GIFTED CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION ABOUT BULLYING:

UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation

by

RACHEL LEAH JUMPER

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Katherine I. Miller
Committee Members,	Michael Stephenson
	Barbara Sharf
	Joyce Juntune
Head of Department,	Richard Street

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ABSTRACT

Gifted Children's Communication about Bullying: Understanding the Experience.

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Rachel Leah Jumper, B.A., Texas A&M University; M.S., Auburn University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Katherine Miller

The purpose of this study was to examine gifted middle school children's communication about bullying. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, differences between gifted and non-gifted children regarding amount and type of bullying experienced were examined, as well as specifically exploring gifted children's communication about bullying.

A total of 344 students, 145 boys and 199 girls, participated in the quantitative survey. These children completed The Olweus Revised Bully/Victim Scale. Children completing the survey were asked questions regarding the types, amounts, locations, and disclosure of bullying. These responses were analyzed through chi-square tests and analysis of variance.

A total of 26 gifted children, 13 boys and 13 girls, participated in the focus group/interview. These children were asked to answer questions regarding what bullying consists of when it occurs, who it happens to, and who they talk to about bullying. The data from the focus groups was transcribed and a grounded approach was used to discover themes.

Quantitative analysis revealed that gifted children reported higher rates of weekly bullying than other children. Gifted children reported experiencing higher amounts of name calling than other children, but there are no other differences regarding different forms of bullying. Gifted children were not more likely to tell adults about bullying, but were more likely to disclose bullying to peers than other children. Finally, it was found that children having at least one good friend were less likely to be bullied.

Qualitative results led to the emergence of several themes discussed by gifted children. Gifted children reported on the complexities of bullying, the importance of adults in preventing the occurrence of bullying, the likelihood of people who are "different" being bullied, and the internal sadness of bullies. Additionally, trust emerged as an important theme for telling others about bullying. Parents, teachers, and friends were all seen as possible avenues for disclosure, but each had advantages and disadvantages.

Results highlight the importance of recognizing gifted children as particularly vulnerable to bullying. Additionally, the present study reveals the importance of adults in preventing bullying, as well as the critical role peers can play in buffering the effects of bullying.

DEDICATION

To those I love most, Jack, Dana, Rebecca, Dan, Elizabeth, Matt, and Emily.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In today's world, we increasingly see and hear about acts of violence by children brought on as a result of victimization. School shootings, television, news shows, and books have all given rise to the acknowledgement that bullying occurs in our schools at somewhat alarming rates. One study of schools found that between forty and eighty percent of children in public schools are victims of bullying with ten to fifteen percent of these experiencing "chronic victimization" (Juvonen & Graham, 2001). The present study will examine middle schoolers' communication patterns about bullying and will focus specifically on children who have been victims of bullying. A victim, for this dissertation project, is defined as someone who is exposed to bullying behaviors, and receives feedback from peers that he or she is not valued and accepted (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003).

Bullying in schools usually does not occur in private, but rather is a public occurrence, which can lead children to experience humiliation in front of their friends and peers (Leary, et al., 2003). While some adults express the view that bullying is simply part of childhood (Clarke, Kitzinger & Potter, 2004; Simmons, 2002), research shows that bullying can lead to lasting negative effects on the child including depression,

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This dissertation follows the style of Psychology in the Schools.

continued victimization, drug use, and aggression (Ivarsson, Broberg, Aridsson &Gillberg, 2005; Simmons, 2002; Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998; Sullivan, Farrell & Kliewer, 2006).

While bullying can occur among all groups of children regardless of age, sex, class or religious affiliation, one group of children who may be particularly vulnerable to victimization is gifted children (Cross, 2001; Passmore, 2001; Wallace, 1999). While there is no direct research supporting the proposition that gifted students are more vulnerable to the effects of being bullied, there is research showing that students who are "different" in some way are more likely to face bullying (Kohut, 2007). These students include children who are considered weak, geeky, or overweight (Kohut, 2007). Additionally, a study conducted to examine children with special needs found that children who had a special need were significantly more likely to report being bullied (Whitney, Smith, & Thompson, 1994). This study found that children with special needs were also bullied more frequently than their peers who were considered "mainstream" (Whitney, et al., 1994). Because giftedness is likely to be perceived as a difference by students, and because giftedness is often considered to be a "special need" by schools and family, it is likely that gifted students might be particularly prone to being victims of bullying. To extend research that points to this likelihood, the present study will focus specifically on gifted children to determine if differences that exist in their experiences with bullying are similar to those of other non-mainstream children.

In addition to their likelihood of being bullied, it is possible that gifted children may respond differently to the experience of bullying than their non-gifted peers. One

theory of why gifted children may be particularly susceptible to the negative effects associated with victimization is that they have what Dabrowski labels "overexcitabilities" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977). Overexcitabilities "represent expanded awareness and a heightened capacity to respond to stimuli of various types" (Silverman, 2000, p.13). There are five overexcitabilities described by Dabrowski: psychomotor, sensual, imaginational, intellectual, and emotional (Silverman, 2000). Gifted students' heightened awareness, especially the imaginational and emotional overexcitabilities, could potentially lead to greater sensitivity to, and different perceptions of, bullying behaviors than that experienced by non-gifted children.

In addition to having overexcitabilities, gifted children are noted for their interest in talking with adults (Ruf, 2005). Because gifted children are able to grasp the subtleties of language earlier than their peers, and often have more advanced senses of humor, these children often enjoy conversations with adults (Ruf, 2005). In fact, gifted children have been found to relate well to adults with whom they share interests (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Because gifted children may be more likely to communicate with adults than their non-gifted peers, a gifted child may have unique ways of talking about bullying and coping with being a victim. However, gifted children also exemplify the trait of perfectionism, or wanting to do everything right and this characteristic may hinder their disclosure of information about problems (Schuler, 2002). Regardless of whether gifted students are more or less likely to communicate about their experiences with bullying, it is probable that the unique characteristics of this population will affect

their communication patterns in ways that distinguish them from the mainstream population of students.

While there are multiple studies on bullying in middle schools and junior high schools (e.g., Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004; Berdondini & Smith, 1996; Dake, Price & Telljohann, 2003; Juvonen, Nishna, & Graham, 2000), studies focusing on gifted students are sparse. At the time of this writing, only two studies had expressly examined gifted adolescents and bullying (Peterson & Ray, 2006a; Peterson & Ray, 2006b). The present study seeks to further our knowledge regarding gifted children's experiences with, and communication patterns about, being bullied in schools. Additionally, for many years, articles about the gifted have used both Dabrowski's overexcitabilities and perfectionism as theories to explain why gifted children differ from their peers (e.g., Gust-Brey & Cross, 1999; Weisse, 1990). However, few studies using these concepts have examined large samples of children in public schools to determine if gifted children report experiences different from other children. The present study seeks to help fill this gap and to test the proposition that gifted children may be at higher risks for negative outcomes from, or greater sensitivity to, bullying in public schools.

The following review of literature will: 1) define what it means to be gifted through both quantitative and qualitative definitions, 2) discuss why victimization in schools is more than a natural playground ritual, 3) examine why gifted children are an important and overlooked group in the research on bullying and may have characteristics that make their bullying experiences unique, 4) look at why disclosure is believed to be important, and 5) examine if gifted children have specific communicative strategies to

help with disclosure. This review of literature will lead to the proposal of two hypotheses and four research questions regarding the experience of bullying and communication about that experience by gifted middle school children.

Review of Literature

Conceptualization of Giftedness

One of the most important issues in the field of gifted research is defining what "giftedness" means. While a term like giftedness might at first glance seem easy to define, a brief look at the current research shows that there are multiple ways to view giftedness, and that scholars within the field define and focus on many aspects of giftedness in their research. The following look at conceptualizing giftedness will include several different scholars in the field of giftedness who have specific ideas of what it means to "be gifted." Following an examination of these scholars and their ideas on giftedness, an explanation from the Columbus Group that shows promise of promoting convergence among these many ways of viewing giftedness will be discussed and defended.

Definitions of Giftedness

Defining giftedness is central to the study of giftedness and to gifted education, and a clear conception of giftedness is essential to those who study, educate, and parent gifted children (Miller, 2008). Without understanding what we mean when we call children "gifted", there is no way to understand the outcomes we find. There are many scholars who have advanced research on giftedness through the years. These scholars have each made important contributions to the field of giftedness, and have moved the

field forward in understanding the unique characteristics of giftedness. In 1926, Terman wrote about gifted people from childhood through adulthood and used a definition of giftedness that called for people to be in the top one percent of intellectual level when measured with the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. Most current theories broaden this definition of giftedness that relies solely on an individual's IQ score. Today, while some scholars continue to view giftedness as the very traditional intelligence quotient, others broaden the idea of intelligence (and hence giftedness) to include more than an IQ score. A variety of ways to define intelligence, and ways of viewing what it means to be intelligent, can be found in scholars more current than Terman.

Of those who have broadened the view of giftedness, there are a few notable scholars whose works have influenced the way that giftedness is understood and studied. Three of these scholars are Sternberg, Gardner, and Renzulli. A focus on these scholars was chosen because each adds more to the conceptualization of giftedness than traditional ideas of IQ alone. The theories of giftedness of each of these scholars will be briefly discussed. Each of these individuals has distinct views on giftedness, and uniquely adds to the discussion on conceptualizing what it means to be "gifted."

Sternberg. Sternberg's theory on giftedness examines the ways in which culture defines "giftedness". This perspective asks the following question of a society: "a physicist who is considered Number 1 in the country by his peers or another panel of judges is considered gifted, whereas the criminal who is Number 1 on the FBI's most wanted list is not?" (Sternberg & Zhang, 1995, p.88). Sternberg's theory focuses not just on the abilities of the gifted, but on conceptual processes – the ways that the gifted

think – that make these individuals different from others in the population (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1993). In particular, Sternberg introduced the idea of a triarchic view of giftedness.

In the triarchic view of giftedness, Sternberg posits that all products from gifted individuals have fallen into three categories: analytical, creative, or practical (Sternberg, 2000). In a study looking at the ways that schools and individuals define giftedness, he developed the "Pentagonal Implicit Theory of Giftedness" which discusses five criteria that define how people think about giftedness. His five criteria are the excellence criterion, the rarity criterion, the productivity criterion, the demonstrability criterion, and the value criterion (Sternberg & Zhang, 1995). In this view the extent to which a group or individual believes that giftedness is based on one of these criteria will affect the way giftedness is defined and identified.

In his later work, Sternberg uses another triarchic model of giftedness in which wisdom, intelligence, and creativity are synthesized (Sternberg, 2003). Using this model, wisdom, intelligence, and creativity are all necessary for true giftedness. As he writes, "without a synthesis of these three attributes, someone can be a decent contributor to society, and perhaps even a good one, but never a great one" (Sternberg, 2003, p. 112). In Sternberg's theory, truly gifted people have creativity, intelligence, and wisdom that work successfully together.

Gardner. Gardner's conceptualization of giftedness is explained by a person's ability in one or more of what he terms, "multiple intelligences". According to his theory, there are at least seven intelligences. These intelligences are linguistic, musical,

logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Blythe & Gardner, 1990). Gardner later argued for two additional intelligences, the naturalist intelligence and more recently the existential intelligence (Gardner, 1998).

Gardner explains that a true understanding of multiple intelligences will result in a completely different way of thinking about children and different approaches to the education of gifted children (Gardner, 1995). Specifically, this approach suggests that children should be offered multiple ways to learn which will utilize each of the intelligences. This view of intelligence promotes a "hands on" and varied curriculum that allows children to learn about subjects from a variety of projects (Blythe & Gardner, 1990). Gardner and Moran (2006) write that the theory of multiple intelligences defines intelligence as, "a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture" (p. 227). Gardner's theory opposes more traditional views of intelligence that describe it as merely an IQ score and broadens thinking so that there are many ways of being viewed as intelligent (Gardner & Moran, 2006). In Gardner's theory, then, giftedness would be viewed differently and more broadly than in other views of giftedness, including a focus on the individual's unique characteristics.

