UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

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This study sought to enhance the understanding of peer gender and sexual harassment (SH) among elementary school populations. Peer victimization in American schools is not a new problem. SH among older adolescents and college students has been an issue of concern since the mid-1970's (Roscoe, Strouse, & Goodwin, 1994); with prevalence being as great as 80% of students reporting experiencing some form of SH during their school lives (AAUW, 2001). Research also document several negative consequences associated with SH impacting different domains of students' lives (i.e., educational, emotional, and behavioral). In response to the limited research with younger populations, the purpose of the current study was to (1) identify and describe peer gender and sexual harassment experienced by elementary school students and to (2) learn how elementary school students perceive and recognize sexual harassment at their school. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with 22 fourth and fifth grade students. Results indicated that students as young as fourth and fifth grade experience a variety of behaviors associated with gender and sexual harassment at their school (e.g., verbal slander and physical and verbal threats) and that targets of these behavior are most often characterized as being socially peripheral and/or non-conforming to gender and appearance expectations. Additional key elements that emerged pertain to gender differences and similarities and school-based faculty and staff responses to harassment.

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OVERVIEW

Sexual harassment is a widespread problem affecting the majority of children passing through American public schools.

- American Association of University Women (2001)

Peer victimization in the form of sexual harassment, such as receiving unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior from a peer, in American schools is not a new problem. Student sexual harassment among older adolescents and college students has been an issue of concern and examination since the mid-1970's (Roscoe, Strouse, & Goodwin, 1994; Stein, 1993). Since then, there has been an upsurge of research on sexual harassment that primarily examines the issue of student sexual harassment among high school and college students (Roscoe et al., 1994). Much of this research documents the prevalence of sexual harassment among these populations in addition to the negative consequences associated with exposure to sexual harassment (AAUW, 1993; AAUW, 2001; Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994). One of the most comprehensive examinations of the prevalence and consequences of exposure to sexual harassment in American public high schools was commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Foundation in 1993 and again in 2001 (AAUW, 1993; AAUW, 2001). The AAUW studies concluded that sexual harassment is a widespread problem affecting the majority of children passing through American public schools.

A high degree of sexual harassment occurs in American schools (AAUW, 1993; AAUW, 2001; Stein, 1993). The AAUW study done in 2001 illuminated the alarming prevalence of exposure to sexual harassment among this population with eight out of

every ten students (81%) surveyed reported that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment during their school lives, and that six out of every ten students (59%) reported that they had experienced sexual harassment often or occasionally. In addition, over one-quarter (27%) of the students surveyed reported having experienced sexual harassment often (AAUW, 2001). These numbers have not changed since 1993 (AAUW, 2001). It was also reported by some students that their first experience with sexual harassment most likely occurred in the middle school/junior high years; however, some students reported that their first experience of sexual harassment occurred before third grade (AAUW, 1993; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994). Researchers acknowledge that sexual harassment occurs in populations younger than high school and college; however, to date there is limited research examining this problem. Further, until recently this social problem has been overlooked or tolerated as the natural development of children, and therefore treated as an unavoidable fact of life (Shoop & Hayhow, 1994; Stein, 1993). The prevalent rates of sexual harassment coupled with its dehabilitating psychological (e.g. low-self esteem) and physical health consequences (AAUW, 1993; AAUW, 2001; Lee et al., 1996; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994) emphasize the need to respond to this social issue during earlier years of childhood development.

Some noteworthy studies have taken place recently in response to the limited knowledge of sexual harassment in younger populations. Roscoe et al. (1994) examined early adolescents' (ages 11-16, $M = 13$) experiences with and acceptance of sexual harassment. Roscoe and colleagues found that 50% of female students and 37% of male students reported being subjected to sexual harassment. Another study (Murnen & Smolak, 2000) investigated experiences of sexual harassment among elementary school

children, and found that, among the females studied ($N = 40$), 75% reported having experienced some form of sexual harassment, and 12% reported having experienced multiple forms of sexual harassment (e.g. being stared at, had skirt flipped up, was told her outfit looked hot, had an entrance blocked, had her bottom pinched, received harassing phone calls, whispering or giggling, and was told can not play gender relevant games). Among the male students 79% reported having experienced at least one form of sexual harassment.

Many dehabilitating factors have been attributed to exposure to sexual harassment; the most frequently cited are psychological, educational, behavioral (AAUW, 1993; AAUW, 2001; Lee et al., 1996; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994) and physical health consequences (Lee et al., 1996; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994). Both studies completed by the AAUW document negative impacts on three different domains of students' lives: educational, emotional, and behavioral. In addition, Shoop & Hayhow (1994) discussed negative changes in attitude after exposure to sexual harassment. Furthermore, Lee et al. (1996) found avoidance behaviors, in addition to negative educational and psychological effects, following exposure to sexual harassment. In her book on sexual harassment in schools, Stein (1999) equated experiencing sexual harassment in school to a training ground for the cycle of domestic violence.

In response to the increase of research documenting the prevalence of sexual harassment in American schools and its negative consequences, many schools have been forced to implement policies and procedures that address and manage this problem's occurrence (AAUW, 2001). Moreover, Title IX of the Educational Amendments prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and has made it illegal for schools to ignore

the problem of sexual harassment in American schools (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1975; Paludi, 1997; Stein, 1993). Unfortunately, the changes in school policy have had little or no influence on the prevalence of sexual harassment in schools (AAUW, 2001). This is apparent in that approximately seven in ten (69%) students from the AAUW's 2001 study reported that their school had a policy on how to handle sexual harassment issues and complaints (AAUW, 2001) which is a significant increase from the percent of students (26%) aware of a policy at their schools in the 1993 study (AAUW, 2001). Additionally, 36% of the students in the 2001 study reported that their school distributed literature and other materials on sexual harassment compared to only 13% in 1993 (AAUW, 2001). Despite this increase in knowledge about policies and the distribution of materials, the prevalence of sexual harassment reported in both studies is equal (AAUW, 2001).

The study commissioned by the AAUW (2001) found that 35% of older students reported that they had experienced sexual harassment for the first time in elementary school (sixth grade and earlier) (AAUW, 2001). Despite these findings, little rigorous research has been done in the area of sexual harassment with this population and so knowledge thus far has been limited almost entirely to long-term retrospective and brief anecdotal accounts. The extent of negative consequences associated with exposure to sexual harassment validates the need to gain a better understanding of how young children experience and interpret exposure to such violence. Furthermore, before steps can be taken to prevent sexual harassment or develop age appropriate interventions, researchers and program developers and implementers wishing to do this work need to better understand what behaviors associated with sexual harassment youth experience,

when these behaviors begin, and how they develop over time. The purpose of the current study is to examine and describe the behaviors associated with gender and sexual harassment elementary school children experience.

It has been argued that elementary school-age children are not developmentally ready to conceptualize issues concerning sexual harassment (Stein, 1999). For this reason, researchers wishing to examine sexual harassment through the utilization of young children as research participants will have a difficult time engaging the respondents in relevant discussions (Murnen & Smolak, 2000; Stein, 1999). In response to this obstacle, Murnen and Smolak (2000) examined how children in elementary school experienced and interpreted sexual harassment by engaging them with scenarios that they could comprehend and discuss. Nonetheless, limitations are present in that children may experience various types of sexual harassment not represented in the chosen scenarios and discussion about the gendered nature of the behaviors is limited. Alternatively, the present study proposes to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of what children are experiencing in their schools with respect to gender and sexual harassment through engaging the students in one-on-one semi-structured discussions about this unknown phenomenon. The expectation is that employing a semi-structured interview methodology will allow the researcher to examine and gain a rich understanding of the problem of gender and sexual harassment in elementary school. This method was useful for the current project in that it allowed for the youths' voices and thoughts to be heard rather than relying solely on the adult researcher's interpretations of their lives. It also allowed for discussion about behaviors that do not occur often in public view or are not talked

about publicly, thus a semi-structured interview method proved more advantageous than one using observations or quantitative methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Harassment and Bullying

Peer-to-peer sexual harassment in the school context can be considered a behavior that overlaps with what is commonly referred to as bullying behavior. Furthermore, like sexual harassment, bullying is not a new phenomenon effecting school children. Even though many are familiar with the problem of bullying among this population it was not until the 1970s that researchers began to systematically study it (Olweus, 1999). Olweus (1999), the most noted researcher studying this problem, had defined bullying as an event in which a student is exposed repeatedly and over time to a negative action on part of one or more other students. These activities included intentionally inflicting, or attempting to inflict injury, or discomfort upon another student and can be physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing, chocking), verbal (e.g., calling names, threatening, taunting, spreading rumors) and in other ways such as making obscene gestures or social isolation (e.g., excluding someone from a group of friends). Olweus furthered his definition by also including that in order for a behavior to be considered bullying there must also be power differentials such that the victims of bullying generally have difficulty defending themselves. Olweus' definition of peer bullying shares similarities to the legal definition of sexual harassment referred to as Hostile Environment Harassment, which includes unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is persistent enough to impede a student's ability to engage in and thus benefit from the educational environment (see section below on defining sexual harassment).

Bullying is prevalent in the lives of school children. As cited by Olweus (1999), Melton, Limber, Cunningham, Osgood, Chambers, Flerx, Henggeler, and Nation used the

Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire in 1998 to study more than 6,000 students from grades four through six in rural South Carolina. The measure used has many limitations, most notable that it is comprised of only two items (How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months? and How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months); however, of the total informants, 23% reported that they had been bullied by other students "several times" during the past three months and approximately 20% reported that they had bullied other students "several times" in the last three months ("several times" refers to one or more times each week).

Gender differences in bullying are evident in much of the bullying literature. Boys tend to engage in behaviors associated with bullying more than girls and a larger proportion of girls report that they have most often been bullied by boys than by other girls (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001; Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 2002). Furthermore, girls tend to be less apt to use physical means of bullying; instead they tend to bully in more indirect ways, such as spreading rumors, manipulation, and social isolation (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 2002).

According to much of the aforementioned literature, bullying occurs in many places on the school campus. Most bullying has been shown to occur on the playground and in the classroom; however, bullying also occurs in hallways, the gymnasium, the locker room, and the bathroom (Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 2002). Researchers have highlighted many negative consequences on the victims of bullying at school. In addition to feeling humiliated, victims of bullying at school have reported negative consequences affecting their psychological well-being, social adjustment, physical wellness, and the school

climate (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 2002). Students reported a loss of self-esteem, concentration and a dislike for school. Therefore, bullying that went unchecked at school subsequently created an environment that impeded concentration and learning (Olweus, 1999). Overtime, the acceptance of bullying behaviors fostered new bullying episodes and other problems (e.g., sexual harassment) (Olweus, 1999).

Five different types of bullying emerged from the Nansel et al. (2001) study. Of the sample of 15,686 students in grades six through ten, 25.8% reported that they had been bullied about religion or race and 8.08% reported experiencing this form of bullying frequently (once or more per week), 61.6% reported being bullied about looks or speech and approximately 20% reported this occurring frequently, 55.6% reported being hit, slapped or pushed and 14.6% reported this occurring to them frequently, 60% said that they had been the subject of rumors and 17% said they had frequently, lastly, 52% reported having been the subject of sexual comments or gestures and approximately 19% reported being the subject of sexual comments or gestures frequently. Moreover, when broken down by gender, being the subject of sexual comments or gestures was prevalent for both boys and girls and was more prevalent then many of the other forms of bullying. For example, approximately 47% of boys reported experiencing this form of bullying (this is more prevalent then being bullied about religion and race, 27.7%) and 17.5% reported experiencing this form of bullying frequently (this is more prevalent then being bullied about religion and race, 8.8% and being the subject of rumors, 16.7%). Furthermore, approximately 57% of girls reported being the subject of this form of bullying (this is more prevalent then being bullied about religion and race, 23.7% and being hit, slapped, or pushed, 43.9%) and 20.5% reported being subjected to sexual

comments or gestures frequently (this equaled the prevalence of being belittled about speech and looks, and was greater than the other three forms of bullying). Therefore, under the definition of bullying, being targeted for sexual comments or gestures emerged as a significant way in which children were bullied by their peers at school. This form of bullying has been identified by other studies to be a form of sexual harassment, and thus sheds light on the critical nature of examining and gaining a better understanding of this form of bullying among school children.

Defining Gender and Sexual Harassment

Definitions specifically addressing sexual harassment vary tremendously. One component of the legal definition emphasizes a power differential between the perpetrator and the victim (Roscoe et al., 1994). Others, however, have moved away from power differentials and have placed more focus on the creation of a hostile environment (i.e., a setting in which someone is unable to function at his/her potential) (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997; MacKinnon, 1979; Roscoe et al., 1994). Clearly, students are capable of creating such hostile environments through sexually harassing their peers at school.

Two distinct forms of sexual harassment are evident in most of the literature: Quid Pro Quo Harassment and Hostile Environment Harassment (Brandenburg, 1997; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Paludi, 1997; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994; Stein, 1999; US Department of Education, 1997). Quid Pro Quo Harassment, in the context of schools, occurs when a school employee explicitly or implicitly conditions a student's participation in an education program (e.g. honors courses) or activity, or bases an educational decision on the students compliance to unwanted sexual advances, sexual

favors, or other conducts of a sexual nature (e.g. verbal or nonverbal) (Brandenburg, 1997; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994; Stein, 1999).

Hostile Environment Harassment applies when unwanted sexual conduct causes the environment to become hostile, intimidating, or offensive and interferes with a student's education (Brandenburg. 1997; Stein, 1999). Hostile Environment Harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of sexual nature that is severe, persistent or pervasive enough to impede a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational environment (Stein, 1999; US Department of Education, 1997). The latter definition more appropriately defines the typical form of sexual harassment that occurs with younger populations, and has been the most commonly used definition in previous research with young student populations. For example, the AAUW study (2001) defined sexual harassment to their respondents as "*unwanted* and *unwelcome* sexual behavior that interferes with your life. Sexual harassment is *not* behaviors that you *like* or *want* (for example *wanted* kissing, touching, or flirting (p. 2)." This definition will be the basis for defining sexual harassment in the current study with the addition of gender harassment, defined as, verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are not sexual in nature, but are associated with gender-based insults, hostility, and humiliation.

Gender harassment describes any behavior that reinforces traditional gender roles of heterosexual masculinity and femininity (Meyer, 2006). Behaviors that fall under the scope of gender harassment include gender bullying, name-calling, social exclusion, and physical violence. The motive behind acts of gender harassment are linked to norm setting and public performance of traditional gender roles (Larkin, 1994b; Meyer, 2006)

Behaviors associated with gender harassment has been under-researched. Many studies examine gender differences and similarities with regards to peer bullying (i.e., boys perpetrate more than girls and girls are victimized more than boys); however, few if any have specifically examined the gendered nature of the behaviors. Therefore, behaviors associated with gender harassment are not well understood in the context of peer bullying and sexual harassment. The current study specifically included an examination into this unacknowledged act of violence in order to better understand the gendered nature of peer harassment at school.

Sexual Harassment and Intimate Partner Violence

Research has revealed a link between early exposure to sexual harassment in schools to increases in dating violence later on in life, as well as an increased risk for negative psychological, physical and educational consequences (Stein, 1999). Acts of sexual harassment in school are not private events; rather, many respondents in Stein's survey stated that it happened in plain view and that most of the adults who witnessed the behaviors did not label it as sexual harassment. In addition, girls reported making repeated efforts to get the adults to see and believe what was happening in plain view and to do something about it. Though there are no studies that look directly at this problem, many of the open-ended responses in a *Seventeen* magazine survey point to this disturbing issue and demonstrated that the young women began to sound like battered women who are not believed or helped by the authorities (Stein, 1999). Berman, Straatman, Hunt, Izumi, and MacQuarrie (2001) further this argument by stating that sexual harassment, as a form of sexual violence, is a fundamental way in which gender is ingrained, expressed and reinforced in the lives of girls and women.

Incidence rates of violence in dating relationships are arguably high. Each year approximately 1.5 million women in the United States are raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner (i.e., current and former dates, boyfriends/girlfriends, spouses, or cohabiting partners) (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Knowledge of this epidemic has led to a growing body of literature documenting sexual violence among teen dating relationships. One such study reported that as many as 57% of students in a school said that they had engaged in at least one act of dating violence (Avery-Leaf, Cascardi, O'Leary, & Cano, 1997), whereas most others report that between 15 and 45% of adolescents have used some form of violence against their intimate partners (Burke, Stete, & Pirog-Good, 1988; Foshee, Linder, MacDougall, & Bangdiwala, 2001) and that 12 to 59% of teens have experienced some form of physical violence (Foshee, Bauman, Arriaga, Helms, Koch, & Linder, 1998; Macgowan, 1997; Pacifici, Stoolmiller, & Nelson, 2001) or sexual coercion (Pacifici, Stoolmiller, & Nelson, 2001) from a dating partner. In addition, it has been reported, among sample populations as young as 8th and 9th grade, that approximately 25% of students have experienced some form of dating violence (Foshee et al., 1998).

