.

The only ones who seem to be suffering any consequences by the bullies and their actions are the victims, their friends, and families. I am curious to know how much longer it will take Congress and other law and federal officials to finally put their foot down and take a stand in making those who make it their business to bully others legally responsible for their actions. I guess the sad answer to this question would be: after many more have died, or after one of their own has to succumb to such abuse.

I remember being a teen growing up and how it felt to be teased. I can’t imagine the frustration and the pain and anguish of being a teen today and having to deal with bullying consistently on an everyday basis. As an adult, if someone acts stupid towards me or has something to say about me, I simply roll my eyes, keep my head up, and keep walking. But that’s me. I happen to be a strong-minded individual and know that the words and actions of others are not what define me and I couldn’t really care less. This, of course, comes with years of experience and maturity. Now ask a ten- or sixteen-year-old to do the same thing. If it was all that simple, then I guess I wouldn’t be writing this paper.
Bullying behavior has been known to start in adolescents in as early as middle school and, for some, grade school. I believe that school psychologists, guidance counselors, and parents should hold some sort of workshop on bullying throughout the school year to better educate parents on identifying if their child is either being bullied or shows some sort of bullying behavior. Schools should hold assemblies and give out pamphlets that can offer students useful information on what to do if they are a victim of bullying or have witnessed their peers being bullied.

Many school-aged children carry cell phones to school. During school hours it should be mandated that students have their cell phones checked in to a centralized locker or room where they cannot get access to them unless school is over for them. This would keep rumors and other things like tweeting information from being spread around while the kids are in school. Computers at the school should have social network websites like Facebook, Myspace, etc., either blocked during school hours or a special password should be required to login. This way it can be monitored and tracked to see who was on what computer, at what time, and give a report of the activity that was performed. At home, depending on the child’s age, parents should only allow their child to be on the computer for a limited amount of time. As the child gets older, the parents should have some sort of monitoring application that records the child’s activities on the computer. Although many would probably say that this may be an invasion of privacy, the parent could probably set up a program that would pick certain words up like “slut, whore, hoe, sex,” etc. If these words are things that the child is using to post about another student, then the parent can take the necessary measures they see fit to punish their child.
Parents and school officials should take complaints received by the students and parents seriously. Listen and respond immediately no matter how minor the situation or matter may seem. Schools and other social organizations should create anti-bullying policies. When the student or individual has violated one of the rules listed on the policy, immediate action should be taken. Either the student or individual should be placed on probation or not allowed to participate in certain activities for a certain period of time.

School officials should set up some sort of program where those students who are being bullied or have witnessed others being bullied can either anonymously report the incident or have some sort of code they can use to alert the school officials as to what is happening to them or their peers. This would allow for incidents to be handled immediately and action can be taken without the student or individual being chastised by their peers for reporting the incident.

Teachers or school officials who are responsible for groups of children should make it their business to identify those students who are always the ones left out of play groups or events, and to identify those students who seem to be more aggressive. Instead of allowing students to pick their own team players or to pick certain students they wish to work with on a project, teachers or the school officials should make up their own groups, occasionally. This would keep the student or individual from being an outcast among their peers and almost forcing their peers to deal with them even if only for a short period.
Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank all the participants for trusting me with their stories and for allowing me to share their experiences in dealing with bullying. I would also like to thank my professor, Dr. Christopher A.D. Charles. I have to say that the first time I heard him speak and reiterate the importance of plagiarism at Orientation, I said “OMG I do not want that man as my professor.” Not because of the plagiarism, but he just seemed to be such a stiff and serious professor. I have to say that Dr. Charles has become one of my top and favorite professors at Monroe College. Dr. Charles is one of those professors who does not accept excuses, but he is fair and is willing to work with you to get you where you need to be, but only if you are willing to do the work. Thanks, Dr. Charles, for your patience with me and my taking so dam long to finish this paper.
References


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Bullying and Its Effect on Today's Youth

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Appendix 1

Letter to Principal

December 1, 2010

Dear Principal Smith,

I am Lateisha H. McCleary, a graduate student completing my degree in Criminal Justice at Monroe College. I am doing a thesis on bullying among high school students. I would like your permission to conduct two focus groups in your school.