Renzulli. In his research, Joseph Renzulli describes a "three ring conception" of giftedness (Renzulli, 2002). In this model, intelligence can be viewed as general (capacity to process information) or specific (ability to acquire knowledge) (Renzulli, 2002). According to this model, "above average ability will be used to describe the upper ranges of performance or potential in either or both general or specific ability"

(Renzulli, 2002, p. 71). This view of ability results in the three ring conception of giftedness with the three parts being above average ability, creativity, and task commitment (Renzulli, 2002). Renzulli's writings explain that above average ability cannot be measured through IQ tests. Giftedness, according to this model, cannot be explained by any one single criterion. Instead, he formulates a model illustrating giftedness as "an interaction among three clusters of traits-above average but not necessarily superior abilities, task commitment, and creativity" (Renzulli, 2002, p. 72).

Joseph Renzulli also has conducted a great deal of research focusing on the ways in which we educate gifted children. Renzulli strongly discourages labeling gifted students, and promotes what he terms, "school wide enrichment" (Renzulli, 2005). In this model, there is no testing for giftedness; instead, schools buy curriculum that is implemented throughout the school (Renzulli, 2005). His work is popular among school districts, and his influence is seen in the fact that many states adopt definitions based on his research. For example, Texas' definition of giftedness is based on Renzulli's research. The Texas definition, used officially by each of the school systems in the current research project, states:

> gifted and talented means a child or youth who performs at or shows potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. These students may:
>
> - exhibit high performance in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area
> - possess an unusual capacity for leadership; or

- excel in a specific academic field." (74th legislature of the State of

Texas, Chapter 29, Subchapter D, Section 29.121) (Texas Education

Agency, 2000).

As can be noted from this definition, giftedness may be either "schoolhouse-giftedness"

where students excel at school lessons, or giftedness may be "creative-productive"

endeavors where giftedness is creative and artistic (Miller, 2008).

Research done by Renzulli and his research teams posits that their school wide

enrichment model (SEM) is an appropriate way to educate gifted children without the

effects of labels or pull-out programs for the gifted (Renzulli & Reis, 1994). In this form

of education, the development of the gifted is not emphasized as much as the

development of the gifts and talents of all students (Renzulli, 1998). Renzulli writes that

the SEM model "reflects a democratic ideal that accommodates the full range of

individual differences in the entire student population, and it opens doors to

programming models that develop the potentials of many at-risk students" (Renzulli,

1998, p. 106).

While the approaches of Sternberg, Gardner, and Renzulli each add to the study

of giftedness, they do not all translate into practical or effective educational programs.

In considering ways to implement programs for gifted students, schools, researchers, and

educators may choose specific definitions of giftedness, which will in turn influence

both the ways children are identified as well as the ways that children are taught when in

school. Because these specific definitions of giftedness have often been seen as limited,

none of them are recommended to define giftedness in the present study. An alternative

definition developed by a multi-disciplinary group will be put forth as the preferred

definition for the present study. The following sections examine the definition of

giftedness used for the present study, as well as consider the different ways in which

schools may choose to identify gifted children.

Defining Giftedness with the Columbus Group

While there are many ways scholars have defined giftedness, the present study

selected one definition that will be used for "giftedness" through the rest of this project.

This definition was created by an interdisciplinary group of scholars, educators, and

parents, and is successful in integrating various ways of viewing giftedness. For the

purposes of this study, giftedness is defined in accordance with the following definition

developed by the Columbus Group:

> Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities
>
> and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that
>
> are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher
>
> intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly
>
> vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in
>
> order for them to develop normally (The Columbus Group, 1991).

The Columbus Group was a group of parents, teachers, researchers, and theorists who

met in Columbus, Ohio to discuss giftedness and attempt to define giftedness in a way

that could be used effectively by educators, researchers, school systems, and parents.

This group sought to emphasize the unique qualities of this population of children. This

is not to say that gifted students are better or worse than other groups, but rather that

they are different than their peers and therefore face different issues (Schuler, 1999). Today, this definition is widely used in the literature on gifted children and brings a qualitative and experiential focus to definitions that in the past were often solely based on IQ scores. While definitions of giftedness are important and carry great weight to the study of giftedness, the definition is only part of a larger process. Indeed, once a school decides how it will define giftedness, it is then faced with the task of identifying who is eligible for the gifted programs offered.

Identification of the Gifted

Identification of giftedness is an ongoing issue in the field of gifted education, and is often one of the most controversial issues in gifted programs across the country (Borland, 2008). In an essay on identification, James H. Borland (2008) writes that "the bulk of research on the identification of gifted students is, probably of necessity, tautological. In logic, a tautology is a statement that is true by its own definition" (p. 269-270). Therefore, how an individual or a school district defines giftedness will determine how gifted students are identified (if they are identified at all). Delisle and Galbraith (2002) put it bluntly, "no definition, no program" (p. 17). As was discussed previously, there are multiple ways to conceptualize giftedness, and this leads to multiple thoughts on the appropriate way for schools to identify their gifted students. In today's schools, a discussion of identification of giftedness will almost always include both traditional IQ methods of identification, as well as the multiple new "alternative methods" being used to identify gifted students.

Using IQ Scores to Identify the Gifted

Part of The Columbus Group (1991) definition of giftedness acknowledges the "advanced cognitive abilities" of gifted children. Because gifted children are known to have these advanced cognitive abilities, one of the most common and easiest ways that giftedness is identified is through an "intelligence quotient" commonly known as an IQ score (Silverman, 2000). While this method of identifying children is often criticized, it can be a helpful and seemingly straightforward method to evaluate which students in a school district are gifted. IQ scores give schools a quantifiable indicator of giftedness and are sometimes preferred by schools because of their numerical nature. However, IQ tests require trained counselors to administer and read the scores (VanTassel-Baska & Baska, 2000).

Silverman (1994) points out that when using IQ scores to determine needs of children, federal and state governments find students who fall two standard deviations <u>below</u> the mean to be so statistically different from the average that mandates are developed to protect them through the provision of additional programs and services. However, gifted students who are just as statistically different from the "norm" are not given the same concern or educational changes (Silverman, 1994). Despite the fact that there are not governmental mandates regarding differential educational opportunity or services for gifted students, The Columbus Group (1991) makes a point to note that modification is required by parents, teachers and counselors in order for normal development of gifted children to occur.

IQ scores can be helpful in determining which students need modifications in learning. Scholars like Nancy Robinson (2008) and Deborah Ruf (2005) have examined the usefulness of using IQ scores in identification of the gifted. Robinson (2008) points out that traditional standardized testing for giftedness can be useful and can successfully identify gifted students. While she says that there can be no test that is always effective in identifying gifted students, IQ scores and other standardized performance tests (e.g., Scholastic Aptitude Test, state tests of student performance) do, in fact, correlate with performance of gifted students. This, she says, points to the fact that while there will always be some imperfections; standardized tests are the most effective way to identify intelligent students in our schools. She also argues that other measures used to determine giftedness have been "found wanting" (p. 164). Robinson (2008) points to the fact that IQ tests are seen by large groups of educators and parents as an effective measurement of giftedness and have been proven through research to be successful predictors of performance among children of above average intelligence.

Deborah Ruf (2005) further argues for the importance of intelligence scores in the understanding of asynchrony among the gifted. Asynchrony is the difference between a child's intellectual development and a child's physical and social development (Silverman, 2000). Linda Silverman (2000) gives the example of a five year old child who sees a horse through the eyes of an eight year old with detail and understanding yet cannot take clay and replicate the horse the way he or she sees it in his or her mind. This exemplifies the frustration caused by asynchrony in intelligence and physical ability in a gifted child.

Conceptually, the higher the IQ score, the greater the asynchrony the child will experience (Ruf, 2005). Ruf uses IQ scores to divide the gifted into five levels of giftedness. In this view, children with an IQ score from 120-141+ are considered gifted. Children with scores from 120-129 are thought to be moderately gifted and are in the 90th-98th percentiles, those with an IQ score of 130-135 are highly gifted and are in the 98th-99th percentiles, scores from 136-140 are exceptionally gifted and are in the 98th-99th percentiles, and those with IQ scores of 141+ are exceptionally to profoundly gifted and are in the 99th percentile of the population (Ruf, 2005). While these scores seem to overlap, Ruf is careful to note that this is due "to the limitations of current limitations of current IQ tests" (p. 51). In using IQ scores in this manner, Ruf (2005) shows how even among IQ scores, there are differences in the level of giftedness we can expect from the students. For Ruf (2005), IQ scores fulfill a useful role in understanding the complexity of giftedness and the differences in asynchrony among gifted children. Additionally, she makes the argument that not all students scoring above 120 on an IQ test will need the same type curriculum from the school system.

While IQ scores may be commonly used for determining who should and who should not be in gifted programs, and there is scholarly support for their usefulness, the tests themselves have come under scrutiny in recent years. One issue that often arises around the use of IQ scores is the under-representation of minorities in gifted education. Low scores on IQ tests often prevent minority children from being identified as gifted. Indeed, minority students are often identified as learning disabled as a result of IQ scores in non-representative tests of intelligence (Ford, 2008). Despite the fact that writers of

standardized tests have attempted to take out all "culturally biased" questions, scholars like Donna Ford (2008) point out that culture will affect the way children read an exam, as well as the way they answer the questions. Ford writes that traditional IQ exams have "served as gatekeepers for diverse students" (2008, p. 123). It has also been noted that children from economically disadvantaged families are at risk for being overlooked by the traditional IQ score method of identifying gifted children. However, this concern is also connected to racial diversity as the majority of children in poverty are from non-white households (Douglas-Hall & Koball, 2006). Some scholars (e.g., VanTassel-Baska, 1998) suggest that when using traditional IQ means of identifying gifted children, the scores of children from economically disadvantaged homes should be assessed with less strict cut-off points.

While IQ scores provide a quantitative method to test large groups of students to show teachers and administrators who should be in gifted classes, many scholars argue that IQ scores keep diverse students out of gifted programs, and that IQ scores alone are not enough to determine giftedness. Because of this sentiment, alternative assessments have gained attention in schools, though these alternatives are still not as widely used as IQ scores.

Alternative Assessments of Giftedness

Alternative assessments to determine giftedness are becoming more widely used in schools. Traditional testing methods have been called into question due to the fact that when only traditional IQ tests are used for identification, significant numbers of gifted minority students are not identified (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007). The under

representation of minorities has led researchers and scholars to point out that when

multiple assessments of giftedness are used with the purpose of *inclusion* and not

exclusion, they are an effective tool in successfully identifying a higher number of gifted

minority children (Robinson, et al. 2007). Additionally, as the previously described

definition of giftedness points out, IQ alone does not define the full conceptual range of

giftedness.

Despite the apparent advantages of multiple assessments, Tonya Moon (2008)

points out that these alternatives are often viewed negatively by teachers because of

teacher attitudes about intelligence and the time required to administer alternative

assessments. There are many assessments schools can employ to identify gifted

students. These assessments involve information from multiple sources including

parents, teachers, and peers (Robinson, et al., 2007; VanTassel-Baska, 2007). Today,

many schools do not use only one way of testing for giftedness, instead, they "continue

to adopt identification procedures that attempt to balance testing with more observational

data sources such as teacher recommendations and peer or parent inventories"

(VanTassel-Baska & Baska, 2000, p. 194).

Teacher identification. Teachers are in an excellent position to identify special

needs children. While many schools use teacher observation for the identification of

gifted children, there are some issues that should be considered. Renzulli (2004) points

out that teachers may be more likely to pick children who are "schoolhouse gifted"

rather than creatively gifted. This means that teacher nominations may over-represent

children who are good test-takers and turn homework in on time rather than those

children who actually differ in thinking ability (Renzulli, 2004). In one study, social competence (ability to get along with friends) and task orientation (ability to complete school tasks) was a greater predictor of children's teacher based nomination for gifted programs than was a child's ability for creative thought (Curby, Rudasill, Rimm-Kaufman, & Konold, 2008). While there may be some negatives of teacher identification, other scholars point to the fact that teachers are uniquely able to speak regarding the quality of a child's work and his or her ability to think creatively. Further, teachers spend the most time with the children and, "presumably know them better than other educational personnel" (VanTassel-Baska & Baska, 2000, p. 182). Because teachers are often used as an alternative source for identification, they are an important part of the gifted identification process regardless of possible biases in their recommendations.