While more research is needed to directly examine the relationship between gender and sexual harassment and later sexual assault, it can be presumed that societal acceptance of gender and sexual harassment creates an environment in which girls and women are considered second class citizens to boys and men. Oftentimes, behaviors that are associated with these forms of harassment are trivialized as normal childhood development; for example, these behaviors are dismissed under the notion that 'boys will be boys' or 'it's just a joke.' Berman et al., (2001) argue that this "unacknowledged face

of violence" is actually a major contributing factor in the social construction of male power over women. This argument can also be extended to heterosexual power over non-heterosexuals evident in that much of earlier forms of gender and sexual harassment are in the form of calling another peer gay, fag or lesbian. Moreover, it is important to consider the negative effects this phenomenon has on women and girls. For example, Larkin (1994a) has argued that girls and women become desensitized to pervasive harassment to the point where they fail to recognize many forms of abuse (e.g., verbal assault), and instead limit their definitions of abuse to more physical abuse (e.g., rape). It is suggested that the refusal to acknowledge the significance of gender and sexual harassment in the lives of youth, in effect, condones more explicit forms of violence. If societal ignorance to this pervasive problem does in fact create an environment that perpetuates other severe forms of gender and sexual violence, it is critical that researchers working in this field have a better understanding of the behavior and its potential early onset.

The most frequent form of gender and sexual harassment in school is student-to-student, or peer harassment (AAUW, 1993, 2001; Bradenburg, 1997). Peer sexual harassment has been reported to affect 60-81% of students in the United States (AAUW, 1993, 2001; Bradenburg, 1997). The incidence of sexual harassment reported depends on the sample, the definition used, and the methodology employed. For example, males are often not included in the sample resulting in higher incidences reported since sexual harassment disproportionately affects females (Brandenburg, 1997). Furthermore, when sexual harassment is confined to forced or coerced sexual acts the reported incidence is between 15 and 50% (see, for example Dziech & Wiener, 1990). Conversely, when the

definition includes hostile environment variables (e.g., a group of boys whistle every time a girl walks past them) the numbers increase to between 50 and 90% (Fitzgerald, Shullman, Bailey, Richards, Swecker, Gold, Ormerod, & Weitzman, 1988).

Below is a discussion of some of the most widely cited empirical research that examines sexual harassment in schools and the negative effects associated with exposure to sexual harassment in school. This discussion will begin with an examination of empirical studies that examine sexual harassment in high schools, followed by middle schools, and finally elementary schools. These findings emphasize the critical nature of researching sexual harassment, particularly in younger populations, where little has been accomplished.

Current Empirical Research

High School

Drawing on the results of two well-cited national surveys it is evident that by high school sexual harassment has already reached epidemic proportions. The American Association of University Women foundation (AAUW) commissioned a nation-wide survey on sexual harassment in American high schools in 1993 and again in 2001. In 2001, the AAUW study interviewed a representative sample of 2,064 public school students ranging from eighth through 11th grades (compared to 1,632 in 1993). Of these students, 1,559 were surveyed in their English classes and the remaining 505 took the survey online (AAUW, 2001). This study revealed the widespread prevalence of sexual harassment in students' school lives and explored the impact that the exposure to sexual harassment had on the students' educational environment and learning experiences. Similar to the AAUW study, The Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and

the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund collaborated on a nationwide survey that also illuminated the widespread nature of sexual harassment in American high schools (Stein et al., 1994). The survey was published in *Seventeen* magazine and so has many limitations with regards to the generalizability of the sample; nonetheless, approximately 4,300 girls completed and returned the survey (Stein et al., 1993) and over half of the respondents (54%) were in high school (grades 9-12).

Similar findings emerged from both the AAUW and the *Seventeen* magazine surveys. Nearly all students in the AAUW study (2001) knew the meaning of sexual harassment. About 96% of the students reported that they knew what it is and 14% reported that it occurred often in their schools. Overall, the survey determined that 81% of students (83% of girls, 79% of boys) had been sexually harassed (AAUW, 2001). Likewise, the *Seventeen* magazine survey revealed that 83% of girls aged 13-16 and 81% of girls aged 17-19 experienced physical forms of sexual harassment (e.g., touched, pinched, or grabbed), and 90% of girls aged 13-16 and 81% of girls aged 17-19 experienced nonphysical forms of sexual harassment (e.g., received sexual gestures or comments) (Stein et al., 1993). The study results were not broken down by grade.

The most detailed information about the impact of sexual harassment on the lives of students comes from the AAUW studies (1993 and 2001). The AAUW (2001) study found that exposure to sexual harassment in school has negative impacts on students' emotional, behavioral and educational lives. A significant number of students (18%) are afraid of being hurt or bothered in school (AAUW, 2001). Major impacts reported by students were that they are more likely to avoid persons who bothered or harassed them (40%), talk less in class (24%), not want to go to school (22%), change their seat in order

to be further from their harasser (21%), have a difficult time paying attention in class (20%), find it hard to study (16%), and were more likely to stay home from school or cut school (16%). Emotional impacts reported by students included feeling embarrassed (43%), feeling self-conscious (32%), feeling less sure of themselves or less confident (24%), feeling afraid or scared (19%), and feeling confused about who they are (17%).

The results from these national surveys illuminate the pervasive nature of sexual harassment in high schools and demonstrate the need for investigations of this social problem to begin earlier. In order to gain a more complete understanding of the etiology of sexual harassment, it is imperative for researchers to begin studying it at all levels of childhood development. Currently there has been little empirical research examining this problem in younger children.

Middle School

To date little empirical research has investigated the phenomena of sexual harassment in middle schools. In response to this lack of empirical research, Roscoe and colleagues (1994) gathered and examined data on early adolescents' experiences with and acceptance of sexual harassment. Prior to this study only anecdotal evidence from teachers provided any insight into the existence of sexual harassment in early adolescents' lives (Roscoe et al., 1994). This study used a survey method that was completed by every student (281 females and 280 males) in attendance at an intermediate school on the day the survey was administered (Roscoe et al., 1994). Participants were asked to place an "X" next to any behaviors that they had personally experienced and were then asked to indicate the degree to which they felt each behavior was acceptable or not acceptable. The list of behaviors ranged from relatively nonassaultive to highly

assaultive (e.g. sexual advances and pressure to do sexual activities). The list of behaviors was arranged into six categories: sexual comments, physical contact, telephone calls, letters/notes, pressure for dates, sexual advances, and other written responses.

Consistent with studies examining older populations, Roscoe et al. (1994) found that a considerable number of early adolescents indicated that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment. Specifically, the study found that 140 females (50%) and 103 males (37%) reported that they had experienced at least one of the behaviors. In addition to the surveys, Roscoe and colleagues met with the respondents to discuss the findings. It became clear through these conversations that the experiences and consequences of exposure to sexual harassment were different between males and females. More specifically, the harassment of females most often came from males and so was viewed as inappropriate, invasive, disruptive, and causing hostile environments (Roscoe et al., 1994). Thus, it is clear that girls' experiences, more so then boys,' were consistent with the hostile environment definitions of sexual harassment and resulted in conditions which negatively affected female students' learning environments (Roscoe et al., 1994).

The *Seventeen* magazine survey also revealed noteworthy findings among children in middle school. The results were not broken down by grade level; however, 77% of the respondents aged 9-12 (n = 272) reported that they had experienced physical forms of sexual harassment (e.g., touched, pinched, or grabbed) (Stein et al., 1993). In addition, 86% of students in this same age bracket reported experiencing nonphysical sexual harassment (e.g., received sexual gestures or comments) (Stein et al., 1993).

The aforementioned studies uncovered the prevalent nature of sexual harassment among middle school students. There is an apparent need for more research with this age

group; however, even less is known about sexual harassment among younger populations (i.e., elementary school).

Elementary School

The purpose of the Murnen and Smolak (2000) study was to investigate elementary school children's interpretations of sexual harassment and the relationship between their interpretations to self-esteem and body-esteem. An additional aim was to assess whether elementary school-age boys and girls react differently to sexual harassment situations. In this study, children were asked to respond to a series of 11 scenarios, eight of which contained acts of sexual harassment. Only behaviors that could be categorized as components of the hostile environment definitions were used (i.e. no quid-pro-quo examples were included) (Murnen & Smolak, 2000). It is important to note that none of the experiences included sexual coercion, physical force, or explicitly sexual language; however, there were examples that included sexual content (e.g., flipping up a girl's skirt).

Participants in the Murnen and Smolak study included 73 students (40 girls and 33 boys) from two public elementary schools in third through fifth grade. The mean age of participants was 10.44 years. The children, with consent from both the parents and the child, were taken out of their classrooms to be interviewed. The scenarios featured acts occurring to a child of the same gender as the respondent by a peer of the opposite gender (Murnen & Smolak, 2000). In response to each scenario, students were asked questions pertaining to how they thought the victim felt, why they thought the perpetrator behaved this way, what they think the victim should do, if they had experienced similar scenarios,

and if so what did they do in response to it. The interviewer recorded the students' responses.

Similar to the aforementioned studies, Murnen and Smolak (2000) found that a significant amount of students in their sample had experienced sexual harassment. Specifically, 75% of girls and 79% of boys reported experiencing at least one of the eight scenarios, and 12% of the girls experienced all of the behaviors present in the scenarios. Similar to the study done by Roscoe et al. (1994), the present study found that sexual harassment is interpreted and means something different to the girls than it did to the boys. For example, girls were more likely to perceive sexual harassment as frightening. This is evident in that most girls (56%) thought that the victim would be scared in at least one of the scenarios, whereas fewer than 20% of the boys responded this way. In addition, girls who perceived fear in response to the scenarios also tended to have lower scores on the body-esteem measures (Murnen and Smolak, 2000). Finally, girls who reported experiencing sexual harassment were more likely to score lower on self-esteem measures (Murnen & Smolak, 2000).

The methodology employed in this study indicated that children in elementary school experience some peer cross-gender sexual harassment, and that boys and girls interpret these experiences differently. Additionally, the study succeeded at presenting the issue of peer sexual harassment in ways that elementary school-age children can comprehend. However, several limitations exist that the current study attempts to address. First the scenarios chosen were limiting; for example, all possible experiences of sexual harassment were limited to the eight scenarios (two visual, three verbal, and three physical) that were based on research done with older populations and that were chosen

by the researchers. It is possible that the scenarios provided were not relevant or appropriate for such a young population. It is also highly likely that additional forms of sexual harassment exist in this population that have not yet been researched. Additionally, the method used did not allow for discussions about the gendered nature of the harassment. Specifically, it was never explicitly stated that the perpetrator was of the opposite gender and so it is unclear whether the participant had experienced the behavior as cross-gender or same-gender harassment. Finally, the methodology present in this study does not allow an estimation of the overall rates of sexual harassment experienced by this population; it only indicates that sexual harassment does exist.

The present study used an alternative approach in order to address some of the limitations of the study discussed above. The current study employed semi-structured interviews with key informants (fourth and fifth grade students) in order to advance the current understanding and knowledge of gender and sexual harassment among elementary school students. It is the expectation that the descriptions provided by the informants will provide a more rich and detailed understanding of the behaviors associated with peer gender and sexual harassment that elementary school children experience and will inform more culturally appropriate subsequent research endeavors employing a more empirical methodology because of this improved knowledge.

CURRENT STUDY

Project Aims and Research Questions

The primary aim of the current project was two-fold, (1) to gain a better understanding than what is currently known about the different types of peer gender and sexual harassment experienced by elementary school students and (2) to learn how informants (elementary school students) perceive and recognize gender and sexual harassment in their daily lives at school. The rationale for this study is grounded in the fact that most prior research on the incidence of sexual harassment among elementary school students has utilized only anecdotal evidence (Stein et al., 1993), retrospective accounts from older adolescents and college students (AAUW, 1993, 2001; Stein et al., 1993), or, as is the case with the Murnen and Smolak (2000) study discussed above, used limited scenarios for students to choose from. Therefore, to date, we have yet to gain a complete understanding about what elementary school children experience with respect to peer gender-based harassment at school. Alternatively, the present study was able to further current knowledge through utilizing one-on-one open and emergent discussions. This approach allowed for an open response format that provided an opportunity to obtain detail rich data in the respondent's own words. It is likely that this particular approach unveiled data or ideas that might not have been uncovered otherwise. Moreover, it was important to keep research methods grounded in the youth's lived experiences in order to increase the current understanding of this phenomenon.

It is clear that current literature provides evidence and insight into the existence of peer gender-based harassment among elementary school students; however, little is known about the types of harassment students are exposed to. New research is needed

that will advance the current understanding of this social problem. It is the intention of the current study to aid in the advancement of knowledge in this area.

Research Question #1: What behavior associated with gender and sexual harassment do elementary school fourth and fifth grade students experience? The primary objective of this question was to explore, through guided discussion, the various types of behavior that elementary school fourth and fifth grade students perceive occurring at their school. Specifically, I examined the characteristics and behavioral aspects associated with gender and sexual harassment that emerged in discussion; for example, discussions explored whether gender-based harassment among the students is perceived as gender harassment (e.g., gender-based insults and hostility) or sexual harassment (e.g., harassment of a more sexual nature). Discussions also examined whether harassment was verbal or nonverbal, physical or nonphysical. To that end, discussion topics were directed toward identifying specific types of behaviors, and determining which types of behaviors are witnessed most often, as well as, where and when the various behaviors take place. Additional focus was directed toward the ways in which informants discussed the topics (i.e., the language used) so as to enhance subsequent discussions by utilizing their language and remaining grounded in their experiences.

Additional objectives of this question centered on whether or not informants perceive and describe gender differences in terms of behaviors witnessed. When gender differences emerged, further conversations examined these differences. Specifically, I examined whether there are behavioral differences and/or similarities between cross-gender harassment as opposed to same-gender harassment and whether these behaviors were perceived to be different if perpetrated by a boy as opposed to a girl.

Research Question #2: What actions are taken subsequent to peer harassment on the elementary school campus? The objective of this question was to highlight the various activities which follow an act of gender or sexual harassment at an elementary school, as perceived by the informants. Topics explored included rules and policies that exist in the school and that are familiar to the informants, as well as who student talk to after experiencing a harassing event. Further discussion examined what informants witnessed subsequent to a behavior associated with gender and sexual harassment; specifically, what do other witnesses to the event do and what do the informants perceive adults at the school do in response to harassment.

METHODS

Methodology and Approach

Qualitative research methods are often used in situations in which the researcher wishes to focus on providing the scholarly community with detail-rich, first-hand accounts of people and their particular experiences. Qualitative methods are also often used for phenomena that have not yet been heavily examined, thus making an explorative approach more prudent than one that is predictive. Much of qualitative research's potential rests also with its ability to give voice to those who may otherwise have remained silenced. This is specifically relevant to the current study in that it provided students an opportunity to voice their lived experiences and opinions that may have otherwise gone unheard.

The global research question guiding the current study is: *How are elementary school students harassed by their peers at school and what are their perceptions of this harassment?* Consequently, the this study was designed to explore fourth and fifth grade students' experiences and perceptions relative to sexual harassment that may exist in their school. Six areas of inquiry were developed to capture this information; the areas of inquiry were: 1) What are students overall feelings about their school? 2) How are students sexually harassed at their school? 3) What is taught in schools about sexual harassment? 4) What happens after an occurrence of sexual harassment? 5) What do informants perceive happening at their school after a student is sexually harassed? And 6) What are students' ideas/opinions about sexual harassment?

In furtherance of this study's purpose and theme, inquiry was guided by the social constructivist approach to research. The underlying assumption to this approach is that

different members in the same group will have diverse interpretations of similar experiences and events. The social constructivist approach enabled me, as the researcher, to explore both the unique and shared experiences and interpretations of informants. This approach was critical to fulfilling the exploratory nature of the current study. Furthermore, given the limited knowledge about the social issues pertaining to this study, an open and personal interview methodology was advantageous. Standard survey methodologies would not have captured students' diverse experiences as well as a social constructivist methodology and approach did.

Setting

School-based research is particularly useful for exploring and providing insight into interpersonal peer relations, including behaviors associated with sexual harassment. The school site for the current study was established in the late 1950's, and is located in a small suburb of Detroit, Michigan with a population of 6,954 in 2006. The elementary school is comprised of approximately 385 students ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade and has approximately 50 teachers and staff. There are two fourth grade classes and two fifth grade classes comprised of approximately 30 students each. According to the 2000 Census (2006 data is not available for this geography), the population of the suburb was predominantly White (95%) and middle class; the median income of the town's county was $64,293, much higher than the median income of the state of Michigan ($44,409). This is also reflected in the population of students attending the elementary school (the exact school population break-down is unknown at this time).

Collaborative Approach to Inquiry

The current study was designed collaboratively with the elementary school faculty. As an initial step in this process the primary investigator met with the principal of the school. The principal apprised the researcher of issues he deemed important concerning the school and its needs. This information was used to inform the design of a culturally appropriate and meaningful study. Regular meetings were scheduled with the principal in order to inform him of the progress of the study as well as to obtain feedback. This feedback was incorporated into the study design as needed. As a final step in data collection I met with six faculty and staff to present interim findings and to ensure credibility of student responses (Patton, 2002). In addition to incorporating feedback from school staff into the design of the study, I was open to obtaining feedback on the presentation of results.

Procedure

Sampling

Multiple methods were used to achieve the final sample. Considering the research purpose, I decided to adhere to the recommendations put forth by Patton (2001) such that the sample was limited to only fourth and fifth grade students to ensure that informants were knowledgeable about the topics addressed and were more likely to have had meaningful experiences that they were able to discuss. First, a complete list of all fourth and fifth grade students was obtained from the school. A mixed purposive and random sample methodology was then used to finalize the sample. Specifically, all eligible students were placed into predetermined subgroups that they were randomly sampled from. The subgroups were selected based on what was deemed interesting to the researcher and the research questions. Specifically, the current study was interested in

understanding the differences between female and male student's experiences, and so all fourth and fifth grade students with parental consent were randomly sampled from within their appropriate subgroups (fourth-grade male, fourth-grade female, fifth-grade male, and fifth-grade female).