Please let me know if this is possible. My contact information is (917) 836-6227 and lmccleary9169@monroecollege.edu.

Thanks for your time, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Lateisha H. McCleary
Appendix 2

Consent Form

My name is Lateisha H. McCleary. I am a graduate student in the Criminal Justice program at The King Graduate School, Monroe College, and the investigator of the project “Bullying and its Effect on Today’s Youth.” This research is being conducted to understand the factors that cause bullying. I would like your permission to interview your child about bullying.

The interview will take about 45 minutes. The information on the questionnaire will only be seen by me and my advisor. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I and my advisor will have access. With your permission, I would like to audiotape the interview. At any time, your child can refuse to answer any question or end the interview.

I foresee no potential harm for participating. Potential benefits of this research will include meaningful dialogue about the reasons for bullying in order to better understand this issue from a sociological perspective. There will be approximately twenty participants in this study, including your child.

I may publish the results of this study, but names of people or any other identifying characteristics will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (917) 836-6227 or by email, lmccleary9169@monroecollege.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Dean Basil Wilson at The King Graduate School at (718) 933-6700 or bwilsonl@monroecollege.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Christopher Charles, at (718) 933-6700, Ext. 8677, or ccharles@monroecollege.edu.

Thank you for participating in this study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you. I agree to have this interview audiotaped (please circle one): Yes   No

_________________________                            __________
Participant’s signature                                           Date

_________________________                            __________
Investigator’s signature                                         Date
Appendix 3

Focus Group Questionnaire

Questions: Put all the questions in Times New Roman

1. What is your gender?

2. How old are you?

3. What is your household income?

4. What is the size of your immediate family?

5. What race are you?

6. What area do you live in?

7. Do you work?

8. How long have you been attending this high school?

9. What grade are you in?

10. Do you think you get along well with others?

11. How many friends do you have or associate with?

12. How do you define “bullying”?

13. What sorts of bullying have you seen take place at/in school?

14. Where in the school is bullying most likely to take place?

15. Why does bullying occur frequently here and not in other places?

16. Which areas in or around the school do you believe to be unsafe? Why?

17. Have you ever been bullied?
18. What sort of incidents did you experience?

19. How and when did the bullying start?

20. How often did it occur?

21. What do you believe was the reasoning behind you being bullied?

22. When the incident occurred, what did you do?

23. Did you know the person(s) bullying you?

24. What was their gender?

25. Was the bully(s) older or younger than you?

26. Tell me, in as much detail as possible, how bullying has affected you – both in and out of school.

27. What suggestions would you make for parents, teachers, or other officials to help stop or prevent bullying?

28. Is there anything else you would like to say in regards to bullying?
Table 1

Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Borough of Residence</th>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>Queens</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

M=18.5
SD=0.151299

M=$48,625
SD=13635.16641

*=This participant is living on her own
Table 2
Reasons for Being Bullied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“They marked my accent and teased me about my dark skin and deep accent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They called me dirty boy and said that me and my family stinks”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I got pushed around and beat up. They said that my parents were taking other people’s jobs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“My mom worked and hers didn’t. She borrowed my clothes, but then would talk about me behind my back and snicker at me with a group of girls, calling me name.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They tried to jump me and sprayed body spray on me for no reason.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical appearance—pretty skin, hair, and eyes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“I didn’t wear the most fashionable clothing and didn’t hang out with the most popular crowd, but the boys considered me to be pretty and liked me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I had hazel eyes and would start wearing my hair in a bun so they would not try to cut it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation (identified themselves as being openly gay)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I had been fondled and had dildos attached to my locker.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I almost drowned when a group of boys held my head in a toilet and I’ve been jumped after school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive intimate partner relationship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“We met freshman year and he was so sweet, then six months later he became so obsessive and abusive and would physically assault me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height—short for a boy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“I was asked for the time and when I looked down, I was punched in the face and they took my book bag and shoes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor family structure (in foster care, mother is well-known crack head)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“They would leave laundry detergent and fake crack pipes at my locker. They teased my about my foster parents and about my mother being the neighborhood crack head.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>