One example of teacher assessment of giftedness is the portfolio approach. When using this approach, teachers provide children with activities that will encourage creative thinking and then make recommendations based on the products the child produces (Johnsen, 2007). Joseph Renzulli and Carolyn Callahan (2007) describe an alternative teacher based method of identifying giftedness that they term "product assessment." In this form of analysis, the teacher creates tasks for the whole class which are evaluated with a structured rubric. These rubrics then allow the teacher to make decisions about the creativity of the products produced by the child (Renzulli & Callahan, 2007). While teachers are a convenient source of information on children's

ability, parents and peers may also be able to add to the identification process in ways that teachers and IQ exams cannot, making them an additional source of identification.

Parents and peers. Less common than teacher identification is the use of parents and peers for identification of the gifted. Parents are often able to provide insights into the child that help provide a greater understanding of the child's overall abilities. Robinson, et al. (2007), write that parents are "notoriously accurate in identifying their children's abilities" (p. 7). Some schools have begun to take advantage of this accuracy, and utilize parents in their identification process of the gifted. Parents may nominate children for gifted programs and keep portfolios of their children's work.

Finally, peers can often provide a realistic view of their classmates' abilities when asked in an appropriate manner. Peer nominations often ask students to rate other children on a variety of topics including their general intelligence and creativity (Cunningham, Callahan, Plucker, Roberson, & Rapkin, 1998). When used with other forms of identification, peers can be a successful way to identify children who exemplify creative thinking that might not otherwise be noticed (Cunningham, et al. 1998).

As is clear in modern practices, there is not one standard way in which all schools identify their gifted. Rather, a variety of methods are adopted, either alone or in combination. IQ scores are a common way that provides educators with a seemingly less subjective mode of identification. While IQ scores have been the most common and most widely used method of identification for years, schools and researchers are realizing the importance and value of using alternative identification methods including teacher, peer, and parent identification of gifted and exceptional children.

Being Different

As Jim Delisle and Judy Galbraith (2002) point out, gifted children are different, and they know it! This can lead to misunderstandings and frustration for the children, teachers, and peers. Delisle and Galbraith (2002) list what the call "The Eight Great Gripes" of gifted children. These are: (1) No one explains what being gifted is all about—it's kept a big secret. (2) School is too easy and too boring. (3) Parents, teachers, and friends expect us to be perfect all the time. (4) Friends who really understand us are few and far between. (5) Kids often tease us about being smart. (6) We feel overwhelmed by the number of things we can do in life. (7) We feel different and alienated. (8) We worry about world problems and feel helpless to do anything about them (p. 155). Most of what today's gifted youth are worrying about are things that gifted people have worried about since giftedness became a topic of study, "self understanding and acceptance, social meaningfulness, and the desire to learn and succeed in life" (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002, p. 154). As has been shown, the needs of giftedness, and the ability to understand those needs, can lead to difficulties for children who have been identified as gifted. Despite the fact that giftedness is often seen by teachers and parents as a positive trait for children to possess, it can lead to struggles for children trying to understand their differences (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Silverman, 2000).

Essential to the present study is not only an understanding of giftedness, but also an understanding of bullying. Additionally, it is necessary to look specifically at how giftedness and bullying interact. While many in the general population believe that

being gifted means having an easier time, Linda Silverman (2000) writes, "To the uninformed, giftedness may seem a sort of special privilege, but to the gifted individual, it often feels like a distinct disadvantage" (p. 3). The fact that gifted children are so different from their peers (and realize these differences) may play a large role in both the amount of bullying gifted children experience in schools, and the ways in which they handle and react to bullying. In order to understand if gifted children experience bullying differently, the term bullying must first be defined and understood.

Defining Bullying

Kohut (2007) writes that "If the legend is true that Eskimos have dozens of different names for snow depending upon its characteristics, then bullying is similar to snow. In the end, snow is cold, wet, white, and falls from the sky. Bullying is harmful, humiliating, and victimizing behavior that causes emotional, social, and physical pain for another person." (p. 19). In the end, the point remains that bullying can be difficult to define and even harder to see. In recent research, the context in which bullying has been studied has been varied and includes bullying in prisons (e.g., Wood, Moir, & James, 2009), and the workplace (e.g., Hader, 2009; Khalil, 2009; Lester, 2009). However, in the present study, the focus will be on bullying in the school context. Rivers, Duncan, and Besag (2007) write that while scholars may disagree on one specific definition, there are common factors among most researchers about what is considered bullying. These factors include that the bullying occurs repeatedly over time, and that there is an imbalance of power. Beyond these areas of agreement, there are many ways in which bullying is viewed by researchers and educators. What is recognized, however, is that

no matter how we define bullying, it has real and sometimes deadly consequences in

schools (Garrett, 2003). In recent years, bullying has come to the attention of the news

media, parents, and educators. Highly publicized incidences of school violence and the

recently introduced concept of "cyber bullying" have kept bullying at the forefront of

America's public consciousness in recent years (Kohut, 2007). For example, in May of

2009, the popular talk show, "Oprah" did a story on bullying following the suicides of

two boys who were bullied in school. Additionally, this same broadcast addressed cyber

bullying and the pain that it causes (Winfrey, 2009). The recognition of bullying and its

consequences in popular culture is an important factor that keeps bullying in the public

eye. While popular culture explores bullying, academics continue to examine the

subject as well by considering the parameters that define bullying, especially in the

school setting.

What Is Bullying?

Despite the fact that there are many and varied definitions of bullying, as

researchers, we have a need to define constructs in order to enhance the clarity of our

scholarship and share it with others. Today, a commonly quoted definition of bullying

comes from Dan Olweus and his studies of bullying that began in the 1970s. Olweus

(1993) defines bullying as, "A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed,

repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons.

Negative action is when a person intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another

person, through physical contact, or in other ways" (p. 3). The present study uses

Olweus' definition of bullying both for the purposes of definition in the literature

review, and for definition for the students completing the survey of bullying that Olweus

and others have used in ongoing research. Olweus is careful to distinguish between

"teasing" and "bullying," stating on the survey, "we <u>don't call it bullying</u> when the

teasing is done in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is <u>not bullying</u> when two students

of about equal strength or power argue or fight" (Olweus, 1996b, p. 2). Olweus provides

a general definition of being a victim of bullying as someone who is treated negatively

repeatedly by his or her peers. While a general definition of bullying and victimization

are important, it is also useful to examine different types of bullying, as well as the

different ways in which children may be involved in bullying, in order to understand the

process of bullying with greater detail.

Different Types of Bullying

For the present study, bullying will be discussed as being classified into two

main groups: overt (direct or physical) and covert (indirect or relational) (e.g., Harris &

Petrie, 2003; Rivers, et al., 2007). Van der wal, de Wit, and Hirasing (2003) explain that

direct bullying includes physical and verbal bullying including "kicking, hitting,

threatening, name-calling, and insulting while indirect bullying is social isolation like

exclusion or ignoring" (p. 1312). Other scholars describe the distinctions between

physical, verbal, and psychological bullying. Physical bullying includes destroying

property, or shoving, tripping, and pushing. Verbal aggression includes teasing,

intimidating, name calling, and mean phone calls. Finally, psychological bullying

includes being left out, spreading rumors and gossiping (Ericson, 2001; Macklem, 2003)

and is also termed relational bullying by some scholars (eg, Rivers, et al., 2007).

While most scholars separate direct and indirect bullying, some like Rigby (2008) point out that each type of bullying (physical, verbal, and psychological) can be both overt and covert. For example, Rigby points out that physical bullying could be both direct (spitting, using a weapon) and indirect (hiding belongings). The present study evaluates both direct and indirect bullying.

Some evidence suggests that there may be gender differences between direct and indirect bullying, with girls experiencing more indirect or relational bullying and boys experiencing more direct or physical bullying. This finding that boys are more likely to experience direct bullying (pushing, kicking) and girls are more likely to experience more indirect bullying (leaving out, spreading gossip about) has been found by several scholars (e.g., Crick, 1996; Rivers & Smith; 1994). Gender differences in the type of bullying experienced are important to note in that they may cause one gender to be more likely than the other to report bullying to adults, as studies have found that children who experienced direct physical bullying or direct verbal bullying regardless of their gender have been found to be more likely to report the bullying to an adult than when they experience indirect bullying (Rivers & Smith 1994). Girls have also been found to report being more concerned about being socially isolated or evaluated negatively by their peers (Slee, 1995). Regardless of the type of bullying occurring or the gender of the child who experiences it, bullying does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it affects and involves a variety of people including teachers, friends, parents, and peers. Because of this, the current dissertation adopts a systems approach to bullying which will be explained in the following section.

Systems Approach to Bullying

This project conceptualizes bullying using a social-ecological framework. Using this framework allows us to see bullies and victims of bullying not in isolation, but, instead, within a related network of culture, community, school, peers, family, and the individual (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). According to Susan Swearer and Dorothy Espelage (2004), the individual may be involved as the bully, the victim, or the observer of bully behaviors on other students. In addition, using a social-ecological approach highlights the importance of individual factors for bullies and victims, such as family characteristics, peers, the community, and the culture (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). As Brofenbrenner (1989) theorizes, the child is at the center of a set of related systems. Without understanding the settings and the context that an individual operates in, you cannot truly understand the phenomenon you are studying (Brofenbrenner, 1989), including bullying. Within a system, children's characteristics will interact with the peer group, the family, the school, and the society.

The present study posits that giftedness is one such characteristic that will influence the individual's interactions with the system. Because giftedness encompasses a unique way of viewing the world (Silverman, 2000), giftedness should influence gifted children's reactions to events at each level of the system. It is this idea that gifted children will interact with the system differently than non-gifted children that is at the heart of the present research. In addition, a systems approach allows for communication between bullies/victims and other adults and peers within the system to carry great importance. This is important for giftedness due to the fact that unique characteristics

possessed by an individual affect the system as a whole. The system approach to bullying allows for a focus on communication patterns between the child and the various other members of the system.

The systems approach to bullying also allows a focus on the importance of institutions on children's experiences in addition to a consideration of specific relationships and individuals. The school and the legislature have stepped in to try to control bullying and have had mixed results. As Rivers, et al. (2007) write, there have been differeing opinions about the effectivness of interventions for bullying. They point out that some studies have found significant decreased levels of bullying following interventions, while other studies have actually shown increases in bullying at schools participating in interventions. Clearly the institution plays a role in bullying, but has not yet found a truly effective way to reduce bullying. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2004) also point out the importance of the school system on both bullies and victims and discuss how the school plays an important role in the experiences of children who are part of the bullying process.

While institutions are recognized as playing an important role in an individual's experience with bullying, families are also a vital part of a child's life and experiences at school. Families have been shown to be an important player in children's bully and victim behaviors (e.g., Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004; Georgiou, 2007; Knafo, 2003; Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Families are found to have a strong impact on a child's likelihood of being a bully or a victim. Whether a child is from a home with harsher parents and therefore more likely to be a bully (Knafo, 2003; Smith & Myron-Wilson,

1998), or from a home with overprotective parents and therefore more likely to be a victim (Georgiou, 2007), the family clearly plays a role in a child's experiences in school.

As Ahmed and Braithwaite (2004) write, "It has been suggested that the child's family experiences before entering school shape the child's capacity to adapt and cope at school. Therefore, if the child has had problems at home, there is greater likelihood of problems at school as well" (p. 50). However, these scholars also point out that the school still has the ability to minimize or maximize the likelihood of negative outcomes (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004). Regardless of whether or not outcomes are positive or negative, it is obvious that children are not operating alone. Rather, they are individuals who are part of a very definite context which is influencing their experiences.

While bullying occurs in a very complex system involving parents, children, and institutions, three main players stand out as being of greatest importance to the act of bullying itself. Three main types of participants have been identified: bullies, victims, and bystanders. Each of these roles adds a unique element to the experience of bullying.

Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders

When bullying occurs, there are often three acknowledged groups that deal with the consequences. They are bullies, victims, and the bystanders (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Kohut, 2007; Rigby, 2008). In this triad, bullies are seen as the aggressors and they tend to enjoy harassing certain classmates over extended periods of time (Harris & Petrie, 2003), victims are children who are repeatedly the focus of harsh and hurtful treatment by their peers (Georgiou, 2007) and bystanders are children who observe the bullying

and may react in a variety of ways to the episode they witness (Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, & Franzoni, 2008). Each of these actors plays a unique role and will be examined in detail.

Bullies

Often, bullying is found to be done by a small number of students in a school (Rigby, 2008). It should be noted that many bullies are found to be socially competent, confident, and have good self-image (Olweus, 1978). Despite these seemingly positive traits, bullies are not positive in nature. Bullies seem to feel personally justified in their behavior, stating reasons for bullying such as, "they annoyed me" or "to get even" (Rigby, 2008). Kohut (2007) describes several "red flags" of bullies and identifies bullies as: having unbalanced power relationships, expressing intent to harm others, lacking in remorse for harming others, being impulsive and angry with authority, and enjoying the process of making others fearful.

One recent report finding that may help explain this, focused on the brain functioning of bullies. In February of 2009, Jean Decety of the University of Chicago, reported at the American Association for the Advancement of Science findings from his recent study in which the part of the brain linked with feelings of reward became activated when watching pain being inflicted on others. This brain difference in bullies may be part of the link that explains the aggressiveness, as it would provide the bully with feelings of reward and pleasure. Decety was quoted in the meeting notes from the American Association for the Advancement of Science as stating, "They do, so to speak, share the pain of others, but instead of finding it negative, they enjoy it" (Quill, 2009).

Despite their strong leadership and the fact that bullies may display social adeptness, this does not translate into positive social success for bullies. Rigby (2008) points out that bullies are shown to have higher rates of suicidal thoughts, and to be "more prone to act aggressively when they leave, that is in dating relationships, in the workplace, and as family tyrants" (p. 49). Other research has also shown negative effects for bullies later in life. For example, Olweus (1993) reports that children who are identified as bullies in elementary school are six times more likely than their non-bullying peers to be convicted of crimes when they are young adults. Clearly, bullies experience negative consequences due to their behaviors and social characteristics.

Victims

The second group of children involved with bullying are known as the victims. As noted earlier, a victim is defined as someone who is exposed to bullying behaviors, and receives feedback from peers that he or she is not valued and accepted (Leary, et al., 2003).   On April 6, 2009, 11-year old Carl Walker-Hoover hung himself in his family's home in Massachusetts. He had endured taunting in school, being called names like "gay" and "fag" (James, 2009). Ten days later on April 16, 2009, Jaheem Herrera, a fifth grader in Georgia, hung himself, tired of bullying at school (Simon, 2009). With recent events like the suicides of Carl Walker-Hoover and Jaheem Herrera, parents and educators cannot help but become more concerned about victims of bullying, and the fact that being a victim may lead to acts of aggression or violence (Garrett, 2003). While the majority of children who are victims of bullying will not ever be involved in acts as dramatic as the deaths of Walker-Hoover and Herrera, the fact remains that

victims are more likely to suffer from a wide variety of psychological and physical problems than their non-bullied peers (Garrett, 2003). Gayle Macklem (2003) notes that victims cannot escape from the school system or the children who bully them while at the school. Rather, they are forced to continue within the system in which they experience negative behaviors.

Olweus (1993) identified several typical characteristics of victims, including being physically weaker than their peers, less coordinated than their peers, and being insecure about themselves. A particularly noteworthy finding for the present study is that Olweus (1993) found that victims are more likely to relate better to adults than to peers. A final important note is that victims report that they do not think that adults are likely to stop the bullying (Kohut, 2007). Additionally, victims have been found to be more withdrawn, more likely to report depression, more worrisome, and more fearful of new situations than their peers (Byrne, 1994). Victims also report having fewer friends and being more lonely than their non-victimized peers (Slee, 1995).

In a study by Hoover, Oliver, and Hazler (1992), victims of bullying were more likely than other children to report emotional trouble resulting from teasing. Additionally, this study found that both boys and girls perceived that being a victim negatively affected them in the eyes of their peers. The effects of being bullied are wide ranging and include high stress levels, frequent illness, fatigue, irritable bowl syndrome, poor concentration, poor self-esteem, and irritability (Garrett, 2003). The long term effects on being a victim of bullying will be discussed in a later section. Interestingly, in one study, over half of the children who identified themselves as bullies also reported

being victims of bullying, leading the authors to speculate that the two groups may not be as exclusive as they were once believed to be and that we should acknowledge that there may be an additional group of children who are both bullied and victimized (Haynie, Nansel, Eitel, Crump, Saylor, & Yu, 2001).

Bystanders

Finally, the third group involved with bullying are the bystanders. Bystanders are sometimes overlooked when discussing bullying, but due to the importance of peer groups in middle school, bystanders can be central to understanding bullying within a systems perspective (Garrett, 2003). Peers are more likely to witness bullying than adults, and therefore, their actions or non-actions are important to the bullying episode (Garrett, 2003). Margaret Kohut (2007) writes that the bystander is a crucial person involved in an incident of bullying. According to her book chapter, bystanders are often fearful of retaliation and do not have any knowledge of how to put a stop to the bullying and most often choose to do nothing (Kohut, 2007). Some bullying researchers have suggested that those bystanders may actually be the group who has the most influence on bullying and prevention of bullying (Garrett, 2003). Bystanders do not escape the negative effects of bullying. Indeed, research suggests that bystanders experience conflicting emotions including feelings of fear of being the victim, and guilt and helplessness for not helping the victim (Garrett, 2003).

Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Kaukiainen (1996) found that there are three roles that a bystander may take when they observe an episode of bullying. These bystander roles are defending the victim, reinforcing the bully, or doing nothing.

A study by Gini, et al., (2008) found that children reported feeling positively only about children who defend the victim; these children reported negative reactions to children who both treat the victim with passivity and children who reinforced the bully. Additionally, this study found that when bystanders actively helped the victim, the victim was seen as less responsible for the bullying occurring to him or her. When bystanders supported the victim, victims also felt safer than when bystanders did nothing or supported the bully. In this same study, middle school students were found to have more positive social feelings toward victims when they were defended by bystanders (Gini, et al., 2008). These studies show the importance of the peer group on the outcomes of bullying, as well as the potential of bystanders to positively or negatively influence the victim emotionally and socially.

It is important to note that all three groups -- bullies, victims, and bystanders -- can suffer from the negative consequences of bullying. The three groups make up a complex triad, with none of them able to exist without at least one of the others. While it is agreed upon that these three groups are all affected by bullying, it is also significant to understand how often bullying actually occurs and affects children in schools.

Psychosocial Negative Outcomes of Bullying

There are a variety of negative outcomes that victimized youth experience, many of which are long-term. This makes the study of victims essential. In a review of literature by Dake, et al. (2003), victims of bullying were found to have depression, suicide ideation, loneliness, low self-esteem, and anxiety. The same review found that

victims are also more likely to have physical health problems, school adjustment problems, and to be absent from school more often than their non-bullied peers.

Other studies have found similar instances of negative psychosocial outcomes. In a study of 243 7th and 8th graders, children who reported higher levels of harassment incidents had lower self-worth, higher depression, more loneliness, lower GPAs and higher rates of absenteeism from school than their peers who did not report high levels of harassment (Juvonen, et al., 2000). In another study of junior high students, Ivarsson et al. (2005) found that a significant portion of the victim group was reported by a school health officer to have psychiatric symptoms and to have social adjustment problems in school. Sullivan, et al. (2006) found, in a sample of predominately African American 8th graders, that being a victim of bullying led to increased drug use, aggressive behaviors, and delinquent behaviors. Finally, in a study of 9-13 year olds, it was found that children who were bullied were more likely to report depression and suicide ideation, with girls reporting higher levels of both than boys (van der Wal, et al., 2003). As these studies illustrate, it is possible for all victims to experience negative feelings as a result of bullying, but when dealing with gifted children, feelings of anger, withdrawal, and depression are intensified because of the experience of being different from other children (Schuler, 2002).

Violence as a Result of Bullying

Violence Toward Others

Victimization not only causes psychosocial effects that harm the individual, but in some cases, victimization can lead to violence. In recent years, society has watched

as school shootings and other acts of extreme violence against classmates unfold. From 1996-2003, nearly 40 students were killed, with another dozen injured as a result of school shootings (Leary, et al., 2003). Leary et al. (2003) conducted an analysis of newspaper and other media reports of fifteen school shootings that occurred during school hours, to determine if being a victim of bullying was a factor in these tragic events. This case analysis revealed that, indeed, it seems that the majority of students (all but two) who were involved in shooting classmates were victims of some form of peer rejection and bullying. It is important to remember that most students who are bullied will not be pushed this far, and it is unlikely that rejection alone will lead to such an extreme action. Leary, et al. (2003) also found that most of the children who perpetrated school violence had pre-existing psychological problems, a fascination with guns, or a fascination with death, in addition to their victimization. Victims of bullying do not always react with violence to the bully, but when they do, the results are too often tragic for everyone involved.

It is important to note that research acknowledges the link between giftedness and violence in some situations. As Schuler (2002) notes, "Because gifted adolescents tend to be highly sensitive to others, their reactions to being teased are extremely intense. One only has to look to recent shootings around the country, committed by kids who have been described as very bright, for examples of this kind of intensity" (p. 3). Statements like this illuminate the need for parents, educators, and policy makers to understand the gifted and their experiences with bullying in school.

Violence Towards the Self

In addition to violence against others, violence against the self in the form of suicide is also of high concern for children who are victimized as illustrated by the very recent cases of suicide discussed earlier.   In 1990, Dan Weisse wrote a theoretical article positing that the gifted might be more likely to commit suicide because of their greater sensitivity to life events and perfectionism. As Tracy Cross (2008) points out, one of the most difficult issues in studying the gifted and suicide rates is the lack of consistent definitions of giftedness. Therefore, it is difficult to accurately identify the influence of giftedness among adolescents who commit suicide. In their literature review, Gust-Brey and Cross (1999) point out that while some theorists hypothesize suicide rates might be higher among the gifted population due to their emotional characteristics, findings from empirical studies suggest that while gifted teens may possess the characteristics of suicide victims, the rate of suicide among the gifted is no different than that of average populations of adolescents. This article also points out the importance of training counselors to be aware of suicide among the gifted, as it does occur at the same rate as suicide among the average population (Gust-Brey & Cross, 1999). Cross, Cassady, and Miller (2006) conducted a study of students in a school for the gifted (n = 152) and found that suicide rates, and psychological problems leading to suicide, are not more prevalent among the gifted. Interestingly, they also found that these students were not more introverted than the general population (Cross, et al., 2006). While these findings are relevant to the present study, it should be noted that this study occurred in a school for the gifted with a larger sample than most studies on the

gifted and suicide. Students in such an environment may be more protected from being bullied based on their giftedness since it would not be a unique characteristic within this social system. As can be seen from the research on violence both toward others and the potential for violence against the self, the role of victimization and feeling rejected by peers is too great to overlook.

Psychological Differences in Suicidal Thoughts Among the Gifted

While the limited research on gifted adolescents and suicide does not reveal percentage differences in suicide among the gifted and non-gifted (Cross, et al., 2006; Cross, 2008), a newer field of research doing "psychological autopsies" of gifted children who completed suicide has revealed unique insights into the minds of troubled gifted students (Cross, 2008). This form of research, "includes interviews of family members, friends, or significant others; reviews of records from school, physician, or psychologist/psychiatrist; and cataloging and analysis of books read, music listened to, video games played, and so forth. Data from all these sources are analyzed" (Cross, 2008, p. 635). Although only a small sample (n = 4) of gifted students who committed suicide have had these psychological autopsies conducted, they have revealed that these gifted students had several characteristics in common. For instance, they reported intense emotions and confusion from peer rejection and teasing (Cross, 2008). While the sample is very small, this is an interesting way to study the gifted and learn more about their thought process when suicide is involved. Especially of note for this study is the fact that peer rejection and teasing was one of the commonalities among the gifted adolescents who committed suicide.