Saturation

Deciding on a sample size for qualitative inquiry can be difficult because there are no definite rules considering this matter. Frequently, sample size depends on what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources. Because, the purpose of the current study was to study one specific phenomenon in depth random sampling continued until saturation had been met through at least 20 information rich cases. Saturation is met only after enough interviews have been conducted such that no new information pertaining to the phenomena of interest is emerging (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Furthermore, this study sought to understand and describe the informants' experiences and perceptions of sexual harassment at their school. The interview protocol was successful at eliciting these experiences, and saturation was met through a full examination of informants' experiences with regard to sexual harassment at their school. For further exploration the aim was to have comparable groups with information rich experiences; therefore, the final sample was comprised of almost equal numbers of female and male respondents from both fourth and fifth grades. To enhance the ability to make meaningful comparisons, sampling continued until at least five information rich cases had been identified from within each of the four subgroups.

The sample selection chosen for this study adhered to the social constructivist approach such that it was small enough to allow for depth while remaining large enough to allow for meaningful comparisons and to maximize the ability to determine that shared realities exist within the data. In order to satisfy this requirement, subgroups consisted of no less than five informants as recommended by P. Foster-Fishman (personal communication, September 2005).

Recruitment

Informants were recruited through their elementary school. Initial contact with students and their families was in the form of an informational letter signed by the principal and the school counselor that was mailed from the school on the school's letterhead to the parents/guardians of all 117 current fourth and fifth grade students (See Appendix A for the letter). The letters explained the study, its importance to the school, and indicated that each recipient's child may be selected for an interview. Specifically, the parent/guardian was informed that the project would explore the students' experiences of gender bullying at school and that knowledge gleaned from this project will inform the school's future endeavors in addressing and preventing behaviors associated with this type of bullying at their school. The letter also explained that in order for their child to participate, they must read the consent form attached to the letter (See Appendix B for the parental consent form) and sign and return either the consent form or refusal form (See Appendix C for the parental refusal form) in the self addressed and postage paid envelope provided by the researcher by the date selected by the researcher. They were also informed that each class would receive a pizza party upon deliverance of seventy percent of the class's forms and that if their child were to be chosen for the

interview they would receive a ten dollar gift card for a local toy store. The parent/guardian was also alerted to the possibility that they may be contacted by phone from a member of the school staff in the event that a consent or refusal from is not received by the date requested.

Parents/Guardians were invited to contact the researcher for further information on the study. Moreover, the letter explained that their student will also be asked to provide their consent in the event that they are chosen for the study in the form of an assent form (see Appendix E for the assent form), and that both the parent/guardian and informant may decline at any time with no penalties if they so chose; however, if they accept, they and their child would be assured confidentiality.

To achieve an adequate number of informants to sample from, additional reminder letters (See Appendix D for the reminder letter) and consent forms were sent home with students to those guardians who did not return a consent or refusal form. These additional letters were used to inform the guardians that it is important to return the consent or refusal form indicating whether or not they agree to allow their student to participate in the study. The sampling procedure was designed such that each student with parental/guardian consent was assigned an identification number and was placed in a group based on gender and grade for subsequent random selection. Once the samples were established the school staff set up the interviews.

Participants

Of the 117 fourth and fifth grade students at the school site, 62 (53%) parents or legal guardians consented to their child's participation in this study and ten (9%) refused their child's participation; the remaining 45 (38%) did not respond either way. The final

sample was comprised of ten fourth grade students (five male and five female) and twelve fifth grade students (six male and six female). At the time of the interviews the fourth grade respondents were all ten years old, and those in the fifth grade ranged from ten to eleven years old.

Data Collection

In keeping with the social constructivist approach and the goals of the current study the methodology for data collection for the current study was comprised of in-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with a random sample of elementary school fourth and fifth grade students. The data collection phase was completed in the months of April through June, 2006. Interviews were conducted in a private room on the elementary school campus at times convenient for the school and for the informants. The interviews examined the six areas discussed above as well as any other important issues that emerged while conducting the interviews. The majority of the interviews did not exceed 45-60 minutes, one lasted under 20 minutes and a few went over 120 minutes.

Interview Instrument

In adherence to the recommendations for qualitative data collection put forth by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Patton (2002), informants were interviewed using a semi-structured, open-ended interview protocol. The emergent nature of the protocol design coupled with predetermined probes is purposeful in highlighting each informant's unique experience (See Appendix F for the complete interview protocol). Due to the sensitive nature of the research questions coupled with the developmental stage of the informants, sexual harassment was addressed through terms such as bully, tease and poke fun at. Through use of terms such as these, behaviors associated with sexual harassment

emerged similar to the Berman et al., (2001) study in which it became evident that children aged 8-10 had a difficult time defining and using the term harassment; however, they were clearly able to articulate experiences of bullying, teasing, being picked on, and the frustrations they felt when seeking assistance or trying to cope. The hostile nature of behaviors associated with sexual harassment was evident in the informants' responses despite their lack of ability to apply the term to their experiences (Berman et al., 2001).

To examine the first area of inquiry (What are students overall feelings about their school?) I asked questions that broadly explored the informant's positive and negative feelings about their school (*What is your favorite (least favorite) thing about your school?*) and specific questions about how they feel about their teachers and other students at their school (*What do (don't) you like about kids at your school?*). To address inquiry area two (How are students sexually harassed at their school?), I began by asking the informant to define bullying to ensure that I use his/her language throughout the interview. I then asked questions pertaining to how kids harass other kids at their school (*How are students bullied in your school?*), as well as questions that specifically aim to illicit responses pertaining to gender differences (*Do boys and girls bully differently?*). Specific questions were also asked about reasons students become targets of sexual harassment (*Do students ever get bullied at your school because of their body?* And *Do students ever get called gay or lesbian at your school?*) and about the different ways students might harass each other at school (i.e., rumors, graffiti and grabbing clothes). To address the third area of inquiry (What is taught in schools about sexual harassment?) I asked specific questions about rules and consequences at the informant's school (*As far as you know, does your school have rules about bullying?*). Four scenarios exemplifying

ways in which harassment might occur were read to informants to address the fourth area of inquiry (What happens after an occurrence of sexual harassment?) as well as asking about direct instances they have witnessed or experienced. The scenarios were followed by questions pertaining to what might happen next at their school (e.g., *What would the teacher do?, What would other kids do?, and What would the principal do?).* To address the last two areas of inquiry (What happens at school after a student is sexually harassed? and What are students' ideas/opinions about sexual harassment?), I asked questions that explore these issues specifically, (*Who do kids talk to about getting bullied?* And *Why do you think bullying happens at school?*).

DATA ANALYSIS

Data Collection

All 22 interviews were audio recorded; special care was taken to ensure quality sound. First, the equipment was checked before each session to ensure that it was working properly and batteries were charged. Additional efforts were made to ensure that the room in which the interviews were conducted was conducive to produce adequate sound quality and were private enough for audible conversations.

Once arrangements were made to conduct the interview with a student, the interviews generally proceed as follows. I first read the assent form and asked the informant to provide either assent or dissent to being audio recorded for the extent of the interview. I then informed the respondent that s/he could ask to have the audio recorder turned off at any time. I then invited any questions or concerns that the respondent may have had concerning the research. The informant signed the assent form once s/he was assured that s/he understood her/his rights as a research informant. After the assent process, I read the same established introduction to the interview protocol before beginning with the interview questions. I conducted each interview by following the interview protocol; however, I probed the informants' responses to ensure that each informant's lived experiences were adequately captured. After the questions on the protocol were answered and the informant had indicated that s/he has no additional questions or contributions, I thanked the informant for her/his time, gave him/her their gift card, and asked permission to contact them again if questions emerge during the analysis.

Data Analysis

Each audio recorded interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher and two undergraduate assistants. Data analysis then proceeded in adherence to the recommendations put forth by Miles and Huberman (1994). They describe data analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/validation (p. 10). To that end, an inductive approach to analysis was used to identify themes (Patten, 2002) and a variety of data displays in the form of matrices were employed to assist with data analysis (Miles & Huberman 1984).

Data Reduction

The first stage of data analysis consisted of data reduction. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in the transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of data reduction continues throughout the entire process of a qualitative project. To that end, an iterative coding process was used to guide subsequent interview discussions and to develop the initial coding framework. To begin the process I read and reread six interviews identifying segments pertaining to the research questions. I underlined important points thought to be relevant to the research questions and extracted meaningful statements from the verbatim transcripts. For example, the following segments illustrate one segment that was selected for further analysis and one that was not:

> *Identified for further analysis*: If the counselor or principal catches you bullying, you won't get your green card pulled, you'll either have to sit in the office or um, temporary detention where you just sit there for the last ten, twenty minutes and they'll uh, talk to you. But like, in class, if it's like serious bullying, like, um, like my um mom is really sick and like they uh, uh, boys from another class they told me like um, I hope your mom dies and stuff and the teacher, um, saw, and he had um, two detentions and a suspension.

> *Not identified for further analysis*: Well I hear like, sometimes I hear them talking about me. I hear them say my name and then I hear them say my friend's name, but really otherwise I don't listen. (You don't hear what they say about you, you just know that they're talking?) Yeah.

As is evidenced by these two examples, some interview segments clearly identified respondent's experiences with harassment while others were not as clear. The respondent in the first segment included specific information about how he was harassed and described how he perceived school faculty's' reactions to the behavior. On the other hand, it was difficult to discern whether the behavior discussed by the respondent in the second segment was an act of harassment or something else. The respondent in the second segment only heard his name and his friend's name; thus, he was not able to know whether the other students' conversation about him and his friend was in fact harassment. As evidenced above, the goal of this step was to identify segments in the interviews for further analysis.

The identified statements were then analyzed for content and were clustered into higher order themes. The first step in this process was to place each highlighted segment into a conceptual domain bounded by the six areas of inquiry. Each segment was read and reread by the researcher and highlighted in different colors depending on its conceptual domain. In situations where the segment fit into more than one domain the researcher and members of the research team discussed the best fit; in some situations it was agreed that the segment belonged in more than one domain, and so these were placed in all of the domains that applied. For example, the segment "There's this one kid, he's, he's kicks me sometimes. I wanna say he's a bully because he kicks me when he thinks I deserve it" was placed into two domains; specifically, *How are students harassed?* and *Why do*

students get harassed? Alternatively, the subsequent segment fit only in one domain; *How are students harassed?* "Yeah, poking, people, a lot of people poke me, and I poke some people."

Once each segment was placed into a conceptual domain the primary researcher read and reread each segment again and identified key concepts and ideas. These concepts and ideas were condensed into shorter descriptive terms and written into the left margins of the interview next to the segment. In some circumstances one sentence warranted many terms and in others an entire paragraph received only one term. For example, statements such as, *physical during soccer*, *boys retaliate and girls circumvent*, and *anger* were written in the left margin next to the following quote:

> *Like, if somebody's really mad at someone who wants revenge at soccer, like some of the boys who are mad at the other boys kicks the ball right into, right into their head, anywhere on their body on purpose for some reason. But girls have never done that. We just say, we just say, okay you're right, oh well. We don't retaliate.*

This stage ended with the descriptive statements being condensed further into simplified terms which were then written in the right margin of the interview segments. Special attention was given to maintaining respondents own words as much as possible. For example, in the example above I wrote terms such as *intentional physical harassment, retaliate, anger* and *gender difference* in the right margin next to the segment. These terms were then written on index cards and were grouped together through iterative processes in order to create higher order codes. This method allowed for the emergence of patterns, themes and categories that could then be ordered into a coding framework that consisted of both higher order themes and descriptive information.

In an effort to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, as recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1989), peer debriefing with committee members and members of the research team were conducted throughout the data reduction process. This consisted of a group dialectical process of discussing the data and developing a final mutually agreed upon coding framework.

Coding Framework

The development of the coding framework was guided by the emergent themes discussed above and the six areas of inquiry. The iterative and dialectical processes of data reduction resulted in a coding framework comprised of 17 higher order codes each comprised of more detailed codes. For example, one higher order code under the domain *How are students harassed* is "Targets of bullying;" within this code are the following descriptive codes: 1) non-conforming/socially peripheral, 2) new student, and 3) ethnic minority. Statements that emerged from the iterative process were used to define each code. For example, non-conforming/socially peripheral was defined as: unusual behaviors or hobbies, does not adhere to traditional gender roles, and lacks skill set (See Appendix G for the complete coding framework). The final 13 codes were: 1) Positive feelings about School, 2) Negative feeling about school, 3) Type of harassment experienced, 4) Location of harassment, 5) Why harassment occurs, 6) Students learn to self-manage, 7) Students learn to solicit assistance, 8) Students learn consequences of harassment (e.g., punishments and emotional consequences), 9) Student responses to harassment (e.g., victim, perpetrator, and witnesses), 10) Staff/faculty response to harassment, 11) Frequency of disciplinary action, 12) Respondent's opinion about why peer-to-peer harassment occurs, and finally 13) Respondent's opinions about how school

should handle harassment/bullying. I also examined the way interview segments varied with regards to the above codes as a function of gender. Complete descriptions of codes are discussed below; however, not all codes will be discussed because they did not emerge as being salient in the lives of the participants.

The coding framework was then applied to the remaining interviews using ATLAS.ti 4.2 to assist with data management. Alterations were made to the coding framework as needed and the previously coded interviews were recoded when new codes emerged. To check reliability and to increase the credibility of the findings, one other member of the research team also read and coded all interviews and requisite changes were made to the coding framework and previously coded interviews as needed. Furthermore, inter-rater reliability was calculated and any discrepancies were discussed in depth until an agreed upon code was selected. Finally, member checking was done at the end of the coding process with the school's principal and a selection of five faculty and staff to ensure that findings were credible.

Data Display

The second step of analysis consisted of displaying the data. A data display is an organized and condensed grouping of information that allows conclusion drawing and action (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Essentially, a display, according to Miles and Huberman, is a visual format that presents the data systematically so that the researcher can draw valid conclusions and take needed action (p. 91). Two types of matrices were employed for the current study: frequency matrices and conceptually clustered matrices. The construction and content for the frequency matrices were guided by the information gleaned through the data reduction phase as well as through the research questions. This

type of matrix was used to summarize the frequency of different themes that emerged. For example, to answer the question of whether or not behaviors associated with harassment vary as a function of gender (specifically, who bullies who more), a frequency table was constructed to examine the total number of students who experienced boys harassing other boys, boys harassing girls, girls harassing boys, and girls harassing other girls, as well as the total number of unique segments in which each emerged in the interviews. The first column of numbers in this matrix include the total number of participants out of 22 that experienced each theme and the cells in the second column include the frequency that each theme emerged in the interviews. This matrix allowed for detection of gender patterns in bullying experienced.

The next type of display is called a conceptually clustered matrix. A conceptually clustered matrix, as defined by Miles and Huberman (1994), has its rows and columns arranged to bring together items that belong together. Conceptually clustered matrices were created to organize the data and identify underlying patterns from within and across informants' interviews (within and cross-case analysis). The patterns and relationships that emerged from the frequency matrices as well as what was deemed important in answering the research questions determined the content and structure of the conceptually clustered matrices. The matrices were arranged as a simple informant-by-research question (or topic) or topic-by-topic format (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The aim of this method is to combine and compare research inquiries in the matrix that are conceptually related to each other. For example, during early analysis I recognized that a potential relationship existed between the gender of the perpetrator and victim and the type of bulling employed; therefore, I created a matrix with the gender of the harasser and the

harassed across the top (i.e., boy to boy, boy to girl, girl to girl, and girl to boy) and the type of harassment employed (e.g., Intentional bullying) down the left side column. Each matrix cell clusters responses to these inquiries together for further analysis; further, the number in each cell represents the number of unique segments in which the relationship emerged in the interviews.

Conceptually clustered matrices were particularly suitable for the current study. This type of data management and analysis displays all relevant responses for all relevant key informants in one table, and consequently allows the analyst to make comparisons between the responses given by one informant and the responses given between informants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the current study, data was entered into the matrices by counting the number of coded segments and entering the frequency into the cell. Analysis of the matrix cells allowed for examination of the relationships evident in the informants' responses (noting relationships between variables). Once relationships were detected, coded segments were extracted from each interview and entered into the appropriate cell such that coded segments could be condensed into labels, summaries and direct quotes, thus replacing the frequencies and allowing for more in-depth analysis. Each type of display used to answer the research questions is discussed in more depth below.

Research Question #1: *What behaviors associated with bullying and sexual harassment do public elementary school students experience?* The data reduction phase identified three key ways in which students are harassed at school: 1) verbal, 2) physical, and 3) nonverbal/nonphysical. There were a few instances that did not fit within these categories that could be categorized as indirect forms of harassment; however, they did

not emerge enough and the detail gleaned from the interviews was not sufficient to necessitate further analysis. Indirect forms of harassment were instances in which a peer engaged in a behavior that was perceived by another peer as harassing even though the behavior was not specifically directed at that peer. For example, one participant discussed an instance in which a male peer became angry and punched a wall in the classroom until his hands bled which frightened many of the students. In addition, a female participant discussed a time when she was made to feel uncomfortable and threatened because a male peer was verbally harassing another female peer.

In order to determine how common each act of harassment was within this sample a table was designed with the types of harassment and their frequencies. Two types of frequencies were calculated for each type of harassment, one for the number of individual students who discussed experiencing each type of harassment, and the other portrayed the frequency of unique instances each type of harassment was discussed (see results for complete analysis of matices). Therefore, this table summarized the types of harassment experienced by this sample as well as the frequency with which they referred to each.

Additional frequency matrices were employed in order to further understand how students are harassed at school. The first matrix summarized where students are harassed by their peers and how many times respondents referred to harassment occurring in each of these locations. The data reduction phase identified two settings in which harassment occurs at school; during structured class time (e.g., organized classroom activities and games) and during unstructured free time (e.g., recess, bus, and unorganized classroom activities). A second table was used to summarize and examine the number of students who experienced boys bullying other boys, boys bullying girls, girls bullying boys, and

girls bullying other girls, as well as how many times the respondents experienced each. This table allowed for further examination of the gendered nature of harassment. A third matrix utilized to answer research question one summarizes specific characteristics of the targets of harassment as identified through the data reduction phase; the three characteristics of targets that emerged from the interviews were non-conforming or socially peripheral students (e.g., do not adhere to traditional gender roles, physical appearance, unusual hobbies or friends, strange behavior or demeanor, and ability), new students, and ethnic minorities.

In order to go beyond the simple descriptions of how the students comprising this sample are harassed at their school, a succession of conceptual matrices were designed to examine relationships pertinent to research question one. In particular, the first conceptual matrix was developed to examine the relationship between how often each type of harassment was referred to and the gender of the perpetrator and victim. This matrix provided distinct information about which gender is most commonly the perpetrator and which is most commonly the victim of each behavior associated with harassment. The second matrix illustrated the relationship between type of harassment and where the harassment occurs. Specifically, this matrix clarified the location respondents experience each type of harassment occurring most often. An additional conceptual matrix was created to examine the relationship between the targets of harassment and the type of harassment. As a result, this matrix helped to clarify the type of person who is victim to the different behaviors associated with harassment. As can be seen from the table, most harassment occurred to students considered nonconforming or socially peripheral; therefore, a separate matrix was created to look at the relationship

between the various ways in which a students is considered nonconforming or socially peripheral and the type of harassment each experiences most often. A final conceptual matrix was designed to examine the relationship between the target and the gender of the perpetrator and victim (see Appendix O). Specifically, this table provided additional information about whether there is a relationship between the target characteristics, the targets gender, and the perpetrator's gender.

Research Question #2: What actions are taken subsequent to peer harassment on the elementary school campus? The data reduction phase identified five ways in which respondents describe faculty and staff's response to actions associated with harassment: variable (e.g., inconsistent punishment), active, inactive, effective, and ineffective (e.g., unsuited punishment, negligent, and unsuccessful). The data reduction phase also identified ways in which students respond to harassment; specifically, this phase identified four ways in which victims of harassment respond to harassment (take action, circumvent, seek peer solidarity, and negative emotional responses), two ways in which witnesses respond (take action and ignore), and three ways in which perpetrators respond after engaging in an action associated with harassment (dodge rules, seek peer support, and apologize). Student responses to harassment will not be discussed further because, while it emerged in the interviews, discussion was not rich in detail and thus this issue did not appear to be salient in the respondents' lives.

Similar to the above analyses, in order to determine how common each type of response was discussed and referred to within this sample I created a table for faculty and staff and the other for students, which included the types of responses and their frequencies. Two kinds of frequencies were calculated for each type of response, one for

the number of individual students who discussed experiencing each type of response and the other portrayed the frequency of unique instances each type of response was discussed. Therefore, these tables summarize the various ways in which the respondents discussed adult and student responses to harassment as well as the frequency with which they referred to each.

Conclusion Drawing/Verification

The third phase of data analysis was comprised of conclusion drawing and verification. While preliminary conclusions are being made throughout the data collection and analysis process, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested holding these conclusions lightly in order to maintain openness to new and emerging conclusions. Conclusions should become increasingly clear and grounded as the project proceeds (Straus and Corbin, 1990). The goal of this stage of analysis was to make meaning of the data obtained through the interviews and to discover the patterns and meanings of relationships that emerge through the processes of data reduction and data display. According to Miles and Huberman, this "mental exercise involves connecting a discrete fact with other discrete facts, and then grouping these into lawful, comprehensible, and more abstract patterns (p. 261)." A primary objective of the current study was to shed light on a social issue that, to date, has been poorly researched, it is also to served as a starting point for subsequent research endeavors attempting to develop appropriate hypotheses, theories and constructs for use in future testing. Once conclusions have been drawn, and theoretical explanations have been reached, the researcher must make appropriate steps to verify that these conclusions are accurate and sound; data verification is discussed below in terms of authentication.

Data Authentication

Data authentication refers to the quality, trustworthiness and authenticity of findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To that end, for data authentication to be met steps must be taken to maximize the validity, credibility and correctness of the data collected and the interpretations stemming from the data (Maxwell, 1996). Guba and Lincoln (1989) put forth a "trustworthiness criteria" for determining the authenticity of data. This criterion includes objectivity, reliability, and internal and external validity. The current study made all possible attempts to minimize all threats to validity and to maximize the credibility of its findings through engagement at the study site, member checks, negative-case analysis, peer-debriefing, and through evaluating the transferability of findings.

Engagement with the school site was established with the principal and counselor of the school and with the fourth and fifth grade students on a weekly to bi-weekly basis for about two month prior to data collection. This was important to ensure that misrepresentation of the findings is minimized, to create trust with the school's students and staff, and to establish a more comprehensible understanding of the school's culture. Member checks were used to the extent possible in order to ensure that the interpretations of data were consistent with what the informants intended. This process was carried out by bringing the findings back to the site, and they were also addressed in group discussions with school faculty and staff.

Negative case analysis is central to the fine tuning and revising of qualitative research hypotheses. Furthermore, negative case analysis was used to maximize the credibility of findings. This process ensures that the researcher is examining all unique experiences that may arise from the interviews rather than merely seeking out information that proves

their hypotheses. This process included examining instances and cases that do not fit with potential patterns and themes. As previously discussed, peer-debriefing was conducted with committee members and research team members and consisted of a group dialectical process of discussing the data and developing a final mutually developed coding framework. Furthermore, to check reliability and to increase the credibility of the findings, another research team member read and coded all interviews and changes were made to the coding framework and the coded segments as needed. Transferability is a term commonly used in qualitative methods in place of generalizability in quantitative methodologies (Gruba and Lincoln, 1985). Since sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be too small to be generalizable, qualitative researchers aspire to provide enough rich detail about their research site and procedures so as to be transferable to other similar contexts. To address the transferability of my findings I provided a full description of the procedures, participants, and the findings. It is understandable that the description provided as well as the research findings that emerged from the current study will not be transferable to many situations or contexts; however, they may be found to be transferable if similar subsequent studies are conducted.

RESULTS

Research Question #1: What behaviors associated with peer bullying and sexual harassment do public elementary school students' experience?

Results from Frequency Matrices

What does peer-to-peer harassment look like? The data reduction phase identified three main behaviors associated with harassment that respondents had either personally experienced or directly witnessed. These behaviors were coded as: verbal, physical, and nonverbal/nonphysical. Upon examination of Table 1 (all tables are located after appendices) it is clear that direct forms of harassment were quite common; in fact all respondents (n = 22) experienced some form of verbal harassment and all but three experienced some form of physical harassment and nonverbal/nonphysical harassment. Again, indirect forms of harassment, such as the respondent witnessing a peer punch a wall to threaten another peer and, in turn, indirectly feeling threatened, did not appear to be as pervasive. As can be seen in Table 1, very few respondents reported experiencing these types of behaviors.

Behaviors characterized as verbal emerged from the interview discussions more than any other actions associated with harassment and appear to be more widespread. Two hundred and seventy-four separate instances of verbal harassment were identified in the interviews. This type of harassment, most often described in terms associated with slanderous insults, was reported by all respondents. Moreover, 166 unique accounts of this behavior emerged from the interviews (42% of all verbal segments). An example of such an act is demonstrated in the quote below in which a fifth-grade female student

discussed an instance in which a male and female peer in her class degraded another female in class because of her weight.

> *People whisper stuff behind her back about her... Like, um, my friend Drew, he said, and Liza, she's the one who has the cool shoes, um, they said that um, her fingers are big because it's because she's fat and they say her butt's big...She just ignores it, 'cause she knows it's the truth.*[1]

Name-calling surfaced as another popular way in which elementary school students harass their peers. Ninety-three separate instances of name-calling (34% of total verbal segments) were revealed in the interviews, and all respondents were able to recall experiencing this form of harassment at school. In the following quote a fifth-grade girl spoke about how some of her peers at school tend to call other students "gay" if they engage in activities considered unusual, specifically, listening to songs sung by a member of the opposite gender.

> *Like if you're acting weird, they call you (gay), and if you're listening to a song sung by a boy and if you're, and you're a girl, they'll say. "What you're doing is (gay).*

In addition to slander and name-calling, gossip also emerged as a frequent way in which peers harass other peers at school. Fifty-eight separate instances of gossip (21% of total verbal segments) were discussed by all but one respondent. In the subsequent quote, a fifth-grade boy illustrated the rampant nature of rumors and gossip at his school.

> *Yeah, rumors get spread like wild fire.*

[1] All names presented in this paper are pseudonyms in order to protect confidentiality.

A fourth-grade girl also verbalized this widespread problem, specifically pertaining to relationships between females and males.

> *Um, yeah, actually some of them boys, like the mean boys if anyone tells on them they usually will spread a rumor about anyone. And they mostly do like if there's two people like a boy and a girl that tells on them they usually spread a rumor about they like each other or something like that.*

The final behavior associated with verbal harassment illustrated through the interviews was in the form of verbal threats or intimidation. While only five students discussed this form of harassment, the acts appear to be severe and have the potential to lead to other forms of harassment. For example, a fourth-grade female student discussed a situation in which a male peer threatened physical harm to another male peer for answers to a test.

> *Just with Matt Johnson. He says things like, "if you don't tell me the answer to this question I'm going to punch you in the face at recess."*

In addition to verbal forms of harassment most respondents (n = 19) recalled instances of physical harassment. Seventy-three unique coded segments emerged from the interviews making this the second most pervasive type of peer-to-peer harassment at school. Physical forms of harassment were often characterized as mild, such as pushing or poking; however, in several cases physical harassment was described as more severe, such as kicking, punching, and grabbing. In the first quote below a fourth grade girl described that some of her female peers occasionally push her as she walks by; the second quote exemplifies a more severe form of harassment in which a fifth grade boy repeatedly pushed and hit a female peer at school.

Well, uh, one time, a few (girls) just like, like, when I walk, they just push me away like that.

Well like Dylan bullies me a lot and he like pushes me and this one time he hit me across the face.

Finally, the third most common behavior associated with harassment discussed in the interviews was neither physical nor verbal. Four types of behaviors associated with this variety of harassment were identified through the data reduction phase: threats and intimidation, gestures, social exclusion, and nonverbal forms of slander (e.g., passing notes). A fifth behavior emerged that could be placed in this category in which a peer blocked another peer's path; however, it was experienced by only one participant and will not be discussed further. The two that emerged most in the interviews were social exclusion and nonverbal forms of slander. Social exclusion emerged in thirty separate instances (42% of total nonverbal/nonphysical harassment) and was discussed by many of the participants. This form of harassment was often actualized when a group of peers excluded or shunned another peer from a game by not passing them the ball or by ignoring them. For example, in the following quote a fourth grade male explained how girls are often excluded from playing sports during recess.

Well it's (exclusion) a lot in soccer, lots of kids (boys) usually don't like to pass to the girls 'cause they think girls stink at soccer, but I don't think that, I, I, I think everybody's just the same.

Nonverbal forms of slander were also a common way in which peers harassed each other. Twenty-five unique cases emerged in the interviews and almost exclusively occurred in the form of note passing or graffiti on the walls or desks.

Umm ah well ah this one time somebody wrote on my desk you suck and I never figured that out, but that was like really mean. Oh and uh like someone wrote you see that gray thing on there (points to the floor board). Somebody used a blue pen and wrote MN, which is me, plus Nate, which is the big brother of that boy who I used to like and drew a heart around it and like people kind of laughed, and it kind of hurt my feelings.

Yeah, I, one (note) was passed to me that said something mean like "ugly" and one time Carter Smith wrote something on his test, ripped it up and showed it to us and then he ate it so there would be no proof... It said "You're ugly. You don't need a mask for Halloween because you're so ugly."

Gestures and threats or intimidation also emerged in the interviews as ways in which peers harass each other in nonverbal/nonphysical ways; although to a much lesser extent than social exclusion and slander. Eight instances (11% of total nonverbal/nonphysical forms of harassment) emerged in the interviews in which a participant discussed peers using nonverbal gestures as a way to harass another peer. For example, in the quote below a fourth-grade girl recalled an instance in which boys showed the girls their middle fingers, a common gesture in many western countries meaning "fuck you."

The girls will be like playing and the boys will be like oh, what are you playing dollies or something they will be laughing and the girls will try to stick up for themselves and the boys will just make up an excuse to get them back. They'll be like you're such a baby, and they would flip us off.

Five instances (7% of total nonverbal/nonphysical forms of harassment) were recalled by 5 participants in which threats or intimidation was used by peers to harass another peer. In the example below from an interview with a fifth-grade girl, a note was written and passed in class in which one student threatened another student.

I found a note on the floor that said 'I hate someone and if I had the chance to I'd like kill them.' I gave it to my teacher and my teacher had a talk with the class about note

passing. We have a rule now that if we throw anything or write any notes and pass them in the classroom then we get an automatic detention.

Where does peer-to-peer harassment occur? The data reduction phase identified two contexts on campus (the school bus is considered an extension of the school campus) in which respondents had experienced a behavior associated with harassment, either personally or directly. These contexts were coded as: structured time and unstructured free time. Upon examination of Table 2 it is clear that the most common context in which respondents witnessed an act associated with harassment occurred during unstructured free time. Respondents witnessed these behaviors occurring during free time over twice as often as during structured time.

Unstructured free time appears to be the most popular context in which the youth experienced or witnessed peer harassment. Forty separate instances of harassment occurring during unstructured free time were identified. The data reduction phase identified three distinct contexts characterizing unstructured free time in which peer-to-peer harassment occurs: during unstructured classroom activities, during recess, and on the school bus. Peer-to-peer harassment was most often experienced during recess as 14 respondents (64%) reported these instances. Moreover, 19 unique segments were coded in which harassment was described as occurring at recess (48% of all unstructured free time). An example is demonstrated in the quote below in which a fourth-grade female student discussed that harassment happens at least once during each recess.

(Harassment happens) mostly outside... (The frequency depends on) however much time we have at recess... depends if we have recess or not... (It happens) at least once every recess.

The school bus surfaced as another popular place in which elementary school students harass their peers. Seventeen separate instances of behaviors associated with peer-to-peer harassment occurring on the bus (43% of all unstructured free time) appeared in the interviews, and eight respondents (36%) were able to recall experiencing some form of harassment occurring on the bus. In the first quote below a fourth-grade boy spoke about how some of his peers at school tend to call other students "gay" secretly on the bus in order to not get in trouble, and the second quote illustrates an instance in which a fourth-grade girl was physically harassed on the bus by a boy.

> *(They don't get in trouble) because students (call other students gay) secretly; mostly on the bus.*

> *I have seen a few boys push some girls. I was on the bus one time and one boy stuck out his foot to make me trip and I did, lots of that sort of thing happen. Not really pushing but tripping happens a lot.*

In addition to recess and the bus, unstructured classroom activities also emerged as a common context in which peers harass other peers at school, albeit at a much lower frequency. Seven separate instances of harassment during unstructured classroom activities (18% of total unstructured free time segments) were discussed by six respondents (27%). In the following quote a fifth-grade girl illustrated that peer-to-peer harassment often occurs while the teacher is busy checking students work and thus averting her attention from the rest of the students.

> *(I want) the teacher (to) listen more carefully to what people are saying while she is checking spelling...a lot of the bullying that happens while the teacher is busy checking spelling.*

In addition to unstructured free time, many respondents (n = 14; 63%) also discussed instances in which behaviors associated with harassment occurred during structured times at school. Two unique situations were identified during the data reduction phase that characterized this context: during structured classroom activities and during organized games. Twenty uniquely coded segments emerged from the interviews in which respondents discussed peer harassment occurring during structured time. Peer-to-peer harassment occurring within this context was most often described as occurring during structured classroom activities as 13 respondents (59%) were able to remember instances in which harassment occurred during structured classroom activities. Additionally, 18 unique segments were coded in which harassment was described as occurring during these times (90% of all structured time segments). For example, in the following quote a fifth-grade male explained how a male classmate physically harassed a male and a female peer during Physical Education class.

> *Well, in P.E. somebody was running and a kid put his arm out and pulled (a boy) back and smacked him right in the face. The kid thought he was choking him. Then a girl was walking by and he pulled her shirt and he got in trouble...it was the end of P.E. so he didn't really have a punishment.*

Finally, structured games also emerged as a context in which peers harass each other; however, at a much lower frequency than any other context. Only two respondents (9%) discussed instances in which they experienced a behavior associated with harassment that occurred during structured games at school. Because of the low frequency of this occurrence, no further analysis occurred.

Who gets harassed by their peers? The data reduction phase identified three main characteristics the respondents discussed as reasons for a peer becoming the target of harassment. These characteristics were coded as: nonconforming/socially peripheral, new student, and ethnic minority. Upon examination of Table 3 it is clear that being perceived as nonconforming/socially peripheral was the most commonly cited reason for becoming a target for peer harassment. In fact, all respondents were able to discuss instances in which a peer harassed another peer because he or she was viewed as nonconforming or socially peripheral. Becoming a target of harassment was much less related to whether a student is new to the school or whether a student is characterized as an ethnic minority; as can be seen in Table 3, very few respondents expressed either as preceding harassment.