Being Gifted and Being Bullied

Gifted children face bullying in the classroom, just as all children do. However, it may be the case that their "gifts" cause them to be teased for being "too smart," "too nerdy," or "too bossy" in school (Schuler, 2002). As Silverman (2000) notes, gifted children face "hostility in society toward children who are thought of as 'intellectually advanced'" (p. 9). Although there has been very little research done specifically on the gifted and bullying, there have been studies of children with special needs which show that these children are significantly more likely to experience bullying (e.g., Van Cleave & Davis, 2006). Although these children differ significantly from gifted children in their needs, they are similar in the fact that they are "different" from the other students. While there is currently no empirical evidence that gifted children are victimized more than the general population of junior high students, it is likely, as a result of overexcitabilities (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Silverman, 2000), that they will process, and therefore communicate, the experience of being victimized differently.

Gifted children are prone to the same negative outcomes as their victimized peers, and may even be found to be more likely to experience psychosocial harm due to specific characteristics of their population. Tracy L. Cross (2001) has done research on gifted children for many years. Her qualitative interviews with gifted students reveal what she terms a "rage." When interviewing these gifted students about school, they often refer to Columbine and express feelings of understanding for the frustration felt by students who are picked on in school. Many gifted children feel angry about the way they are treated. Research supports the idea that gifted children often have difficulties

with social relationships, high levels of anxiety, and feel isolated from their peers in school (Schuler, 2002).

As mentioned previously, overexcitabilities are "expanded awareness and a heightened capacity to respond to stimuli of various types" (Silverman, 2000, p. 13). One of the most pertinent overexcitabilities for the present study is emotional overexcitability, which Silverman (2000) describes as including such factors as intensity of feelings, both positive and negative, complex emotions and feelings, a concern with death, depression and suicide, and relationship feelings such as sensitivity, loneliness, and concern for others. This overexcitability means that gifted children feel these emotions with greater power than average children. Gifted children often have a strong affective memory so that they can "feel" the emotions that occurred during an incident and will often "relive" these feelings for some time (Sword, 2003). In addition, emotional overexcitability often includes fascination with death and suicide, and because victimized children often experience feelings of depression, their problems may be compounded by their intense emotions. As was mentioned previously, while gifted children may be more prone to suicide ideation, they are not more likely to actually commit suicide (Cross, 2008; Gust-Brey & Cross, 1999).

Because of gifted children's unique characteristics and sensitivities, it is believed that their communicative experiences during the bullying process will be different than those of other children. Overexcitabilities may lead to a greater hurt and sensitivity over being victimized in school. Morelock (1992) writes of a case study about a young gifted boy fighting with a non-gifted peer at school. When asked to write out what happened,

the non-gifted child wrote, "Greg hit me and then I hit him back and he kept hitting me." In contrast, the gifted child wrote a detailed summary of negative events from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades that led to the moment in question. This story exemplifies sensitivity and overexcitabilities of the gifted and shows how the gifted may have unique ways of communicating about being a victim of bullying. Gifted children have a "different reality" than their peers (Morelock, 1992).

Additionally, because of their unusually advanced sense of social justice (Schuler, 2002), gifted children may feel the sting of bullying more than their peers and perhaps become angry for themselves and for the injustice done to others. These feelings may lead gifted children to communicate about the act of bullying in ways that are distinct from other populations of students. Specifically, because of the intensity of gifted children's emotions, scholars suggest that gifted children will need extra help in understanding and expressing their emotions (Morelock, 1992; Silverman, 2000). Due to gifted children's overexcitabilities, it may be especially important that gifted children disclose bullying so that they can be assisted in managing their complex and deeply experienced emotions. It is these emotions that will affect a child when he or she decides to disclose or not disclose information about bullying to others.

Deciding to Talk About Bullying

Studies suggest that it is in the child's best interest to disclose information about being victimized by bullies (Mishna & Alaggia, 2005). While most parents are aware of the general fact that bullying occurs at school, they may not be aware of the specific experiences of their own children. Harris and Petrie (2003) surveyed 131 boys and 67

girls in the 8th grade, asking them about their communication about bullying. They found that over half of bullied children do not tell anyone they are bullied. Of the students who do tell someone about bullying, "they are most likely to tell a friend or their mother; only 3 percent of students said that they would tell their father or a teacher." (p. 38). In this study, the authors noted students' perceptions that the administration and teachers were not interested in bullying (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

There are several reasons why middle school children may or may not disclose information about being bullied. Mishna (2004) identifies seven factors that influence children's willingness to disclose peer victimization to adults. These seven factors are: secrecy, powerlessness, victim blaming self, retaliation, child vulnerabilities, fear of losing the relationship if the bully is a friend, and expectations regarding the effectiveness of adult interventions. Mishna (2004) also found that children may not believe that adult help will actually be effective, which reduces the likelihood that they will go to adults for assistance. Finally, Mishna (2004) found that children, like adults, have varying definitions of bullying, making it difficult for children to always know what constitutes bullying behavior. In addition, other scholars have found that children may not disclose information about bullying because they dislike school, and have little faith in the school system's ability to control the problem (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004). Research also suggests that children are less likely to disclose indirect bullying perhaps because it is less visible and more difficult for children to prove. Less disclosure on indirect bullying occurs for both boys and girls (van der Wal, et al., 2003).

Research on bullying has shown that a large number of children never talk about bullying (Smith & Shu, 2000). Among those children who do talk, parents are more likely to be told than teachers at school. Students often reported fear that teachers would not act on the disclosure of bullying, which would make the child feel worse (Smith & Shu, 2000). In addition, children who were older were found to be less likely to disclose bullying than younger children (Smith & Shu, 2000). Finally, children who are involved with more indirect forms of bullying are less likely to disclose victimization than children who are victims of direct bullying (Rivers & Smith, 1994). For all children, the decision to tell is complex (Mishna & Alaggia, 2005). For gifted children, the decision to disclose may be even more complex than for other populations of children.

Being Gifted and Deciding to Talk

There are several characteristics of gifted children that may make them different from their non-gifted peers in their reasons for choosing to disclose or not to disclose bullying to adults. To begin, gifted children may be less likely than other children to talk about being bullied because of a trait known as perfectionism. Linda Silverman (2000) defines perfectionism as being one of the most striking characteristics of the gifted, leading gifted children to strive for standards that might be far beyond the norm. According to Delisle and Galbraith (2002), perfectionism is a negative trait because gifted children who are perfectionists feel that they can never fail and must always have approval. Perfectionism leads children to feel that they must be successful in all facets of life, including relationships (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002). The trait of perfectionism

may cause children to feel that by disclosing information about victimization to adults, they are showing their lack of ability to control their own lives (Schuler, 2002). Viewed from this perspective, gifted children may be less likely to disclose incidents of bullying because they are afraid it will be seen as a failure by adults.

However, gifted students may also have characteristics that make them more likely to communicate with adults about being bullied. Gifted students have been found to strongly benefit from having adult mentors and role models with whom they can talk (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Gifted children often relate to an adult sense of humor and understanding of the world (Ruf, 2005). Because of this, gifted children often enjoy conversations with adults (Ruf, 2005). However, because gifted children have a more adult sense of social justice, they sometimes question authority (Silverman, 2000). When this happens, teachers may react negatively to children (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002) and cause children to not see teachers as a source of comfort or support. Linda Silverman (2000) encourages counselors to be aware of the signs of giftedness and ready to be a support system for children who feel they are not appreciated or understood by adults.

Gifted children exemplify characteristics that could potentially make them both more and less likely to disclose information to adults about being victimized. Because of the complex nature of being gifted and the emotional differences that gifted children may exemplify, decisions to communicate about bullying with adults may be unique. Given the conceptual arguments outlined above regarding the differences between gifted and non-gifted students regarding the processing of information and emotions, this

dissertation project will seek to examine the differences in the experiences of bullying by gifted children and their subsequent communication about being bullied. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this paper will look for differences between gifted and non-gifted children regarding experiences of bullying.

Research Questions

As the current review of literature has shown, bullying is a very real problem in the context of schools in today's society. Additionally, it has been proposed that giftedness will affect children's likelihood to be bullied, as well as to tell others about being bullied. To date, no research has been published which specifically examines gifted children's likelihood to disclose information about bullying. The overall goal of the current research study was to examine the communication differences and/or similarities in the experiences of being bullied by gifted and non-gifted middle schoolers. Additionally, the research sought to determine if gifted children have specific communication patterns about the experiences of bullying and if gifted children are more or less likely to engage in communication about being bullying than their non-gifted peers. Specifically, the following hypotheses and research questions will be addressed:

- *H1: Gifted children will report different amounts of bullying than non-gifted peers.* Specifically, it is hypothesized that gifted children will report higher amounts of bullying than their non-gifted peers.

- *H2: Gifted children will report different types of bullying than their non-gifted peers.* Specifically, it is believed that gifted children will report

higher amounts of verbal and emotional bullying and lower amounts of physical bullying.

- *RQ1: How do gifted children talk about the experience of bullying?* It is believed that they will use a great amount of detail when discussing the behavior.

- *RQ2: Are gifted children more or less likely than their non-gifted peers to talk to others (adults and peers) about being bullied in school than their non-gifted peers?* While a difference is expected with regard to talking to adults about bullying, research is inconclusive and could lead to gifted children being more or less likely than non-gifted children to discuss bullying.

- *RQ3: Does the type of bulling reported affect the likelihood that children disclose information about bullying to adults?*

- *RQ4: How do gifted children disclose information about being bullied to others?*

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Overview

The data used for this dissertation were collected through a study of middle and junior high school students designed to examine their experiences with bullying in the school system. Specifically, the data provide insight into quantitative and qualitative differences between the experiences of children who are gifted and their peers who are not labeled as gifted. The goal of the research was to take an in-depth look at the experiences children face with regard to being bullied while at school. The information collected focuses on children's communication with adults both at school and at home concerning children's experiences with bullying. The collected information also focuses on children's communication with peers about how to handle bullying. Specifically, the study looks at differences between gifted students and their non-gifted peers in order to determine if unique communication patterns exist within the two groups, and if the general experience of bullying is communicated differently by gifted and non-gifted students.

Data for this study were collected in two phases. Phase one was the quantitative portion of the study, followed by the second phase of qualitative data. In order to address the hypotheses and research questions, research collection included a survey portion allowing for comparisons to be made between gifted and non-gifted students (for hypotheses #1 and #2), as well as a focus group component consisting only of gifted

students, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of how bullying is experienced by the gifted (for research question #1) and whether and how gifted students communicate about bullying to adults (for research questions #2, #3, and #4).

Sample

Participants

Schools identified as potential participating districts were contacted in February 2008. These schools were selected based on location and size. Originally, schools representing a variety of school sizes were asked to participate. Schools were chosen based on their distance from a large university town. It was desired that schools be at least 20 miles away (in order to not be one of the often-studied districts in the university's immediate community) but no more than 75 miles away. This distance was determined by reasonable driving distance. A total of ten principals were contacted about school participation. All principals were initially contacted by a mailed letter (see Appendix A). Follow up telephone calls resulted in all ten being spoken to via telephone. Of the ten principals contacted, five agreed to participate. Two districts required superintendent approval. At these schools, superintendents were contacted by telephone regarding the research.

Following contact with the schools, a total of four school districts agreed to participate in the research, resulting in a total of five schools participating. During the summer of 2008, meetings were conducted with superintendents and principals to explain the details of the study and answer questions. The participating schools were all located within the same state region, and were selected to represent a variety of sizes and

student demographics. Schools participating were Revel Junior High with approximately 350 students, Small Junior High with approximately 600 students, Honeyvine Junior High with approximately 800 students, Honeyvine Middle School with approximately 750 students, and Bright Middle School with approximately 1,000 students. All schools (identified above by pseudonym) are located in Texas, near Houston.

Two of the school districts (Honeyvine and Bright) have students in this age range divided into two campuses, a 5th-6th grade and a 7th-8th grade campus. The other two districts (Revel and Small) had one junior high school serving 6th-8th grades. In the districts with two campuses for middle school students, data were collected from 5th-8th graders. In school districts that had only one school serving middle school students, information was collected from 6th-8th grades.