Target characteristics identified as nonconforming/socially peripheral emerged from the interview discussions more than any other target characteristics. One hundred and eighty-six separate instances of nonconforming/socially peripheral characteristics were identified in the interviews. This characteristic was most often associated with physical appearance as evidenced by the fact that 19 respondents (86%) were able to remember instances in which a peer was harassed because he or she did not have a conventionally accepted appearance. Moreover, 79 unique illustrations of this target characteristic emerged from the interviews (42% of all nonconforming/socially peripheral segments). An example of such an act is demonstrated in the quote below in which a fifth-grade female student discussed an instance in which a male peer in her class verbally harassed a female peer in class because of her weight.

> *I've heard [students get teased about the way they look]. A girl in my class is always being teased because she's kinda fat and people are always like 'you're so fat'. And*

this boy came up to her face and said, because she was eating, and [he] said 'I don't think you need to eat that because you're already fat enough' and stuff like that.

Noncompliance to traditional gender norms surfaced as another explanation for why elementary school students are harassed by their peers. Seventy-four separate instances emerged from the interviews in which a youth became a target for peer harassment because he or she did not adhere to accepted gender norms (40% of all nonconforming/socially peripheral segments); furthermore, all but two respondents (91%) discussed divergence from traditional gender norms as a common reason some peers are harassed. In the following quote a fourth-grade girl spoke about how some of her male peers harassed their female peers for playing soccer, a sport played predominantly by boys at their school. In the subsequent quote a fourth-grade boy discusses the contrary; in fact, he said that girls *never* get teased for playing sports with boys.

Actually in soccer...there is this one boy named Casey and he will be like 'girls have NAA', and we'll be like 'what does that stand for?' He says ' Not Athletic Ability'. This makes girls feel bad because some girls are actually better than some boys on the team. I usually get the ball, but the boys, like if a girl gets the ball, they will say 'I have it' and the girls will say 'well actually I do' and the boys will push the girls down and just grab the ball away from her. The girls never really get a chance.

[Girls that play sports never get teased because they act like boys?]...We're actually pretty happy because it makes teams fair.

In addition to physical appearance and gender norms, inability to do something and eccentric behavior also emerged as frequent characteristics that lead youth to become the target of harassment by their peers. Sixteen separate instances (8%) were identified in the interviews in which someone's inability to do something emerged as a reason that

students are harassed by their peers; furthermore, over forty percent (n = 9) of the respondents were able to recall instances in which a peer's inability to do something emerged as a reason he or she became the target of harassment. In the subsequent quote, a fourth-grade boy discussed how he is often ostracized by his male peers because of football catching abilities.

> *A lot of people tease me, usually in football, people tease me because I can't catch. Usually they always yell "Jon can't catch, blah blah blah blah blah"...and usually in football, like if I want to play, and I want to get out of soccer for a little, usually, I'm always picked the last...because I-can't-catch thing.*

Many respondents (n = 9; 40%) also discussed that youth who are perceived as engaging in unusual activities and/or possess an unusual demeanor are often harassed by their peers. Thirteen separate cases emerged in the interviews in which respondents talked about these types of characteristics causing a peer to become the target of harassment. This is exemplified in the following quote from a fourth-grade boy:

> *[Usually a particular kind of person that gets bullied is] somebody who's kind of like shy, and they're scared of stuff.*

Participants also explained that some youth harass their peers when they perceive them as having atypical hobbies. Only three students (14%) discussed this target characteristic; however, the harassment that follows appears to be cruel. For example, a fourth-grade female student discussed a situation in which a male peer was harassed because he preferred to engage in games with girls instead of playing soccer with the other boys.

Well sort of at the beginning of the year I saw that happen [boys getting made fun of for acting too much like a girl]...A boy played with the girls a lot because he thought it was fun playing Ghost in the Graveyard and then the other boys were like you play with the girls too much you need to play with the boys. He actually tried sticking up for girls sometimes... and that's how he also got teased.

Finally, as mentioned above, some respondents also discussed that new students to the school or ethnic minorities were harassed by their peers; however, to a much lesser extent than the aforementioned characteristics. Six respondents (27%) recalled instances in which a peer was harassed because of the color of his or her skin and three (14%) were able to recall a time in which a new student to the school was harassed by his or her peers. For example, in the first quote below a fourth grade female explains that a classmate was teased by other students because she is of mixed ethnicities and in the second quote a fifth-grade female discusses how two of her male classmates were teased because they were new students.

There's a girl in my class with a light brown face, and other students tease her by asking her 'Are you black or what are you?' Then she tells the teacher.

[Some people bully] Samuel and Aaron, because they came to the school towards the end of the year. Right when some students saw them they started talking bad about them. My friends and I were like the only people who asked if they wanted us to sit next to us because people were talking bad about them.

Does gender matter? Gender appears to influence whether an elementary school student is the victim and/or the person responsible for peer-to-peer harassment. Through the data reduction phase, boys emerged as being the primary harassers and girls were overwhelmingly identified as the targets. Through the data reduction phase, boys emerged as being the primary harassers and girls were overwhelmingly identified as the

targets. In fact, all respondents were able to recall instances in which boys were the perpetrator (see Table 4). Furthermore, over seventy percent (n = 149) of the coded segments in which gender could be determined the actor was male. Furthermore, all respondents were able to also discuss instances in which their female peers were the executor of peer-to-peer harassment; however, the occurrence of such segments in the interviews were much less (n = 61; 29%).

The data reduction phase identified female students as the principal targets of harassment. Both male and female students tend to direct harassment towards their female peers more so than to their male peers. Female students were the target of harassment in over 60 percent (131 coded segments) of the coded segments in which the gender of the victim was identifiable; boys were the target in only 38 percent (79 coded segments). Boys tended to harass their female peers more than their male peers. Sixty percent (89 coded segments) of the segments in which males were identified as the harasser were instances in which females were the victims and only forty percent (40 coded segments) of the segments identified males as the victim. Similarly, girls tended to also harass their female peers more than their male peers. Almost 70 percent (42 coded segments) of the segments in which females were identified as the harasser were instances in which females were also the victim and a little over 30 percent (19 coded segments) of the segments identified males as the victim.

Furthermore, the data reduction phase identified many instances in which participants discussed gender differences and similarities relating to their experiences with harassment among their peers. As is evidenced in Table 5, all but two participants (both male) were able to discuss gender differences and most participants were able to also

identify gender similarities. Segments coded as gender differences (60 segments) emerged about twice as often as gender similarities (28 segments). The following quotes exemplify a common theme about gender differences that emerged in the interviews with respect to harassment; specifically, many participants explained that girls are often harassed because of their appearance and boys are harassed for their aptitude to do well in sports. In the first quote below, a fifth-grade boy discusses this point and in the subsequent quote a fourth-grade girl furthers this point by illustrating that boys are not teased for having a conventionally effeminate appearance, such as long curly hair, yet girls are teased for having traditional masculine features such as short hair.

> *Girls get made fun of for what they wear and stuff, boys get made fun of for how they do things like how they play ball or something.*
>
> *Scott McKinney has long, curly hair, so does Ken and Samuel. They never tease them. But if a girl has very short hair, like a boy's, like that, they'd say, hey you look like a boy. That that would hurt our feelings.*

The most commonly discussed gender similarity was that both boys and girls engage in spreading rumors and gossip and both are the targets of such harassment. One fourth-grade girl illustrates this point when she says, *both (boys and girls) mostly spread rumors, but the girls don't really push anyone and the boys sort of do. They both pretty much spread rumors.* The issue of gender differences and similarities will be discussed further in the presentation of the results that emerged from the analysis of the conceptual matrices below.

To summarize, three main types of behaviors associated with harassment emerged from the interviews: verbal, physical, and nonverbal/nonphysical. Interview segments

coded as verbal harassment emerged more than any other form of harassment. Peer-to-peer harassment occurred in two locations on the school campus: structured time and unstructured free time. Harassing behaviors occurred over twice as often during unstructured free time as structured time. Furthermore, three student characteristics coded as nonconforming/socially peripheral, new student, and ethnic minority emerged as the reasons for why a student becomes a target for harassment. Being perceived as nonconforming/socially peripheral was the most commonly cited reason for becoming a target. In addition, gender also appeared to influence whether a student becomes either a victim or a perpetrator of peer-to-peer harassment. Specifically, boys emerged more often as the person responsible for behaviors associated with harassment and girls were more often identified as the target.

Results from Conceptual Matrices

In order to move beyond pure description, conceptual matrices were created to examine relationships relevant to the research questions. The data presented below emerged from analysis of the conceptual matrices and reflect instances in which the researcher could determine relevant information from the coded segments. There were cases in which the participant did not discuss all information relevant to the conceptual matrices and so were not included in the analysis. The matrices were merely used as a tool to assist with examining and identifying patterns and relationships among the responses.

Does the type of harassment vary by location on campus? The type of harassment experienced varied by the location on campus in which the act took place (see Table 6). For example, verbal forms of harassment occurred somewhat more often under structured

than during unstructured times. In fact, verbal slander was the only form of verbal harassment that emerged during unstructured time more often than during structured time. In contrast, physical harassment and nonverbal/nonphysical harassment occurred more often during unstructured free time. Nonverbal/nonphysical harassment specifically included instances in which boys excluded girls from participating in activities with them. In the following quote a fifth grade girl explained that boys at her school exclude girls from engaging in predominantly male-lead activities.

> *Well the girls are not getting passed to on purpose, and they (other team mates) are screaming in the boys faces to pass the ball and a girl is the only person open and it makes sense to pass the ball, they will still pass the ball to another boy.*

On the other hand, nonverbal slander emerged overwhelmingly more during structured time. This is not surprising given that passing notes was the most common form of nonverbal slander. Indirect forms of bullying did not vary much with respect to where it occurred. The following quote provides an example of one slanderous note that a fourth grade boy found in his classroom.

> *I saw something (a note about someone) on a piece of paper. It was a very bad thing about someone... Yeah. It was 'He's so gay. I bet that he sleeps with his mom.' And all that stuff.*

Do peers engage in different types of harassment based on target characteristics? A table was constructed to detect whether participants discussed peers engaging in different types of peer-to-peer harassment based on the characteristics of the target. Participants rarely discussed target characteristics in any category other than nonconforming/socially peripheral which rendered this table virtually irrelevant for further analysis. For this

reason, Table 7 was constructed to detect whether the type of harassment varied by type of nonconforming/socially peripheral target traits. Upon examination of the table it appears that specific forms of harassment were employed more depending on the reason given for why a peer becomes a target for harassment. For instance, when students responsible for the harassment perceived their peer as having an unusual physical appearance they most often used verbal forms of harassment; furthermore, a victim being perceived as having nontraditional gender roles by the perpetrator is almost exclusively linked to nonverbal/nonphysical forms of harassment. Physical and indirect forms of harassment did not vary much in the interviews; however, it is important to note that there were many instances in which the reason for the harassment was unable to be determined.

Verbal harassment was the most commonly cited form of harassment by the participants and was the only form of harassment discussed as being used against peers with any of the nonconforming/socially peripheral target traits. As mentioned above it was most often used if the harasser perceived his or her peers as having an unusual physical appearance (62 coded segments). At times this was because of a peer's physical features (e.g., weight, hair, and height) and occasionally, as shown in the following quote from a fifth grade boy, it was because of the way someone dressed.

> *Some people go farther than gay. I think it should be a suspension, but they just give them detention...Like this girl called one of my friends a fag, and like you need to work on your dress code and he said that another girl said something about him too because he wears other things than other kids. He likes basketball but he wears baseball[shirts] and... they got a detention but he goes home everyday and cries, but they only have a detention for an hour and he has to deal with it [every day].*

When verbal harassment were employed because of a peers physical appearance it was most often done through name calling (n = 27; 44%), slander (n = 17; 27), and gossiping or spreading rumors (n = 11; 18%); threats or intimidation were rarely discussed (n = 7; 11%). Verbal harassment was also a common form of harassment used when the harasser perceived his or her peer as having non-traditional gender roles (36 coded segments). For example, in the following quote a fourth grade girl explained that some of her male peers make fun of a female peer because she engages in traditional male activities.

> *The boys make fun of my friend because she doesn't act like a boy but she's, a tomboy...the way she dresses. She wears shorts like the boys do and like jerseys and stuff like that [she play sports and things]. [Boys] say that she's stupid and weird and stuff like that.*

Similar to physical appearance, when a perpetrator targeted a peer because he or she did not adhere to expected gender norms verbal harassment were most often done in the form of name calling (n = 17; 47%) and slander (n = 14; 39%); gossiping/spreading rumors (n = 1; 3%) and threats/intimidation (n = 4; 11%) were rarely discussed. The remaining target characteristics, namely unconventional hobbies, unusual demeanor or behavior, and lack of particular abilities were discussed much less than gender roles and physical appearance. However, if a peer did harass because of these reasons he or she almost exclusively used verbal forms of harassment. In other words, other forms of harassment were not used nearly as often as verbal harassment when a peer was perceived by the harasser as being interested in unusual hobbies, had a strange demeanor, or was not able to do something that others could.

Nonverbal/nonphysical harassment was another commonly cited form of harassment by the participants in this study and was almost exclusively reserved for targets characterized as not adhering to the expected gender roles (18 coded segments). This was most often done through social exclusion (n = 14; 78%). Typically, this was done when a girl wanted to engage in male dominated activities as is exemplified in the following quote from an interview with a fifth grade girl.

> *Like if a girl wanted to play football they (boys) would say no because it's a boy game and they (boys) just don't pass the ball to them (girls) in basketball because they don't even want them to play.*

Do boys and girls harass their peers for different reasons? Table 8 was constructed to detect whether a variation emerged with respect to whether or not boys and girls harass their peers for different reasons. A gender difference did emerge from the conceptual matrix. Additionally, they explained that their peers harass their same gender peers for different reasons than they harass their cross-gender peers. Specifically, it appears that boys tend to harass their peers because they do not perceive them as adhering to the traditional gender roles more than girls do. Furthermore, they harassed girls for this reason more (31 segments) than other boys (5 segments). Girls harassed boys more for not adhering to expected gender roles (14 segments) than they did other girls (1 segment). The below quote exemplifies an instance in which a fourth grade girl had to change her behavior because she was teased habitually for "acting too much like a boy."

> *[Being teased about acting too much like a boy] happens to me a lot. I'm sort of like a tomboy; like if there is a frog other girls go ewww and I go cool. And the boys go like, ' you act too much like a boy you need to play with like dollies ' or something like that, and I'm like no I don't, and they still just tease me, so yeah I just go away...*

[Other girls get teased for acting like a tomboy too] and then they sort of change to be more of a girly girl. [Me too because]I used to play soccer everyday now I sort of just switch on soccer and Ghost in the Graveyard, and like that.

Boys also tend to harass their peers because they perceive them as having unusual physical characteristics more than girls did. This did not vary much for boys with respect to the gender of their targets. They harassed their female peers slightly more (17 segments) than their male peers (14 segments). However, boys tended to harass girls because of their physical features (e.g., weight) and boys because of clothing/accessories (e.g., glasses). Conversely, girls tended to harass their female peers for this reason much more (14 segments) than their male peers (6 segments). In the first quote below a fourth grade boy discussed the rampant nature at which a female classmate is harassed by other boys in his class about her appearance. In the following quote another fourth grade boy talked about how he gets made fun of by other boys for wearing glasses.

There's this girl Nadia in my class there's also these kids Mike and Joshua. They go around saying mean things, they go right up to Nadia's desk and then they just say something mean like 'ugly' while they're walking by her and then they say "what, I didn't say anything." [They don't get in trouble because] pretty much Nadia, she just says "Mike" and stuff like that and she doesn't really do anything about it.

Sometimes [boys] call me four-eyes because I also wear glasses.

Do boys and girls harass differently? Table 9 was developed to examine whether gender differences exist in the data regarding the type of harassment used. Variations did emerge in the interviews such that boys and girls tend harass their peers in different ways. Specifically, boys were more likely to employ verbal forms of harassment than girls. Furthermore, they harassed girls this way more (54 segments) than they did other boys

(31 segments). In the following quote a fourth grade girl discusses that boys verbally harass other boys, but also provides an example of how sometimes, in doing so, they inadvertently verbally harass girls.

> *[Boys] definitely [bully other boys]...I see them calling each other girls, especially in soccer. Cause they're saying, 'Ha, you kick like a girl.' That kind of hurts me and the rest of the girls who are playing, because they're saying that girls are bad at sports. Sometimes the other girls ask me what the boys mean. I'm like he, he probably meant that girls are bad at sports. [It happens a lot], today I heard Austin say it to Griffin.*

Verbal harassment was also a common way in which girls harassed their peers; however, unlike the boys they harassed their same gender in this way more (28 segments) than they did across gender (11 segments). In the subsequent quote a fourth grade provides an example of how she is verbally harassed by her female peers.

> *Um, some people (female peers) do that to me (make fun about her weight), like saying I weigh too much and stuff like that... They say that 'you're fat' and stuff like that. (They say it) behind my back. I can hear them. I just walk and they say "Sarah is fat" and stuff like that.*

Boys were also more likely to use physical forms of harassment against their peers than females. Unlike any other form of harassment that emerged, they tended to use this form against their same gender more (26 segments) than across gender (17 segments). An example of this behavior is present in the following quote from an interview with a fourth grade boy in which he explains that a male classmate repeatedly kicks him.

> *There's this one kid (in my class) he kicks me sometimes. I wanna say he's a bully because he kicks me when he thinks I deserve it... He says I annoy him but I really don't. And then, when he's really getting close was presently, he kicked me because he said I lied to him, but I really didn't.*

Girls rarely used physical forms of harassment, and when they did they tended to use is equally across genders. Boys were also more likely to use nonverbal/nonphysical forms of harassment than girls. They used this form of harassment almost exclusively on their female peers (18 segments) than their male peers (3 segments). For example, in the quote below a fourth grade girl provided an example of a male classmate writing a threatening note on a female classmate's desk.