Procedures and Measures

Procedures

In September 2008, parental permission forms were sent home with all the students at each school requesting parental permission for children to participate in the quantitative portion of the study (see Appendix A). Permission forms were sorted according to teacher, delivered to the principal, and sent to the teachers. Teachers sent home the permission forms with each student, and collected returned permission forms from the students. Approximately 750 forms were sent home with students at Honeyvine Middle School, 800 forms were sent home at Honeyvine Junior High, 350 permission forms were sent home at Revel Junior High, 600 forms were sent home with students at

Small Junior High, and 980 forms were sent home with students at Bright Middle School.   Students were given two weeks to return the permission forms. Principals asked the teachers to remind the students to return the forms.   After two weeks, principals collected the permission forms from the teachers. Completed permission forms at each school were collected from the principals.

Survey on Bullying

All students at each school for whom a permission form was received were asked to complete the survey. Return rates of permission forms were as follows: Revel (n=18), Honeyvine Middle School (n=53), Honeyvine Junior High (n=126), Bright (n=108), and Small (n=38). Because it is impossible to know how many permission forms were actually sent home with students, it is impossible to compute an exact response percentage. However, it is clear that response rates at Revel and Small were particularly low, perhaps because principals at these two schools were the least involved in the study. Additionally, at Revel, the principal requested to not participate in the qualitative portion of the study after originally agreeing to be part of this aspect of the research. She cited problems with the district's identification of the gifted as the reason for not wanting to participate. At both Revel and Small, teachers were not encouraged or reminded by administrators to collect the permission forms. At the Honeyvine schools and Bright, teachers were sent e-mail reminders from principals requesting collection of the permission forms.

A total of 343 children completed and turned in the survey. Response rates for relevant demographic categories for the study as a whole are as follows: boys (n = 145)

and girls (n = 199); 5th graders (n = 28), 6th graders (n = 54), 7th graders (n = 153), and 8th graders (n = 103); children self-identified themselves as gifted (n = 144) and not gifted (n = 200).

This portion of the study required each child to fill out a survey about being a bully/victim in public schools. The survey used was Dan Olweus' Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Appendix B). This survey took approximately fifteen to forty minutes for students to complete and was completed during school hours. Each school provided a set time for students to take the survey during school and the survey was administered on school property under my supervision or the supervision of a teacher, a counselor, or a principal. Surveys were administered either by a researcher in a large room at the school or by teachers during an assigned time period. Surveys were administered by the researcher at Revel Junior High and Honeyvine Middle School. At these schools, children were called to the designated room during a time selected by the school.

Once the children arrived, they were told to have a seat and then were told that they would be completing a survey on bullying. All children were told that they could stop at any time, and were not required to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. Two children chose to not participate at Revel Junior High and all children participated at Honeyvine Middle School. Once children agreed to participate, the surveys were distributed. At both schools, the researcher stayed in the room along with a school employee while surveys were completed. Children then put their surveys in a stack without any identifiers on them.

At both Honeyvine Junior High and Small Junior High, principals requested that surveys be administered without the researcher present. At these schools, teachers were given instructions to read, and were told to inform students that they were not required to participate. Eight children at Small Junior High chose to not participate and ten children chose to not participate at Honeyvine Junior High. Once children completed the survey, they returned the survey to their principals. The surveys were kept in manila envelopes for the researcher to collect after being contacted by the principal.

Focus Groups

In addition to the survey portion of the study, a qualitative focus group and interview portion was designed to elicit information on gifted students' experiences with bullying in schools. Students in this portion of the research were all identified by their school districts as being gifted. Each district had a different way of identifying gifted students, and the study opted to use each school district's list of gifted students, despite the differences in identification process. This was done because it is theorized that by being identified by whatever process, there will be perceived differences in the children. For this portion of the study, students were asked to participate in focus groups. Principals provided a list of all gifted students in their schools, and a permission form was sent home with all children who were on this list (see Appendix B). Children were given two weeks to return their forms to their principals. These students were then contacted by their counselor or principal with the date of the focus group.

Two school districts opted to not participate in the focus group portion of the study. Revel Junior High requested to not participate in this portion of the study as well

as Bright Middle School. Reasons cited for not participating were dislike for gifted identification procedures in the district and time constraints for the counselor. Two schools participated in the focus groups. These schools were Honeyvine Middle School (n = 20) and Bright Junior High (n = 6). Five focus groups were conducted at Honeyvine Middle School. The 2nd period focus group was unrecorded and all participants were female (n = 3). Four of the focus groups at Honeyvine Middle School were recorded and consisted of both males and females. The 3rd period focus group (n = 4) had three boys and one girl, the 5th period focus group (n = 4) had two boys and two girls, the sixth period focus group (n = 4) had two boys and two girls, and the final focus group during 7th period (n = 5) included two boys and three girls. At Bright Junior High, one focus group was conducted and consisted of both males (n = 4) and females (n = 2).

Parents were asked for permission for their child to be recorded. Parents who did not wish to have their child recorded were given the option to have their child participate in a non-recorded focus group. Three children participated in a non-recorded focus group at Honeyvine. No other parents requested a non-recorded group. When children arrived at the focus group, the researcher showed the children the recorder and explained that they would be recorded, but that their names would not be associated with the recording. Additionally, they were told no names would be used in any part of the study. Children were asked if they had any questions and after all questions were answered, the focus group began.

Prior to the focus group, a notice was sent home with the students listing the other participants in the group and reminding students and parents that a counselor would be present in the room. Focus groups were all conducted in a conference room or empty classroom during the school day on campus. These focus groups lasted from 37 minutes to 55 minutes and covered a variety of aspects of bullying in school. A school counselor or principal was present at each focus group, but was not actively involved in the conversation. Schools requested having a school official present so that school personnel would be aware of any problems that would need immediate attention by the school. All the children were sent to the assigned room during the appropriate time for participation. Once the children arrived, they were told that they would be participating in a focus group about bullying. They were asked to not talk about our conversation outside of the room, but told that researchers could not guarantee their privacy. Children were also reminded that they did not have to participate or answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. All students chose to participate in the focus group.

Individual Interviews

At the end of the focus group, students were given the opportunity to ask for a private follow-up interview. At Honeyvine Middle School, seven students requested a follow up interview. Both males (n = 3) and females (n = 4) requested interviews with me. These interviews were quick and lasted from 51 seconds to seven minutes. Interviews were semi-structured and focused on the experience of being a bully/victim. These interviews were a chance for students to disclose any information that they did not want to talk about during the focus group. All children who requested a follow-up

interview were met with for an interview. Follow-up interviews were all conducted at the school in the counselor's office during school hours with me and the counselor present. No children at Bright Junior High requested an individual interview. These interviews were conducted to ensure that students were given the opportunity to say what they wanted to say without feeling forced to answer questions in the presence of other students.

Children were reminded of the purpose of the interview (bullying in schools) and asked if they had any questions about the interview. The only structured question was to ask them what they would like to add. Children were told that their interviews would last no longer than 30 minutes, but they were much shorter than this, ranging from 51 seconds to seven minutes. Most children simply wanted to say "hi" or to report a specific incident in school that they had seen or experienced personally.

Measures

For this study, there were both quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative portion of the study used the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire. The qualitative portion of the study relied on focus groups and interviews. The focus groups were moderately scheduled, and will be described in detail. Finally, the individual interviews were unscheduled and provided students a time to give any information they desired.

Each research instrument and data collection format was selected for a specific reason that added to the present study and the sample of gifted children. Using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire survey instrument allowed all children, gifted and

not, to report on their experiences of being bullied in school. Focus groups were chosen

because they have been used with success with children when discussing sensitive topics

(Charlesworth & Rodwell, 1997; Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002). Morgan,

et al. (2002) conducted focus groups with children ages 7-11 and write specifically about

the benefits of using this method to collect information on sensitive topics such as

bullying. For this study, children with asthma were asked if they had been bullied

because of their asthma. These researchers noted that, while children often were more

nervous discussing sensitive topics, they reacted better and gave better responses when

asked indirectly about bullying. For example, instead of asking "Have you ever been

bullied because of your asthma?" changing the question to "Have any children at your

school been bullied because of having asthma?" was more effective. The present study

follows a similar pattern of asking broader questions about bullying to gather stories

about bullying in schools, instead of specifically asking children to reveal stories about

themselves. Focus groups were chosen with the hope that the asking of questions in a

non-personal manner would encourage conversations that might not have occurred with

individual interviews. Additionally, using focus groups allowed the opportunity for

children to request an interview afterward if they were uncomfortable discussing

sensitive topics in the presence of others.

Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire

The survey measure given to all the students was the Revised Olweus

Bully/Victim Questionnaire (see Appendix B). The questionnaire includes items about a

variety of types of bullying, though questions regarding sexual bullying were excluded

from this study. There are two versions of the questionnaire, and this study used the 6th-10th grade version. Olweus suggests using the younger version for the 5th grade. However, because the schools were divided into 5th and 6th grade, the older version of the survey was used for all participants. For the schools with 5th graders, the written instructions on the survey were read out loud to all the students, as was the Olweus definition of bullying.

The Olweus questionnaire is distinct from other surveys regarding this topic in that it provides students with a definition of bullying. This definition is presented to the students before they complete the survey. The questionnaire includes the following definition (Olweus, 1996b):

Here are some questions about being bullied by other students. First we define or explain the word bullying. We say a student is being bullied when another student, or several other students:

- *Say mean and hurtful things or make fun of him or her or call him or her mean and hurtful names*
- *Completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose*
- *Hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock him or her inside a room*
- *Tell lies or spread false rumors about him or her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her*
- *And other hurtful things like that.*

When we talk about bullying, these things happen repeatedly, and it is <u>difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself</u>. We also call it bullying, when a student is teased repeatedly in a mean and hurtful way.

But we <u>don't call it bullying</u> when the teasing is done in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is <u>not bullying</u> when two students of about equal strength or power argue or fight.

Olweus (1996a) argues that providing children with a specific definition on the questionnaire allows students to have a less subjective idea of what it means to be "bullied" or to be a "bully" and therefore is a better measure of bullying. According to Solberg and Olweus (2003), the purpose of the definition was to "capture all three main elements of the definition of bullying: the intention to harm the victim, the repetitive nature of bullying, and the imbalance in power between the victim and the perpetrators" (p. 246).

The Olweus questionnaire has been shown to have good internal consistency. In 2006, Dan Olweus wrote a letter stating that while much of the information on reliability is unpublished, he has done analysis on, "large representative samples (more than 5000 students)". These tests revealed $\alpha = .80$ or higher for each of the scales when the individual student was the level of analysis and an $\alpha = .90$ or higher when the whole school was the level of analysis (D. Olweus, e-mail correspondence, March 2006).

In order to determine if children were gifted on the survey, a question was added to the questionnaire (7a-7c). Children were asked to self-identify as gifted by answering, "Have you been identified by your school as "gifted and talented" and "Do you

participate in special classes or activities for kids who are gifted?" If children answered yes to either question, they were classified as gifted for the quantitative portion of the study.

All questions regarding amount and type of bullying (9-18 on the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire) were recoded into "weekly bullying" or "monthly or not at all". In order to determine a child's total bullying experienced weekly, these variables were added: name calling weekly, being left out weekly, being hit or kicked weekly, having lies told about you weekly, having money taken from you weekly, being forced to do things weekly, being teased about your race weekly, being bullied through the phone weekly, and other ways of being bullied weekly. One good friend was recoded so that no good friends was "0" and one or more good friends were coded as "1".

To determine the variables that children told an adult and told a peer, if children reported that they told a teacher (24a), parent (24c), or other adult (24b), they were coded as "1" told an adult. If children answered "no" to telling a parents, teachers, and other adults, they were coded as "0", did not tell an adult. The same was done to determine if children told peers (24d & 24e).

Emotional bullying was operationalized by adding the variables weekly name calling, weekly being left out, weekly having lies spread about you, and weekly being bullied about your race. Physical bullying was operationalized by adding the variables being hit or kicked weekly, having money taken from you weekly, and being forced to do things weekly.

Focus Groups

As described previously, students identified as gifted by the school district were asked to participate in a focus group with their peers. Focus groups were conducted in order to gain insights into the daily experience of being gifted and bullying in schools. Focus groups consisted of 3-6 children and were designed similarly to Guided Discussion Groups designed for use with gifted students.   Linda Silverman (2000) writes that discussion groups for gifted students are beneficial because they help students understand who they are in relation to others. However, she also reminds those working with gifted students of the importance of preventing the group from becoming one big gripe session.

Questions for the focus groups were designed to help students relate to the systemic problem of bullying and also asked for solutions that teachers, administrators, and students could be involved in starting. The complete focus group protocol is included in Appendix C. Questions asked in the focus group were broken down into three sections. The focus group began with a discussion of what it means to be bullied. Children were asked the following questions, "When people talk about bullying, what sorts of behaviors are they talking about", "When you think of bullying, what does it mean?", "How often does a problem have to occur to be considered bullying?", "What are the certain times of the day when bullying is more likely to occur?", and "Is bullying a problem in your school?". Once children had discussed what bullying meant, the discussion moved into questions about what bullying is like for different groups of children at their school. Here questions included, "What sorts of groups do kids at your

school belong to?", "Which of these groups are more likely to get picked on?", "What physical attributes do people get bullied about?", "Are kids who are "smart" more like to be bullied"? and "Why do you think that is?". Finally, the discussion ended with a conversation about what happens after kids get bullied. In this section, children were asked questions that included, "What do you do after you get bullied?", "What people do you talk to about it?", "Does talking to adults help you feel better?" and "What strategies do you use to avoid bullies?"

Focus groups are noted to be "suited to topics of attitudes and cognitions" (Morgan, 1988, p. 17) and thus are appropriate for a consideration of students' thoughts and feelings about bullying in school. Focus groups have been noted for their usefulness through allowing the participants to both give and gather information on the topic being discussed (Charlesworth & Rodwell, 1997). Focus groups also allow the participants to express their views in their own words and to have other people to spark topics and events that an individual might forget (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

<div align="center">Analysis</div>

<div align="center">*Quantitative*</div>

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used in the present study. In order to answer the first hypothesis that gifted children will report different amounts of bullying than their non-gifted peers, chi-square tests were used. Chi-square tests were appropriate for revealing differences between gifted and non-gifted children's reports of bullying. Chi-square tests were also run to examine the second hypothesis that gifted children will report different types of bullying than their non-gifted peers. Quantitative

analyses were conducted to examine if gifted children are more or less likely to talk with others, either adults or peers, about bulling than their non-gifted peers. Chi-square tests were run to test if there is a difference in children's reports that they talk to others about being bullied. In addition to chi-square tests, ANOVAs were run to look for interactions between gifted status and reports of talking to peers and adults. Finally, ANOVAs were run to examine if the type of bullying experienced affected children's likelihood of disclosure.

Qualitative

In order to analyze the data collected from the focus groups, the groups were recorded and transcribed. Each focus group was transcribed separately. No names were used to identify the children, and identifying numbers were assigned to the children when voices could be distinguished. Assigning numbers allowed researchers to follow the flow of conversation more easily, but comments were analyzed as individual statements rather than an analysis of each individual's responses as a whole. Because this study did not have pre-determined themes to be tested, a grounded theory approach to evaluate the data was used. A grounded approach is appropriate because of the nature of the information being gathered. No studies were found to use focus groups to discuss bullying with gifted students. As a result, no pre-determined themes were used. Because there was no use of pre-determined categories, using grounded theory allowed the evaluation of the focus groups to find themes that emerge from within the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe, focus groups were immediately evaluated to determine themes that were noted during the focus group. After all focus groups were conducted, transcriptions were done and the evaluation of themes continued. In this way, both field notes from the focus group as well as transcriptions are used for evaluation. Field notes are detailed notes with a great deal of description of what occurred during the observation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Field notes for this study are important because they help to capture the non-verbal aspects of talking about bullying that would be missed using only the transcription texts. Additionally, each focus group added to themes I had already seen emerging and revealed further themes for evaluation. As themes developed about giftedness and being bullied, negative case analysis was used to further advance or disprove themes that have emerged from the focus group data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Summary

Using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies allowed for a deeper understanding of the experiences of gifted children and bullying in middle school. By using the quantitative questionnaire, comparisons were made between gifted and non-gifted children. These comparisons were used to answer the questions of whether gifted children experience different amounts of bullying than non-gifted children, and if gifted children report experiencing different types of bullying than non-gifted children. Additionally, quantitative methods allowed for an analysis of the likelihood that gifted children will talk to adults or peers about bullying and if the type of bullying affects their likelihood to talk. Focus group information was then added to deepen the understanding

and richness of the data, allowing a look at how gifted children specifically talk and feel about bullying and how they disclose information to others.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Results from the analysis will be broken into two overview sections. The following sections will address the hypotheses and research questions advanced and described in the previous sections. Quantitative associations regarding different amounts of bullying, different types of bullying, and likelihood to talk with adults will be presented in the first section. Qualitative themes regarding how children talk about and disclose information on bullying will be presented in the second section.

Quantitative Associations

The first section of results will examine the quantitative associations found in the survey research collected for the present study. Responses to the questionnaire were analyzed in order to address four hypotheses about gifted children and their reports of bullying and communication about bullying. Quantitative analyses were also used to compare gifted children to their non-gifted peers in order to determine if there are significant differences between the two groups of children. Quantitative analysis was used to answer the following questions about gifted children and bullying:

H1: Gifted children report different amounts of bullying than their non-gifted peers.

H2: Gifted children report different types of bullying than their non-gifted peers.

RQ2: Are gifted children more or less likely to talk about bullying than their non-gifted peers?

RQ3: Does the type of bullying reported affect the likelihood that children

disclose information about bullying?

Analysis for each of these hypotheses and research questions will be examined in the

following sections.

<div align="center">*Findings*</div>

Amount of Bullying Reported

The first hypothesis examined in the current study predicted that gifted children

will report different amounts of bullying than their non-gifted peers. In order to examine

the first hypothesis, chi-square tests were run to determine if gifted children reported

different amounts of being bullied than their non-gifted peers. A chi-square test revealed

that gifted children did report significantly different amounts of being bullied on a

weekly basis, χ_2 (1, N = 338) = 7.16, *p* = .007, Cramer's V = .15. A greater number of

gifted children (19.8%) reported weekly bullying compared to non-gifted children

(9.6%). Gifted children reported significantly higher amounts of weekly bullying than

their non-gifted peers.   When reporting on their bullying of other children, no

significant differences were found between gifted and non-gifted children.

Type of Bullying Reported

The second hypothesis in the current study predicted that gifted children would

report different types of bullying than their non-gifted peers. To examine the second

hypothesis, chi-square tests were run to determine if gifted children reported

experiencing different types of bullying (emotional and physical) than non-gifted

children. A chi-square test revealed that gifted children did report significantly different

amounts of name-calling than non-gifted children χ$_2$ (1, N = 334) = 4.00, p = .046, Cramer's V = .11. A greater number of gifted children (23.6%) reported being called names on a weekly basis than their non-gifted peers (14.9%). No statistically significant differences between gifted and non-gifted children were found for reports of being left out, hit or kicked, having lies spread about, being stolen from, being forced to do things, being teased about race, or being bullied through messages.

Chi-square tests were also run to examine if giftedness affected the likelihood of engaging in different types of bullying in the position of being the bully. When reporting on the frequency that they bullied other children, there were two significant differences between gifted children and non-gifted children. A chi-square test revealed significant differences between gifted and non-gifted children's reports of engaging in weekly name-calling, χ$_2$, (1, N = 334) = 4.00, p = .046, Cramer's V = .10. A greater number of non-gifted children (8%) reported engaging in weekly bullying than gifted children (3.2%). Additionally, significant differences were found for children's reports of engaging in weekly hitting or kicking other children, χ$_2$ (1, N = 306) = 5.28, p = .022, Cramer's V = .13. A greater number of non-gifted children (6%) reported engaging in hitting and kicking other children on a weekly basis than gifted children (.8%).

Likelihood of Disclosure

The first research question examined whether gifted children are more or less likely to talk about being bullied in school than their non-gifted peers. Specifically, information was gathered regarding children's disclosure to both adults and peers about bullying. Two types of analysis were run in order to examine this question. The first

tests run were chi-square tests on both telling an adult and telling a peer, to determine if differences existed between gifted and non-gifted children. The first test looked at children's likelihood to tell any adult (teachers, administrators, parents). A chi-square test revealed that gifted children were not significantly more or less likely to tell adults they had been bullied than non-gifted children. The second test looked at children's likelihood of telling a peer (friends, siblings, etc.) about being bullied. A chi-square test revealed significant differences between gifted and non-gifted children's likelihood of telling a peer that they had been bullied, χ_2 (1, N = 326) = 8.5, p = .004, Cramer's V = .16. A greater number of gifted children (39.4%) told their peers they were being bullied than non-gifted children (24.3%).

An additional set of findings related to talking to friends involved the issue of having at least one good friend. Several chi-square tests were run to examine the relationship between having at least one good friend and bullying. A chi-square test found significant differences in the amount of weekly bullying experienced by children who differed on this factor, χ_2 (1, N = 335) = 8.8, p = .003, Cramer's V = .16. Children with no good friends (n = 7) were more likely to experience weekly bullying (50%) than their peers who reported having at least one good friend (n = 318, 13.1%). Significant differences were also found for the amount of emotional bullying experienced, χ_2 (1, N = 325) = 3.86, p = .05, Cramer's V = .11 as well the amount of physical bullying reported, χ_2 (1, N = 324) = 4.17, p = .04, Cramer's V = .11. A higher number of children who reported having no friends reported both emotional and physical bullying (57.1%, 33.3%) than their peers who reported having at least one good friend (24.5%, 11.1%).

Interestingly, there were no differences between gifted and non-gifted peers regarding the likelihood that they would have at least one good friend.

The second type of test run to examine children's likelihood of disclosure was Analysis of Variance. The ANOVA tested for an interaction between gifted status and reports of telling peers about being bullied (independent variables) on children's reports of weekly bullying (dependent variable). A second ANOVA tested interactions between gifted status and children's reports of telling adults about being bullied on children's reports of weekly bullying.

Results assessing children's reports of weekly bullying, their gifted status, and their likelihood to disclose information about weekly bullying to peers found significant differences for each main effect as well as a significant interaction effect. Children who reported being bullied weekly were more likely to tell peers about their victimization than those who did not report weekly bullying, $F(1, 320) = 42.59$, $p < .000$, $\eta^2_p = .12$. Additionally, a main effect was found for gifted status, $F(1, 320) = 6.63$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2_p = .02$. Children who self-identified as being gifted ($M = .24$, $SE = .03$) were significantly more likely to report being bullied on a weekly basis than children who were non-gifted ($M = .14$, $SE = .03$). These main effects, however, are qualified by a statistically significant interaction between gifted status and telling peers, $F(1, 320) = 7.10$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2_p = .02$. Means and standard errors for the interaction effect are presented in Table 1. Gifted children who experienced weekly bullying were more likely to tell their peers about being bullied ($M = .43$, $SE = .04$) than non-gifted children who reported weekly bullying ($M = .22$, $SE = .05$).

Table 1. *Children's Reports of Weekly Bullying, Gifted Status, and the Likelihood They*

Will Tell a Peer.

	Told a Peer	Did Not Tell a Peer
Gifted	.43 (.04)	.06 (.04)
Not Gifted	.22 (.05)	.06 (.03)

It was also thought that gifted children might be more or less likely to talk to

adults about bullying. Although the interaction effect was not statistically significant,

significant main effects emerged to indicate that children who reported having told

adults about bullying, $F(1, 319) = 35.57$, $p < .000$, $\eta^2_p = .10$, and children who identified

themselves as gifted, $F(1, 319) = 5.99$, $p < .02$, $\eta^2_p = .02$, were more likely to report

being bullied on a weekly basis. Children who were identified as gifted ($M = .24$, $SE =$

.03) were more likely to report being bullied on a weekly basis than non-gifted children

($M = .15$, $SE = .03$). Children who reported telling an adult about bullying ($M = .32$, SE

$= .03$) were more likely to report weekly bullying than those children who did not talk

with adults about bullying ($M = .08$, $SE = .02$).