> *[Graffiti] on the desk happens. One time, I think it was like in third grade, some boy wrote on this girl's desk, 'I never want to see you r face again in this school.' It was a threat, and he got suspended for three days.*

On the other hand, girls tended to use this form of harassment on other girls (9 segments) more than on boys (4 segments). Indirect forms of harassment did not vary much across genders.

To reiterate the above results, students appeared to engage in different forms of harassment depending on where they were on the school campus. Specifically, verbal forms of harassment occurred more often during structured times on campus and both physical and nonverbal/nonphysical forms of harassment occurred during unstructured free time. Peers also tended to engage in different forms of behaviors associated with harassment based on their targets' characteristics. For example, when perpetrators perceived their target as having unusual physical characteristics they tended to employ verbal forms of harassment, and if the target was perceived as not adhering to expected gender roles nonverbal/nonphysical forms of harassment were most often used. Gender differences also emerged for why and how students harass their peers. Boys and girls also harass their same gender peers for different reasons than they harass their cross gender

peers. Specifically, boys were more likely to harass girls for being nonconforming/socially peripheral than other boys and girls were more likely to harass other girls for this reason more than boys.

Research Question #2: What actions are taken subsequent to peer harassment on the elementary school campus?

How do faculty and staff respond to peer-to-peer harassment? The data reduction phase identified five primary ways in which participants perceived the faculty and staff at school responding to acts associated with harassment. These responses were coded as: variable (e.g., inconsistent), active, inactive, effective, and ineffective. Upon examination of Table 10 it is clear that faculty and staff are most often perceived as active; in fact all respondents were able to discuss instances in which they perceived their faculty and/or staff as active in their response to an act associated with harassment, and some felt that when their faculty and staff responded they were effective at stopping the harassment. On the other hand, most were also able to recall instances in which their faculty and staff were ineffective at stopping the harassment (i.e., they were active but not successful). Furthermore, all but one participant discussed occasions in which faculty and staff were viewed as inactive; and finally, many participants believe their faculty and staff respond in variable ways to acts associated with harassment.

Faculty and staff responses to acts associated with peer-to-peer harassment characterized as active emerged from the interview discussions more than any other responses and appear to be more common. All respondents were able to recall instances in which their faculty and staff were perceived as responding in an active manner to an act of peer-to-peer harassment. Moreover, 110 separate instances of active responses

were identified in the interviews. Many students discussed similar responses from their teachers such that different acts associated with harassment received different consequences, often signified by a different color card being pulled or flipped, directed at the person responsible for the act. The consequences ranged from warnings to detentions and conversations with parents/guardians. An example of this is demonstrated in the following quote from an interview with a fourth-grade male student. Some students also discussed instances in which staff members, other than teachers, were active responders to peer harassment. For example, in the second quote below, the fifth-grade male discussed that if the school counselor or principal are witness to an act associated with harassment, the person responsible is often reprimanded in different ways than when witnessed by their teachers.

> *I think that my teacher is most of the time nice; he makes the good decisions and everything. If someone's like being mean to someone else and he sees it then he gets them in trouble and sometimes if he really sees something really bad, if they're doing something really bad, like being mean to someone else like punching them or something like that then he gives them a detention and also a warning. If he sees any violence then he turns your card to black and that means a detention and a call home or an email to your parents and then, if he sees you goofing off or something, he just gives you a warning and you have to change your card.*

> *If the counselor or principal catches you bullying, you won't get your green card pulled, you'll either have to sit in the office or [receive] temporary detention where you just sit there[the office] for the last ten, twenty minutes and they'll uh, talk to you. But like, in class, if it's like serious bullying, like my um mom is really sick and boys from another class told me, I hope your mom dies and stuff and the teacher saw, and he had two detentions and a suspension.*

Not only did participants perceive their faculty and staff as active responders to peer harassment, but over half also felt that their school's faculty and staff were effective at reducing peer-to-peer harassment. Almost thirty separate segments emerged in which

participants viewed their faculty and staff as effective in this way. Sometimes, as is evidenced in the following quote by a fourth-grade boy, faculty and staff were perceived as being effective at preventing harassment from occurring. Participants also illustrated that their faculty and staff are also effective at intervening and stopping peer-to-peer harassment, as can be seen in the second quote below from another fourth-grade male.

> *[My teacher teaches us] not to tease others, we just read this book about these two girls teasing another person, and so we learned not to, and all that. [I think it works].*
>
> *[My school is good at handling harassment], 'cause once they [person(s) responsible for the harassment] sit down and talk with the counselor, then they usually stop.*

While some participants felt that their faculty and staff were effective when they responded to peer-to-peer harassment, more (n =18) were able to discuss instances in which they felt their faculty and staff were ineffective. Fifty-five segments emerged in which faculty and staff were discussed as being ineffective at reducing harassment when they responded. The data reduction phase identified three unique ways in which faculty and staff were perceived as ineffective by the participants: unsuited punishment, negligent, and unsuccessful. Respondents most often discussed their faculty and staff as being unsuccessful in their response to harassment evidenced by the fact that 15 respondents (68%) were able to remember instances in which a member of faculty or staff failed at stopping an incidence of peer harassment. Moreover, 31 unique segments were coded in which participants perceived their faculty and staff as unsuccessful in this way (56% of all ineffective segments). An example is demonstrated in the quote below in which a fourth-grade female student discussed that the faculty and staff at school are not always successful at decreasing or eliminating harassment. In fact, she discussed that the

primary way in which students at her school learn about harassment is through a handbook that few of her peers read. Furthermore, she discussed that oftentimes faculty and staff responses may increase harassment. She believes that this is because the person responsible for the harassment usually does not receive a harsh enough punishment and in turn will retaliate by spreading rumors about the victim. The second quote below from an interview with a fifth-grade male also illustrates that oftentimes faculty and staff are unsuccessful at eliminating harassment, specifically gender harassment. He discusses that he and his male peers are punished for harassing girls, but the punishment does not deter them from continuing to harass their female peers, particularly those girls who reported the harassment in the first place.

> *Well, all I know is that [we are taught at school that] you are not supposed to push anyone down or call anyone names because we are all supposed to be nice to each other, but that doesn't exactly really help anything. They give a little book at the beginning of the year and they tell us to read the rules especially about bullying because it's been going on, but no one ever really reads the book because it just happens anyways. I mean in the beginning of the year [kids got in trouble] a lot, but as the rumors started [retaliation against the victim for telling] and all these people just sort of backed down. Like when I told the teacher the teacher called up the person [responsible for the harassment], and sometimes they don't even get a punishment, they would get a warning about a punishment like, "if you do this one more time you will get a punishment," but then they will just spread a big rumor, so yeah [no one tells anymore].*

> *They [female peers] could do whatever they want; they could go tell. try to get us [male peers] in trouble. Even if they get us in trouble we'll still follow them. Even we have to sit out the whole entire recess, the next day we are going to follow them and keep on doing the same thing until we get what we want.*

Participants also perceived their faculty and staff as negligent with respect to their responses to an act associated with peer harassment. Sixteen separate instances of negligence (29% of all ineffective segments) emerged in the interviews, and nine

respondents (41%) were able to recall a time when a member of their school's faculty or staff was negligent to an act of peer-to-peer harassment. In the first quote below a fourth-grade boy discusses how some of his peers at school have gotten in trouble on the bus for disobeying rules, such as standing or using bad language; however, his bus driver did not respond when he/she heard a student call another student gay. The second quote is from an interview with a fourth-grade female in which she illustrates that staff negligence also occurs on the playground. She believes that her male peers are able to avoid punishment for harassing their female peers through corroborating stories. Furthermore, she discusses that her female peers' attempts at reporting the harassment has been futile, oftentimes the harassment continues despite punishment.

> *My friend got in trouble because he stood up and then my other friend, he swore because he got sent home. He, he swore and so they both had to go up front, because the bus driver heard it. [But] one time my old bus driver would hear [a student call another student "gay"] but left it alone.*

> *[Girls try to tell the recess attendant, but] they will be just like well there are more boys that say no so they can't really believe you. But that is the reason why there are no girls [playing sports], we never get the ball. [They don't get in trouble for calling girls names either], because most boys stick up for the boys even though they know it's true. Well, a few people [female students] have tried to tell, and they [male peers] have gotten in trouble a few times, and then it just keeps happening more, so they just say I'm going to have to live with it then trying to stopping it.*

Finally, some students also felt that their faculty and staff engaged in unfair punishment (e.g., the punishment was perceived as either not harsh enough or too harsh). Five participants (27%) discussed situations in which a student was given an unsuited punishment for engaging in an act associated with peer harassment, and eight unique segments (15% of all ineffective segments) emerged exemplifying this type of response.

In the first quote below a fifth-grade boy illustrates that boys often get in trouble for passing notes that they did not start and in the second quote a fourth-grade girl perceives unfair treatment of girls on the school's playground by both her male peers and the recess attendants.

Girls start it [notes], and it ends with a boy, and the boy usually gets in trouble. He gets sent out in the hallway, like the girl won't get in trouble, and he still gets in trouble. [The note] starts right here [on one end of the classroom], and it'll get to here [the other end] in a minute or two, and like the teacher will see it going by but she won't say anything but on the last person she'll say something and then he'll get sent outside,, she won't see the first person that starts it.

[Boys don't get in trouble for not allowing girls to play] 'cause the girls actually get in trouble for playing basketball, from the recess ladies. They usually say it's the boys turn to play basketball, even though the boys have done it a million times consecutively.

Finally, faculty and staff responses to acts associated with peer-to-peer harassment were also commonly characterized as inactive (see Table 10). All but one respondent were able to recall instances in which they perceived their faculty and staff as being inactive to acts of peer-to-peer harassment. Moreover, 71 separate instances of inactive responses were identified in the interviews. In the quotes below both students discuss instances in which faculty and staff were perceived as deliberately ignoring acts associated with peer harassment.

Some people, this is real mean, some people still bully other people by the color of their skin. It happened once. There's this girl on my bus and there's this boy on my bus, and the boy called the girl, 'cause the girl is black, an N-i-g-g-e-r. And the girl started crying but the bus driver did nothing about it. [Noone at school did anything] it was on the bus. Sometimes [what happened on the bus doesn't get dealt with at the school].

Like one time I was playing kick ball and I was about to catch the ball and [the recess attendants were] like watching me the whole time and then David just came along

and hit me in the stomach pushed me out of the way so that I wouldn't catch the ball. And then um she just sat there and watched and when I looked at her she just hurried up and turned away. (She) pretended she did see it. I said did you just see that? And she is like what? And I said I know you saw it.

Finally, faculty and staff responses to acts associated with peer-to-peer harassment were also characterized as variable, or inconsistent (see Table 10). Fourteen respondents (64%) were able to recall instances in which they perceived their faculty and staff as being variable with respect to their responses to peer-to-peer harassment. Moreover, 21 separate instances of this type of responses were identified in the interviews. In the quotes below both students illustrate that their faculty and staff are often inconsistent in the ways in which they discipline students for acts associated with peer harassment.

[Students get away with] pushing sometimes, but then they never get away for like grabbing them and pushing them to the ground. That's what they never get away with.

[When someone gets in trouble at recess] the recess ladies say that they can stay on the wall for 5 minutes, but it ends up being the whole entire recess even though the whole entire recess is 20 minutes.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to examine and describe the behaviors associated with peer gender and sexual harassment that elementary school children experience. I was particularly interested in investigating the various types of peer-to-peer gender and sexual harassment experienced by elementary school students and learning first hand how elementary school students perceive and recognize these behaviors in their daily lives at school. I was also interested in understanding gender differences with respect to peer gender and sexual harassment; specifically, I examined the differences and similarities between behaviors associated with cross-gender harassment as opposed to same-gender harassment. Finally, ways in which respondents described faculty and staff responses to actions associated with harassment were also explored.

Similar to other studies, peer-to-peer harassment was rampant at this school (AAUW, 2001; Larkin, 1994a; Lee et al., 1996; Murnen & Smolak, 2000; Roscoe, 1994; & Stein, 1995); however, similar to Murnen and Smolak's findings gender harassment emerged more in the current study than explicit sexual harassment. Furthermore, the current study added to the findings gleaned from the Murnen and Smolak study with regards to the types of behavior experienced by elementary school youth. For example, in the previous study, the types of harassment the youth were able to reflect on were bounded by eight predefined scenarios (two visual, three verbal, and three physical). In the current study, all types of possible behaviors were open for exploration through the open interview format and were bounded only by what was salient to the participant. This process allowed for multiple types of harassment to emerge as well as the frequency of occurrence for each type. All respondents were able to report having experienced

behaviors associated with harassment whether personally or by witnessing it. Verbal forms of harassment emerged as the most common way in which peers harassed each other, and of that, slander was the most common. Physical and nonverbal/nonphysical harassment were also popular ways in which peers harassed each other. In addition, unlike the Murnen and Smolak study, the current study examined reasons for why a peer might become the target of harassment. Findings indicated that most students were harassed because they did not fit with what is considered normal; in other words, they were viewed by their peers as being socially peripheral. Nonconformity was primarily defined and recognized by the student's physical appearance and/or their non-adherence to what were socially acceptable gender roles.

Furthermore, findings from the current study are consistent with others with respect to where harassment occurs (AAUW, 2001; Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 2002; Stein, 1999). Peer harassment occurs on campus and, oftentimes, in clear view of others, including school faculty and staff (Nansel et al., 2001; Stein, 1999). Two contexts on campus emerged in which respondents had experienced a behavior associated with harassment: structured time and unstructured free time. It is not surprising that the participants mostly discussed behaviors associated with harassment occurring during unstructured times when adult supervision is limited, such as at recess, on the bus, and during free time in the classroom where teachers are present. However, it is alarming that the participants also discussed many instances in which harassment occurred during structured times, mostly inside the classroom.

The current study found that verbal harassment occurred more often during structured than unstructured times. Verbal slander was the only form of verbal harassment that

emerged during unstructured times more often than during structured times. In contrast, both physical and nonverbal/nonphysical harassment occurred more often during unstructured free time. Occurrences of nonverbal/nonphysical harassment most often pertained to instances in which boys excluded girls from participating in activities with them. On the other hand, nonverbal slander emerged more during structured time. This is not surprising given that passing notes was the most common form of nonverbal slander, and such harassment can be viewed as an unobtrusive way to harass someone while in the presence of authoritative figures.

These findings indicate a need for more adult presence and effective action during both structured and unstructured free times. Many of the participants recognized that adults see peer-to-peer harassment and many, especially girls, also expect that the adults will understand and do something to intervene and prevent it. Yet, many of the girls discussed that they could not get affirmation from the adults about their experiences and thus nothing was done to stop the harassment. It is likely that, overtime, the condoning of these types of behaviors, through adults' lack of action, may foster new and more extreme violent behaviors (e.g., sexual harassment and dating violence). However, to date, no research has examined the relationship between the social acceptance of sexual and gender-based harassment and later perpetration and victimization of more violent behaviors (e.g., sexual assault, dating violence). However, it can be presumed that this acceptance creates a culture in which women are seen as second class citizens to men and thus a belief that it is acceptable to behave towards women in ways that perpetuate this certainty. Oftentimes, behaviors that are associated with sexual harassment are trivialized

as normal childhood development and this approval could be viewed as a major contributing factor in the social construction of male power over women.

Moreover, it is important to also consider additional negative effects this phenomenon has on women and girls. For example, Larkin (1994a) has argued that girls and women become desensitized to pervasive harassment and thus fail to recognize many forms of abuse (e.g., verbal assault), and instead limit their definitions of abuse to more physical abuse (e.g., physical assault and rape). The participants interviewed in the current study do not yet consider these less violent behaviors as normal; however, many of the girls repeatedly discussed futile attempts in which they went to school faculty and staff in order to get them to see and do something about the ways in which boys behaved toward them. Future research should examine the point at which girls begin to internalize and normalize the everyday violence in their lives subsequent to making repeated attempts to get adults to see and recognize these behaviors and their impact. The refusal to acknowledge the significance of gender and sexual harassment in the lives of youth, in effect, may condone more explicit forms of violence.

Unlike other studies with elementary school age youth (see Murnen & Smolak, 2000) the current study actively examined the gendered nature of harassment on the elementary school campus. Results from this study indicate that gender matters when discussing gender and sexual harassment. Participants discussed both boys and girls perpetrating harassment; however, consistent with some studies (AAUW, 2001; Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 2002; Stein, 1999) boys were cited as the perpetrator more than girls. Furthermore, a clear gender difference also emerged with respect to the likelihood of experiencing harassment from a peer, such that, similar to other studies (AAUW, 2001; Stein, 1999),

girls were most often cited as the victim of peer harassment. A gender differentiation was also found in that boys experienced more same-gender than cross-gender harassment, while the reverse was true for girls, they tended to experience more harassment from boys than from other girls.

Boys and girls also used different forms of harassment. Boys were more likely to employ verbal forms of harassment than girls, and they harassed girls this way more than they did other boys. This was also a common way in which girls harassed their peers; however, unlike the boys they harassed their same gender in this way more than they did across gender. Consistent with other studies (Olweus, 1999), boys were also much more likely to use physical forms of harassment than girls, and unlike all of the other forms of harassment that emerged in this study they tended to harass their same gender than in this way more than across gender. Girls rarely used physical forms of harassment, and when they did, they tended to use this form almost equally across genders. Different than other studies (Olweus, 1999 & Pellegrini, 2002) boys were also more likely to use nonverbal/nonphysical forms of harassment than girls. They used this form of harassment almost exclusively on their female peers. On the other hand, girls tended to use this form of harassment on other girls more than on boys. Finally, indirect forms of harassment did not vary much across genders.

There was also a clear gender distinction in reasons for engaging in behaviors associated with gender and sexual harassment, in other words, boys and girls harass for different reasons. Specifically, boys tended to harass their peers because they did not appear or behave in ways consistent with traditional gender roles more than girls did. Furthermore, they harassed girls for this reason more than other boys. Girls harassed boys

more for this reason than other girls. Boys also harassed their peers because they perceived them as having unusual physical characteristics more than girls did, and they tended to direct harassment in this way toward both boys and girls almost equally. However, when girls harassed their peers for this reason, they tended to direct it toward other girls more than boys.

It appears that peer harassment, for the current age group, is more in the form of gender harassment, rather than what is commonly referred to as sexual harassment. The majority of behaviors associated with peer harassment that emerged from the interviews were not explicitly sexual in nature, but were linked with gender-based insults, hostility, and humiliation often with the motivation to reinforce traditional gender norms. No sexual coercion, physical sexual force, or many behaviors of a sexual conduct emerged in the interviews. This may be because of the developmental stage of the sample.

Furthermore, it is likely that if adults do not intervene, schools may be encouraging a continued cycle of violence in the lives of girls and women. In her piece on sexual harassment in kindergarten through 12th grade schools (Stein, 1995) compares schools to training grounds for domestic violence. In the current study the silence and disregard of the school faculty and staff allowed gender-based harassment to occur and in turn, girls learned to accept the harassment and learned how to handle it on their own, often through situation avoidance and through changing their behavior and appearance. Likewise, some of the boys learned that it is acceptable for them to behave towards girls in harassing ways and that they can threaten retaliation to get their way. Given the rampant nature of sexual and gender harassment in the lives of young people at school as well as its dehabilitizing effects and potential to lead to more severe forms of harassment and

violence later on much is needed in terms of future research and theory testing and way to promote behavior and attitude change on many levels within school organizations.

Implications for School-based Intervention

The pervasiveness of gender harassment on campus coupled with the negative consequences associated with exposure to this violence creates a need for effective intervention and prevention strategies aimed at norm changing. If these behaviors are to change the school culture must shift and stakeholders at all levels should be involved in intervention development and intervention (Meyer, 2006). This means that students, families, teachers and staff, school administrators, and the school board should be involved in the process. Below are recommendations for intervention implementation at these multiple levels, namely a) the administrative and school board, b) teachers and staff, c) students, and d) families.

Administrators and School Board

At the administrative level change is needed in three areas: a) policy, b) education, and c) resource support. A clear and concisely written school-wide policy is needed to guide actions against gender harassment. Specifically, guidelines should include response protocols and strategies for intervention. In order for policy to be effective, those that are required to follow it must be aware and knowledgeable about their responsibilities. Education can occur in staff meetings, workshops, and school newspapers. Finally, to ensure that the school climate has sustainable change, leaders such as the administrators and the School Board should ensure adequate resources, such as time and money. Support such as this also gives credibility and value to the intervention.

Teachers and support staff (e.g., bus drivers and yard attendants) are also important stakeholders in a school-wide intervention strategy aimed at changing the school climate. They should be included in the design and implementation of any policies or interventions. Teachers and staff are in a unique position in that they have the most opportunity to observe and intervene in incidents of gender harassment on the school campus. As such they will need to develop effective and useful tools for successful intervention and prevention strategies.

Curricular interventions are one strategy that has been found useful for teacher interventions in gender harassment (Meyer, 2006). For example, curriculums can address some of the underlying issues of gender harassment (Meyer, 2006). One recommendation is to include important contributions from gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people, and women in courses such as history and literature. School curriculum could also include comprehensive education about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Finally, curriculums could be developed and implemented that take a critical look at media to analyze gender stereotypes and heterosexism in popular culture.

Students comprise the largest population on a school campus and set the norm for what is acceptable behavior among their peers (Meyer, 2006). Behaviors associated with gender harassment will continue in locations of minimal supervision and during unstructured times (e.g., locker rooms and athletic fields or courts) without the inclusion and investment of student leaders. Leadership development retreats or workshops can be implemented to educate youth leaders about gender harassment and foster their support and assistance in combating gender harassment and other norms on campus.

Finally, inclusion of families and other community members is important for many reasons. First, families and community groups could provide important insight into the development and implementation of the intervention and prevention strategies. Second, these types of partnerships may limit the possibility of naysayers and any potential backlash from parents or the community. Finally, inclusion of these groups may lead to a community-wide intervention, thus reducing gender harassment and bias in the community as a whole.

Implications for Future Research

Given that little is know about sexual harassment among younger populations there are many directions future research can take. One direction pertains to triangulation of participants, specifically including adults such as parents/guardians, school faculty and staff, and other important adults in children's lives. Including adults such as parents and school faculty and staff as research participants may provide a more holistic view of the issue of peer sexual harassment in elementary school. Interviews with parents could provide insight into what types of behaviors children experience and their perspectives on how school faculty and staff respond to acts associated with peer harassment at school. For example, instances arose in some of the interviews in which a participant discussed that the school faculty became involved only after the child's parent called the school to complain. The school faculty and staff could provide insight into what behaviors associated with peer sexual harassment they witness as well as their response to the behaviors they witness. Discussions with school faculty and staff would also allow for a better understanding of any protocols they are required to follow with regards to peer sexual harassment and whether or not they adhere to them. It would be interesting to

learn whether school faculty and staff responses differ with the students' concerning what types of behaviors associated with sexual harassment take place at school as well as what occurs subsequent to an act of sexual harassment, specifically with respect to faculty and staff response. This research would best be implemented through a case-study utilizing various school settings as the unit of analysis. This method would allow for a more in-depth examination of peers sexual harassment at school and would generate a more complete picture of what happens at school.

Future research on sexual harassment in elementary school could also apply a longitudinal methodology. To date, little is known about how sexual harassment develops over time (McMaster et al., 2002); furthermore, no research exists that has examined this issue longitudinally. In their study on peer-to-peer sexual harassment, McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, and Craig (2002) took a developmental perspective and found that an increase in perpetration of peer sexual harassment was associated with adolescents' pubertal maturity and with their increased participation with mixed-gender peer groups. In this study the authors pose that pubertal development may be related to sexual harassment for two reasons: (1) the development of secondary sex characteristics may signal to peers and to adults that the expression of sexual interest is appropriate and (2) and increase in sex hormones may directly affect sexual motivation and interest, and thus, may lead to sexual harassment when youth are learning about socially acceptable ways to act on their sexual motivations. Pubertal development is a defining characteristic of early adolescence and the onset generally ranges from ages 7-13 for girls and ages 8-14 for boys, and as mentioned above is often marked by the visible development of secondary sex characteristics. As the sole interviewer for this study my observations lead me to

believe that the majority of participants had not yet reached puberty and therefore it is likely that sexual interest had not yet been developed. Given the association between puberty and sexual harassment found in McMaster and colleagues study, it may be possible that the participants' pubertal development is a contributing factor to the finding that behaviors related to gender harassment emerged more than harassment of a more sexual nature in the current study. More longitudinal research is needed to examine the etiology of gender based harassment and sexual harassment.

Longitudinal data collection would provide a richer understanding of the developmental context of sexual harassment. For example, McMaster and colleagues (2002) finding that cross-gender harassment increased in frequency from Grade 6 to Grade 8 was linked to pubertal maturation and an increase in mixed-gender peer groups. However, the question of why pubertal maturation and adolescents who have more contact with cross-gender peers are linked to an increased likelihood of engagement in sexual harassment remained unanswered. The authors attribute this likelihood merely to hormones and access without much discussion of other contributing variables. A longitudinal design would allow for a richer understanding into other potential variables that might play a role in the development of peer sexual harassing behaviors beyond hormones and increased access to the opposite gender.

Future research could also apply quantitative methodology to explore sexual harassment among elementary school peers. The current study utilized a qualitative methodology in order to allow for rich data in an area that had been minimally researched. Qualitative methods have many advantages but also some inherent limitations. The results of qualitative research does not allow for much generalizability

outside of those participants included in the research study. Often times the small sample size in a qualitative study limits the diversity of experiences and perspectives; whereas, quantitative methods would allow for a greater sample size and, in turn, would allow for greater generalizability of the findings. Quantitative methods are also more advantageous when the researcher would like to capture more information in less time. In addition, a mixed-methods study that utilized both a qualitative and quantitative methodology would possibly be beneficial in providing a more complete depiction of the average elementary school student's experiences and perspectives in that the richness of qualitative data coupled with the generalizability of quantitative data would be captured.

Limitations

There are several limitations inherent in this study that should be mentioned. Some limitations pertain to the method used, namely an adult interviewing youth one-on-one, and the potential harm power dynamics may have played. There is a power imbalance between youth and adults such that when an adult interacts with a child there can never be equal status because of the role each plays in society; this role is the direct influence of age, cognitive abilities, and social responsibility (Fine & Sandstorm, 1988). From the beginning of their lives children are taught to listen to, respect, and obey adults and are surrounded by adults (e.g., parents and teachers) who all have the power to direct children's actions and behaviors. Many researchers engaging in interview methodologies with children discuss the importance of minimizing this power dynamic through utilizing group interviews (for example see Corsario & Eder, 1995). Group interviews were not an option for the current study given the sensitive nature of the topic discussed. It is possible that had I used group interviews a victim and a perpetrator may have ended up in the

same group making it harmful for the victim to discuss specific instances in which he or she was harassed. Given this dilemma, one-on-one interviews were utilized at the risk that the inherent power dynamics may have influenced the youths' responses.

In addition, only one interview was conducted with each participant. It seemed that during the interview, the informants knew what they were there to talk about, but it took some participants a while to adjust to the interview process. For example, some of the participants appeared to be expecting the interviewer to give them some sign that their response was correct, despite her attempts at letting them know that there were no right or wrong answers. Furthermore, some seemed uncomfortable talking about their experiences and were more open to talking about their peers. Multiple interviews might have brought about more depth because the participants would have had time to think about the topic in-between interview sessions. Furthermore, it is possible that participants would have become more comfortable with the interviewer and the interview process after multiple interviews, thus minimizing potential limitations coming from discomfort with the process and any power dynamics that may have influenced their responses. Therefore, it is possible that some in-depth information was lost in the participants responses thus influencing the richness of the findings.

Another potential source of limitation to the findings presented here concerns the limited number of cases examined. It can be argued that such a selective and small sample could be biased and not generalizable. Following Patton (2002), I wanted information-rich and knowledgeable informants who would be able to talk about what it is like to be an elementary school student exposed to peer harassment at school. Consequently, while my sample consisted of a small number of informants, given the

trustworthiness of the data analytic process and the fact that the sample interviewed is representative of the school students as well as the City of Walled Lake, I feel confident that the findings will be meaningful and informative. Furthermore, the findings from this study are constrained by context and are case dependent; again, following Patton (2002), all efforts were made to report both the methods and the results in their proper context. In addition, this study sought to examine and describe behaviors associated with peer sexual harassment that elementary school students are exposed to without looking at variation among demographic variables such as SES and locality (e.g., urban, rural, and suburban). It is possible that there may be interesting and meaningful comparisons between these groups. For example, the youth participating in this study were predominantly White and were from a suburban community. It is unclear whether results would be generalized to a multiethnic or ethnic minority inner-city school. Research by Larkin (1994a) suggests that girls from ethnic minority groups may be more likely to be harassed in a multiethnic school, to some extent because of myths surrounding ethnic sexuality.

Additional limitations that may impact the current study lie within the credibility of the research tool used, namely the researcher. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary tool for data collection and analysis and therefore the credibility of the researcher is paramount. As a researcher completing a Master's thesis it is important for me to note that my training and preparedness is somewhat limited. Nevertheless, I have gone through extensive instruction aimed at developing and enhancing my credibility as a researcher, and I am confident that the group dialectical process of discussing the data, peer debriefing and the guidance of my faculty advisor has greatly minimize the potential

limitations inherent in my novice abilities as a qualitative researcher and has enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings.

APPENDIX A

Gender Bullying – Initial Informational Letter

March, 29 2006

Dear Parent/Guardian!

The faculty and staff at Mary Helen Guest Elementary School are excited to announce our participation with a project in collaboration with researchers in the psychology department at Michigan State University. This project will explore our students' experiences of bullying at our school. Knowledge gained from this project will inform our future endeavors in addressing and preventing bullying at our school.

In order for your child to participate, please **read** the consent form attached to this letter and **sign and return** either the consent form or refusal form in the self addressed and postage paid envelope provided for you by **April, 14 2006**. Each class will receive a **pizza party** as soon as we receive 75% of the class's forms.

If you have any questions specifically about the project, you can contact Kristen Law at 510-917-2389 or lawkrist@msu.edu (our MSU representative) OR Dr. Culbert at Mary Helen Guest Elementary School.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to sharing the findings from this project with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Principal Counselor

APPENDIX B

Gendered Bullying- Parent/Guardian Consent Form

This is a study to explore your child's ideas and thoughts on bullying in schools. Should you allow your child to participate, s/he will be asked to participate in an interview lasting no more than an hour and a half. This interview will be audiotaped for accuracy and audiotapes will be destroyed after the interview is transcribed.

There are no known risks to your child for participating. In fact, participants often appreciate our interest in their opinions concerning these issues.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to have your child participate or your child may choose not to participate. Also, your child can decline to participate in certain portions of the study or not answer certain questions. At any time during your child's participation, s/he has the right to discontinue participation without penalty. If you choose to not allow your student to participate please fill out and sign the refusal form attached to this form and send it in the self addressed pre-paid envelope by **April, 14 2006**. If you chose to allow your student to participate, please sign the bottom of this form and send it in the self addressed pre-paid envelope by **April, 14 2006**. *Each class will receive a pizza party upon delivery of 75% of the consent and/or refusal forms.*

If your child is selected, to show our appreciation for your child's participation, at the completion of the interview, s/he will receive a gift worth approximately $10. If you are interested in study results, you may request them at the completion of the study.

Every participant will be assigned a study ID number that will be used to protect the confidentiality of their answers. Only the ID number will appear on the interview and a list linking ID's to names will be kept in a secure location (a locked cabinet in the office of the investigator). Interview transcripts and audiotapes will be stored in a separate secure location (a locked cabinet in the lab of the investigator). Both locations require one key to enter the floor on which the room is located and a separate key to enter the room itself. Data will be stored on computers in the lab and office of the investigator. These computers require that a password be entered to open programs on the computer. Each lab member is designated a unique password. Only members of the research team have access to the lab or the computers on which data is stored. Participants will not be identifiable in any report of research findings. Research reports on this study will report group (rather than individual) findings, so no individual person will ever be identifiable. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Data will be retained for a minimum of five years in this secure location.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the primary investigator, NiCole Buchanan, Ph.D. by phone: (517) 355-7677 or e-mail: nbuchana@msu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing 48824.

I, _____, voluntarily agree to allow my child
(Print your name here)

_____ to participate in this interview.
(Print your child's name here)

_____ _____
(Please sign here) (Date)

APPENDIX C

Gender Bullying – Parent/Guardian Refusal Form

Parent/Guardian REFUSAL for Child Participation in Research

Project Title: Gendered Bullying

Researchers: NiCole Buchanan, Ph.D. Department of Psychology
Kristen Law, Department of Psychology

REFUSAL to Allow Minor Child to Participate:

I, _____, have read the description of this study and its
(Please print your name)
risks and benefits.

I do **NOT** consent to allow my minor child
_____ to participate in this research.
(Please print child's name)

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian signature Date

APPENDIX D

Gender Bullying – Parent/Guardian Reminder Letter

May 1, 2006

Dear Parent/Guardian!

As you may know Mary Helen Guest Elementary School is participating in a project in collaboration with researchers in the psychology department at Michigan State University. This project will explore our students' experiences of bullying at our school. Knowledge gained from this project will inform our future endeavors in addressing and preventing bullying at our school.

You should have received a letter in the mail a few weeks ago from Michigan State about this research. This mailing is comprised of a consent and refusal letter. In order for your child to participate, **read** the consent form attached to that letter and **sign and return** either the consent form or refusal form in the self addressed and postage paid envelope provided for you by **May, 8 2006**. Each class will receive a **pizza party** as soon as we receive 75% of the class's forms.

If you have any questions specifically about the project, or you need another letter mailed out to you, you can contact Kristen Law at 510-917-2389 or lawkrist@msu.edu (our MSU representative) OR Dr. Culbert.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to sharing the findings from this project with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

George Culbert, Ed.D.
Principal

Louanne Saenz
Counselor

APPENDIX E

Gendered Bullying – Youth Assent Form

This is a study to explore your ideas and thoughts on bullying in school. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do an interview lasting no more than an hour and a half. This interview will be taped for accuracy and the tapes will be destroyed when we are done with the study.

No one at your school will find out what you said in this interview, not other kids, teachers, or the principal.

There should be no harm to you for participating. In fact, students often appreciate our interest in their opinions concerning these issues.

Participation in this study is absolutely up to you. You may choose not to participate at all, if you do participate, you can decide not to answer certain questions or stop at any time.

To thank you for your help with our study, we will give you a small gift, worth approximately $10, at the end of the interview.

To keep your answers safe and private, everyone is given a number so their name is not on the interview. The paper that tells us which person has which number will be kept in a locked cabinet in our lab. We will keep your answers as safe and private as we are allowed to by the law.

Please keep a copy of this paper and give it to your parent/guardian.

I, _____, agree to participate in this interview.
(print your name here)

_____ _____
(please sign here) (date)

APPENDIX F

Gender Bullying – Final Interview Protocol
Adapted from Buchanan, N.

Areas of Inquiry	Protocol Questions and Probes
1. Overall feelings about school.	*To start off, I would like to know a little about your school.* 1) What is your favorite thing about your school? 2) What is your least favorite thing about your school? • [2]What don't you like about your school? 3) What do you think about your teacher this year? 4) How well do you get along with the kids you go to school with? 5) What do you like about the kids at your school? 6) What don't you like about the kids at your school?
2. How do students get bullied?	Have you ever heard of the word bullying? What does this word mean to you? *Now I would like to talk about the bullying that happens at your school. Remember you do not have to answer any question that you do not want to.* 7) How are students bullied in your school? • Who gets bullied? • How do kids bully other kids? • **Do girls bully other girls?** **(if yes) How do girls bully other girls?** • **Do boys bully girls?** **(if yes) How do boys bully girls?** • **Do girls bully boys?** **(if yes) How do girls bully boys?** • **Do boys bully other boys?** **(if yes) How do boys bully other boys?** *That was very interesting. Thank you for your answers. I would like to ask you a little more about how boys and girls get bullied. Sometimes boys are treated different than girls and girls are treated different than boys.* 8) Can you tell me how they are bullied the same? (if yes) how? 9) Can you tell me how boys and girls get bullied

[2] Probes in bold indicate those that should definitely be asked. Other probes listed can be used to seek additional information or to provide different ways to reword a question.

	differently? (if yes) How are they bullied differently? *Now I would like to talk about how boys and girls bully other students.* 10) Do boys and girls bully differently? (if yes) How do boys and girls bully differently? 11) Do they bully the same? (if yes) How? *Some students are teased about how it's better to be a boy/girl. This is an example of how some kids are bullied because they are a boy/girl.* 12) Does this happen in your school? (How?) • Has this ever happened to you? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens? *Students may also bully each other by saying that they can't do something because they are a boy/girl.* 13) Does this happen to students at your school? • Has this happened to you? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens? *Students might also be bullied because they act or look too much like a boy/girl (are too girlish or too boyish).* 14) Does this happen to students in your school? • Has this ever happened to you? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens? *Students sometimes get bullied because of their physical appearance. The next few questions will be about this kind of bullying.* 15) Do students ever get bullied at your school because of their body? • For example, the shape or development of their body? • Has this ever happened to you?

	16) Do students ever tease each other about the clothes they wear? • **What do they say?** • **For example, do students ever tease someone because their clothes are too loose? Too tight? Showing too much skin? Too girly/boyish?** • **Have you ever been bullied because of your clothes? What happened?** • **Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens?** *Some students also get teased about their hair or skin.* 17) Does this ever happen at your school? (if yes) How? For example, skin color and hair type. • Have you ever been teased about your hair? Skin? • Do people get in trouble for this? What happens? *Students also talk about getting teased or bullied because of who he/she "goes out with."* *For example, some students talk about who someone else is "going out with."* 18) Have you seen or heard this happen at your school? What happened? • Have you ever been teased about a person you might "go out with?" • Do people get in trouble for this? What happens? *Some students might get teased about what they might do with the other student they are "going out with." For example, holding hands/kissing.* 19) Have you ever seen or heard this happen at your school? What happened? • Has this ever happened to you? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens? *Thank you so much for all of this great information, it is really helpful! We have talked a little about some different types of bullying. Now, I would like to ask you about rumors or gossip that you might have heard.* 20) Do rumors ever get spread about who students are

	"going out with?" • For example, who someone might go out with? • Do rumors get spread about what they might do together? • What about people who are not "going out with anyone?" • Has anyone ever spread rumors about you? What about? • Do people get into trouble for spreading rumors? What happens? 21) Do students ever get called gay or lesbian at your school? • Provide alternative terms for gay/lesbian if necessary (e.g., lezzie, fag and dyke) • Has this ever happened to you? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens? *Sometimes students will write notes or graffiti about other students. They might do this in the bathroom or on desks.* 22) Does this happen at your school? What do students write about? • Has anyone ever written things about you that you did not like? For example, notes, or on walls, desks? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happened? *Sometimes students talk about other students putting their hands on someone when they did not want to be touched. Sometimes they are grabbed on their clothing, and sometimes they are touched on their body.* 23) While at school, have you ever seen or heard of another student's clothes being grabbed or pulled when they didn't want them to be? • Has anyone grabbed or pulled your clothing when you did not want them to? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens? 24) While at school, have you ever heard of another student being grabbed or touched on their body when they did not want to be?

	• Has anyone ever grabbed or touched you on the body when you did not want them to? What happened? • Do people get in trouble for doing this? What happens?
3. What is taught in schools about bullying?	*Thank you so much for sharing, you have been a great help. Before we begin the next section would you like to take a break?* *We just talked about the different ways kids are bullied and teased at your school. Now, I would like to talk to you about what is taught in your school about bullying and the rules that your school has about bullying.* 25) What have you been taught at school about bullying/harassment? • What about the types of bullying we discussed above? (for example, spreading rumors, writing graffiti, grabbing or touching someone else or their clothes) 26) As far as you know, does your school have rules about bullying? • **Could you tell me what you know about the rules?** • Are these rules for your classroom only, or are they for the whole school? • How do you know that these are the rules/How did you learn them? • Were you taught by a teacher/handbook/etc? 27) What are some behaviors that are considered bullying by your school? • How often does bullying happen at your school? 28) What are the punishments for bullying another student? • How often do kids get into trouble for bullying?
4. What happened after a bullying/harassing event?	*Great, thank you. Now, I am going to describe somethings that might have happened at your school or that could happen at your school. When I am done, I would like you to tell me what would happen next. Remember imagine that what I am telling you about happens at your school.* 29) Tony is hanging out before school starts for the day. Another boy decides to start calling him "gay" to be mean. Pretty soon it catches on and other boys start teasing him that he is gay. What happens next? • What would the teacher do?

	• What would other kids do? • What would the principal do? • In your opinion what would be the best way for the situation to be handled? I want to know how you would like things to happen. 30) Amy is waiting for the bus after school. The boy standing next to her decides to flip up her skirt. When he does this everyone can see Amy's underwear. What happens next? • What would the teacher do? • What would other kids do? • What would the principal do? • In your opinion what would be the best way for the situation to be handled? I want to know how you would like things to happen. 31) While the teacher is busy with something, one of the girls in Kevin's class starts tickling him. He doesn't like it and asks her to stop. She ignores him and keeps tickling. What happens? • What would the teacher do? • What would other kids do? • What would the principal do? • In your opinion what would be the best way for the situation to be handled? I want to know how you would like things to happen. 32) Marcie goes into the girls' bathroom and sees a joke about sex written on the wall. What happens next? • What would the teacher do? • What would other kids do? • What would the principal do? • In your opinion what would be the best way for the situation to be handled? I want to know how you would like things to happen.
5) What happens at schools after a student is bullied and/or harassed?	*Thank you, now I would like to ask you more questions about what happens at your school when kids get bullied?* 33) Who do kids talk to about getting bullied? • For example, a teacher, counselor, or principal? • Is there someone that kids are supposed to tell? • What does (name) do about the bullying? • How often do students at your school tell? • Have you ever reported? What happened when you told? • What do you think about how bullying is handled at

	your school? • Is it helpful, do you like it? 34) What do you think about your school's policy/rules about bullying? • Is it clear? • Do students understand it? • Is there anything that you can think of that the school should do to make the policy clearer or more helpful? *Now I am going to list some things that your school might have rules about. If you know that your school has these rules say yes, if you know that your school does not have these policies say no, and if you do not know say I don't know.* 35) Does your school have rules about… • Punching/hitting? • Stealing? • Calling names like "stupid?" • Teasing someone about their body shape (e.g., fatso, flat-chest)? • Teasing about clothing? • Teasing about hair or skin? • Teasing about "going out with" someone else? • Spreading rumors? • Calling someone gay or lesbian? • Unwanted touching of a students' body or clothes? • Writing graffiti/notes about other students?
6. What are students' ideas/opinions about bullying?	*That was extremely helpful, thank you so much! Lastly, I would like to take some time to find out a little about your ideas and opinions about bullying.* 36) What do you think would be the best way for a school to deal with bullying? 37) Why do you think bullying happens in school? 38) Are there any other things that happen that you think we should know about?

APPENDIX G

Gender Bullying – Final Coding Scheme

1. What are students overall feelings about school?
    a. Positive Feelings:
        i. Positive peer relations
        ii. Opportunities for social interaction
            1. Non-directed social time
            2. Directed social time
        iii. Opportunities for academic learning
        iv. Positive feelings toward faculty/Staff
    b. Negative Feelings:
        i. Negative peer relations
        ii. Courses
        iii. Hostile learning environment
        iv. Inconsistent adult authority

2. How are students harassed/bullied?
    a. Targets of bullying:
        i. Nonconforming/Socially Peripheral
            1. Gender Roles
            2. Physical Appearance
            3. Hobbies/friends
            4. Demeanor/behavior
            5. Ability
        ii. New students
        iii. Ethnic minorities
    b. What:
        i. Direct Harassment:
            1. Physical
            2. Verbal
                a. Threats/Intimidation
                b. Gossip/Spread rumors
                c. Name call
                d. Slander
            3. Nonverbal
                a. Threats/Intimidation
                b. Gestures
                c. Social exclusion
                    i. Same-sex
                    ii. Cross-sex
                d. Slander
                    i. Notes
                    ii. Graffiti

e. Block path
ii. Indirect Harassment:
1. Physical
2. Verbal
3. Nonverbal
a. Threats/Intimidation
b. Gestures

c. Frequency:
d. Where
i. Supervised/Structured-time
1. Organized classroom activities
2. Organized Games
ii. Unsupervised/Free-time
1. Unorganized classroom activities
2. Recess
3. Bus

e. Why:
i. To intimidate
ii. For self-promotion
1. Status
2. Reputation
iii. For self-assurance
iv. To retaliate
v. For collective Action
1. Bandwagon

3. What do children learn at school regarding bullying/harassment?
a. To self-manage
i. Evade
ii. Talk to/confront harasser

b. To solicit assistance
i. School official
ii. Peers
iii. Parents

c. Consequences
i. Punishment
ii. Affect on others

4. What happens at school after an action associated with bullying/harassment occurs?
a. Student response
i. Witnesses
1. Active
a. Provide support to victim
b. Provide support to bully/harasser
c. Provoke bully/harasser
d. Partake

2. Inactive
    a. On look
    b. Leave/Walk away

ii. Victims
1. Take action
    a. Report
    b. Retaliate
    c. Confront
2. Circumvent
    a. Walk away
    b. Ignore
    c. Situation avoidance
3. Seek peer solidarity
4. Emotional Consequences
    a. Sad
    b. Embarrassed
    c. Angry
    d. Sick (psychosomatic)
    e. Scared

iii. Bullies
1. Dodge rules
2. Seek peer support
3. Apologize/Truce

b. Staff/faculty/administrative response
i. Variable
1. Context
    a. During structured activities
    b. During unstructured activities
2. Punishment

ii. Active
iii. Inactive
iv. Ineffective
1. Unsuited punishments
2. Negligent
3. Unsuccessful

v. Effective

c. Frequency of disciplinary action?

5. <u>What are students' ideas/opinions about bullying/harassment?</u>
a. Definitions
i. Physical
ii. Verbal

b. Why peers bully
i. Retaliation
ii. Anger
iii. Self-gratification

    iv. Discrimination
c. Gender differences
d. Gender similarities
e. How school should handle bullying
    i. Take preventative measures
        1. Teach students to support each other
        2. Enhance rules
            a. Increase clarity of rules
            b. Develop new rules
            c. Increase students exposure to rules
    ii. Implement stronger discipline
    iii. Increase adult supervision/intervention
    iv. Teach de-escalation techniques
f. Loss of faith in system

APPENDIX H

TABLE 1

TYPE OF HARASSMENT

	# Experienced	# Segments
DIRECT VERBAL	**22**	**274**
Verbal – Threats/Intimidation	5	7
Gossip/Spread Rumors	21	58
Name Call	22	93
Slander	22	116
DIRECT PHYSICAL	**19**	**73**
DIRECT NONVERBAL	**19**	**71**
Threats/Intimidation	5	5
Gestures	5	8
Social exclusion	14	30
Slander (i.e., notes and graffiti)	16	25
Block Path	1	3
INDIRECT PHYSICAL	**3**	**3**
INDIRECT VERBAL	**3**	**5**
INDIRECT NONVERBAL	**1**	**2**

TABLE 2

LOCATION OF HARASSMENT

	# Experienced	# Segments
STRUCTURED TIME	**14**	**20**
Organized classroom activities	13	18
Organized games	2	2
UNSTRUCTURED FREE-TIME	**17**	**40**
Unorganized classroom activities	6	7
Recess	14	19
Bus	8	14

TABLE 3

TARGET CHARACTERISTICS

	# Experienced	# Segments
NONCONFORMING/SOCIALLY PERIPHERAL	**22**	**186**
Gender Roles	20	74
Physical Appearance	19	79
Hobbies	3	4
Demeanor/Behavior	9	13
Ability	9	16
NEW STUDENT	**3**	**4**
ETHNIC MINORITY	**6**	**7**

TABLE 4

GENDER OF PERPETRATOR AND VICTIM

	# Experienced	**# Segments**
BOY	**22**	**149**
Boy to Boy	14	60
Boy to Girl	18	89
GIRL	**22**	**61**
Girl to Girl	13	42
Girl to Boy	15	19

TABLE 5

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

	# Experienced	# Segments
GENDER DIFFERNECES	**20**	**60**
Boy	9	22
Girl	11	38
GENDER SIMILARITEIS	**16**	**28**
Boy	8	14
Girl	8	14

TABLE 6

TYPE OF HARASSMENT X LOCATION OF HARASSMENT

	Structured Time	**UnstructuredTime**
DIRECT VERBAL	**29**	**24**
Verbal – Threats/Intimidation	4	2
Gossip/Spread Rumors	4	0
Name Call	17	14
Slander	4	8
DIRECT PHYSICAL	**14**	**19**
DIRECT NONVERBAL	**18**	**21**
Threats/Intimidation	1	3
Gestures	2	0
Social exclusion	4	11
Slander (i.e., notes and graffiti)	10	3
Block Path	1	4
INDIRECT PHYSICAL	**1**	**1**
INDIRECT VERBAL	**1**	**2**
INDIRECT NONVERBAL	**1**	**1**

TABLE 7

TYPE OF HARASSMENT X NON-CONFORMING/SOCIALLY PERPIPHERAL TARGET TRAITS

	Gender Roles	**Physical Appearance**	**Hobbies**	**Demeanor/ Behavior**	**Ability**
DIRECT VERBAL	**36**	**62**	**2**	**10**	**13**
Threats/Intimidation	4	7	0	1	4
Gossip/Spread Rumors	1	11	1	5	2
Name Call	17	27	0	3	4
Slander	14	17	1	1	3
DIRECT PHYSICAL	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**
DIRECT NONVERBAL	**18**	**1**	**0**	**2**	**3**
Threats/Intimidation	4	0	0	0	0
Gestures	0	0	0	0	0
Social exclusion	14	0	0	0	2
Slander (i.e., notes and graffiti)	0	1	0	2	1
Block Path	0	0	0	0	0
INDIRECT PHYSICAL	**2**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**0**
INDIRECT VERBAL	**5**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**0**
INDIRECT NONVERBAL	**2**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**

TABLE 8

TARGET CHARACTERISTICS X GENDER OF PERPETRATOR AND GENDER OF VICTIM

	Boy to Boy	**Boy to Girl**	**Girl to Girl**	**Girl to Boy**
NONCONFORMING/ SOCIALLY PERIPHERAL	**29**	**55**	**23**	**22**
Gender Roles	5	31	1	14
Physical Appearance	14	17	14	6
Hobbies	2	1	1	0
Demeanor/Behavior	3	2	3	2
Ability	5	4	4	0
NEW STUDENT	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
ETHNIC MINORITY	**2**	**4**	**1**	**1**

TABLE 9

TYPE OF HARASSMENT X GENDER OF PERPETRATOR AND GENDER OF VICTIM

	Boy to Boy	**Boy to Girl**	**Girl to Girl**	**Girl to Boy**
DIRECT VERBAL	**31**	**54**	**28**	**11**
Verbal – Threats/Intimidation	5	1	0	0
Gossip/Spread Rumors	2	5	14	4
Name Call	17	32	11	6
Slander	7	16	3	1
DIRECT PHYSICAL	**26**	**17**	**5**	**4**
DIRECT NONVERBAL	**3**	**18**	**9**	**4**
Threats/Intimidation	1	1	0	0
Gestures	0	2	0	0
Social exclusion	2	13	4	4
Slander (i.e., notes and graffiti)	0	2	5	0
Block Path	0	0	0	0
INDIRECT PHYSICAL	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**
INDIRECT VERBAL	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**
INDIRECT NONVERBAL	**1**	**1**	**0**	**0**

TABLE 10

FACULTY AND STAFF RESPONSE TO PEER HARASSMENT

	# Experienced	# Segments
VARIABLE	**14**	**21**
ACTIVE	**22**	**110**
INACTIVE	**21**	**71**
INEFFECTIVE	**18**	**55**
Unsuited punishment	5	8
Negligent	9	16
Unsuccessful	15	31
EFFECTIVE	**12**	**29**

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