Type of Bullying and Disclosure

The third research question in the present study was that the type of bullying

being reported (emotional or physical) would affect children's likelihood of disclosing

this information to adults or peers. In order to analyze this research question, a series of

factorial ANOVAs were run to examine emotional and physical bullying and if gifted

children were more or less likely to talk about one of the two types of bullying in disclosures to adults or peers.

The ANOVAs revealed no significant interactions between the type of bullying experienced and children's likelihood of reporting bullying to their friends or adults. However, there were some significant main effects for both physical and emotional bullying. Significant main effects were found when testing for physical bullying. Children who reported being bullied physically were significantly more likely to tell either an adult (F (1, 311) = 26.37, $p < .000$, $\eta^2_p = .08$) or a peer (F (1, 312) = 14.42, $p < .000$, $\eta^2_p = .04$). Specifically, children who reported experiencing physical bullying were more likely to tell adults ($M = .37$, $SE = .05$) and peers ($M = .34$, $SE = .05$) than children who did not report being physically bullied ($M = .07$, $SE = .03$ & $M = .10$, $SE = .03$).

No significant effects emerged for gifted status indicating that children who are gifted are not more or less likely to talk to either a peer or an adult about being physically bullied than their peers. Additionally, no significant interactions were found with physical bullying, gifted status, and telling peers or adults. These results suggest that gifted children are not more or less likely to talk with their peers or with adults about being physically bullied than their non-gifted peers.

Results for the ANOVAs run on emotional bullying were very similar to those run for physical bullying with children who reported experiencing emotional bullying being more likely to tell peers (F (1, 311) = 49.10, $p < .000$, $\eta^2_p = .14$) and adults (F (1, 310) = 38.73, $p < .000$, $\eta^2_p = .11$) than those children who did not report experiencing emotional bullying. Specifically, children who reported experiencing emotional bullying

were more likely to tell adults (*M* = .81, *SE* = .08) and peers (*M* = .85, *SE* = .08) than

children who do not report having been emotionally bullied (*M* = .24, *SE* = .05 & *M* =

.20, *SE* = .05). No significant main effect was found for gifted status when experiencing

emotional bullying. There were also no interaction effects with emotional bullying,

gifted status, and talking with a peer or an adult. These results indicate that gifted

children are no more or less likely to discuss emotional bullying with peers and adults

than their non-gifted peers.

Summary of Quantitative Results

Quantitative analysis revealed several significant findings regarding gifted

children, their experiences with being bullied, and their communication with adults and

peers regarding bullying. The first two hypotheses sought to discover if there were

differences in amounts of bullying and different types of bullying that gifted children

experienced. The first hypothesis was that gifted children would report different

amounts of bullying than their non-gifted peers. The present study found that a greater

number of gifted children reported being bullied on a weekly basis than their non-gifted

peers. The second hypothesis was that gifted children would report different types of

bullying. Results from the present study revealed that gifted children reported higher

amounts of name-calling than their non-gifted peers, but there were no differences for

gifted and non-gifted children's reports of any other form of bullying.

Quantitative analysis was also used to address two research questions. The first

considered the likelihood of disclosure. Results indicated that gifted children were not

more likely than other children to talk with adults about their experiences with bullying.

However, gifted children were more likely to talk about being bullied with their peers than non-gifted children. It was also found that children who reported having at least one good friend were much less likely to report experiencing weekly bullying, including both physical and emotional bullying. Friends and peers emerged from this data set as playing an integral role in children's experiences with bullying at school. Results regarding communication emerged regarding gifted children who were bullied on a weekly basis, with these children being more likely to talk with their peers about bullying than their non-gifted counterparts. The present study found that there are some significant differences in the experiences of gifted children regarding being bullied as well as their willingness to talk about bullying in relation to their non-gifted peers.

<div align="center">Qualitative Analysis</div>

This section will consider the results of the qualitative analysis conducted for the present study. Focus group transcripts were analyzed in order to answer two research questions regarding children's communication about bullying that they experience in school and the ways that they react to bullying. Qualitative analyses were used to gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings, as well as to explore the meanings of bullying for gifted middle school children at these schools. It is hoped that through the qualitative analysis, the research will come alive with the voices of the 5th-8th graders who shared a moment of their lives with me. Almost all the children participating in the focus groups also filled out the questionnaire at a separate time. Because of this, I believe that the qualitative research in this study gives a voice to the questionnaires and helps illuminate the statistical findings into actual lived experiences. Specifically, the

qualitative research will be used to examine the following two research questions:

RQ1: How do gifted children talk about the experience of bullying?

RQ4: How do gifted children disclose information to others about being bullied?

Findings

Talking About Bullying

When I first began my conversations with the children, I asked them a series of questions regarding what bullying actually meant to them. This turned out to be a great way to begin the conversations that we had later. It gave the children a chance to get an idea of what exactly we were talking about during our focus group time together. These conversations generally moved through the same sequence beginning with what is bullying, who does it happen to, where does it happen, and what causes people to bully. The final line of conversation about what causes people to bully was not ever on my list of questions. However, it seemed important to the children in each focus group to discuss why bullies treat others so cruelly. Each of the four parts of the conversations revealed at least one theme which contributed to an understanding how these children regard bullying.

Everyday meanies. All of the children I met with seemed to be very well versed in what bullying constituted. This line of questioning evolved into three themes: bullying happens over and over, bullies have a mean intent, and bullying is complicated. When asked to tell me about bullying, the children aligned closely with what the research tells us about bullying. For example, most definitions of bullying talk about the repetitive nature of bullying over time (Olweus, 1996b; Rivers, et al., 2007). When

asked to define bullying, the kids I talked to quipped definitions such as, "Not just, like one time and then they never talk to you again. It would have to be like everyday.", "It has to be constant, it can't be just one day…", or "It is teasing someone over and over again…or hurting someone over and over again."

Additionally, intent seemed to play a role for the children. Bullying was something different than just a friend picking on you in a playful manner. After one child said that it had to happen every single day to be considered bullying, another of his friends spoke up and said, "Or it just could be like, two to three times because if they do it once and you ask them to stop and they do, then that's not bullying; but if they keep on doing it, then it is." In his 1996 definition of bullying, Olweus points to this same fact that it isn't bullying when friends just pick on each other, but that the bully has to have an intent to harm a child (Olweus, 1996b).

A few of the children in the focus groups pointed to the deeper complexities of bullying. One child stated, "Well, sometimes it isn't obvious. Like they could be in gym or something and maybe they threw a ball and they pretended like they were throwing at somebody else to catch. Like passing it to you, but then they were purposefully trying to hit you." While most children agreed that it had to happen more than once, they also knew that it was not always something that everyone saw. Sometimes, it was just something you felt about the way another person treated you that hurt. One child told me, "You get hurt all the time." Another said that bullying happens when someone is, "Showing angry emotions towards people that don't deserve it."

Fat kids, four eyes, and nerds. Once we had discussed what bullying was, conversation turned to who got bullied. Most of the children started off by listing groups of children or individuals who had outward physical problems. Children told me that people were bullied, "If they are fatter", "Or if they are really really skinny." One told the group, "It's like the really little people, or the really tall people, or the really smart people." Frisen, Jonsson, and Persson (2007) found a similar pattern in their study of children's thoughts on why children are bullied. In their study, physical appearance was listed as the top reason that children were bullied. Certainly the children in my study believed that physical appearance was an important factor in why their peers experienced bullying. The kids went through an exhaustive list of all the physical things that a person could be bullied for: being fat, being skinny, being short, being tall, wearing glasses, wearing braces, having pimples, wearing make-up, not wearing make-up, having the wrong clothes, the wrong hair; the list went on and on! One child said, "You know about size, cause you usually don't pick on the football team! They pick on you! Yeah, because they are really big so…yeah…I'm glad football season is over!" Each physical reason that could cause children to be bullied was discussed, but most of these reasons were simply listed or called out as one-word answers. The discussion really began to gain momentum when we started a general talk about differences and intelligence.

In one focus group, after we had been talking about all the reasons a person might be bullied, a child sighed and said, "They don't get the concept that everyone is different and no one is the same!" In another group, after we discussed why children

were bullied, a child said, "And nobody can be exactly like you! They don't get that! They want everyone to be exactly like them and adore them for what they are." These children wanted bullies to appreciate diversity, and yet that seemed to be the key reason that they believed children were bullied.

While the children certainly saw physical appearance as important, they added the idea of nerdiness as being a reason that children were bullied in school. This idea sparked more conversation and participation from the children in the focus groups. Even children who had been quiet to this point erupted with answers when someone would state intelligence or being smart as a reason children were bullied. Recent research has suggested that teachers may perceive gifted children as being less likely to be bullied than their average peers or peers with mild disabilities (Estell, Farmer, Irvin, Crowther, Akos, & Bouudah, 2009). However, in the present study, the gifted students I spoke with certainly perceived intelligence as a cause of bullying. One child said, "We get picked on quite a bit because we work more independent. Like, we only work with people like us (gifted) and we work by ourselves a lot so kids bully us about that." Another said, "They say, 'You're smart, you're a geek, you're a nerd.' Saying harassing things to make them, like, lose their focus in class." Another said, "…the really smart people. Those are the people most likely to get bullied." Two girls had a conversation about being smart and being bullied:

-"It's like just because we're in the GT program, we may be a little bit smarter than you on the subject but that doesn't mean we are nerds!"

- "Yeah! Or that you should pick on us!"

Most of the children simply felt that not only was physical appearance a reason that children were bullied in school, but that children who were smart were picked on as well. When we started talking about smart kids getting bullied, the conversation became much more animated and personal. One of my favorite quotes was from a child who angrily said,

> …and sometimes I tell them, like whenever they call me a nerd or whatever, I'll say, 'Well think of this, when I graduate college in 20 years and I'm the one that has a million dollars, and you've got like, twenty bucks, and you're driving a taxicab-yeah, and you're driving a taxicab-you'll remember us! And I'm driving a Maserati! Think of that!

Bullies in the gym, the cafeteria, and the isolated breezeway to band practice.
One theme that emerged from the data as being very important to the children was where bullying occurred. They had particular places where bullying was likely to occur and several of them actually talked about dreading certain parts of the day because bullying was more likely to occur at those times than others. While Dan Olweus' survey asks where children have been bullied at school, I found no research regarding the qualitative examination of where bullying is likely to occur. This concept of "where the bullies are" was important to the children I talked to. In some ways, this knowledge ruled their days -- causing them to go down different hallways, skip lunch periods, sign up for lunch activities to avoid lunch, and fake sickness to go to the nurse during gym. One very important theme that came from this conversation was that without a teacher or administrator present, bullying was more likely to occur.

Teachers and coaches were the two groups most likely to help prevent bullying. Or, at the very least, the lack of presence of a teacher or coach meant that a student would become more likely to be bullied. When discussing where bullying happened, one boy told me, "In athletics because in athletics, the coaches are around, but they are never paying attention. They're in their office with their door closed." Another child explained it this way, "…places where there's more kids than teachers. Like there's way more kids than the teachers can even handle. I mean, you can't watch every student." One child was very specific about where bullying occurs, telling me, "Walking in between band and going back because there is a big narrow place where it is outside and there are no teachers outside." Another child didn't have a specific location, but instead just said, "Whenever teachers aren't around." After listening quietly to the conversation about where bullying happens, one boy piped up and said, "You know what we need? We need hall monitors, like, really big buff people." While previous research hasn't focused on where bullying is likely to occur and what that could mean for interventions, the conversations with the children in the present study suggest that this might be a very important key to help stop bullying or to at least continue to decrease its occurrence in public schools.

The big dark hole. As our conversations progressed through the mechanics of bullying in school, the children began to ponder what makes a bully "tick". Several of the students brought this question up themselves, adding to the conversation a comment about *why* bullies bully. Research points to the idea that children who bully may be more socially adept than other children (Olweus, 1978; Rigby, 2008). However, the

children who participated in the present study expressed repeatedly the idea that bullies are sad and have internal problems themselves. They did not seem to believe that bullies bully for the pure enjoyment of hurting others as is suggested by research (Kohut, 2007; Quill, 2009). Instead, these children responded that bullies are hurting. As one girl said, "It's a big dark hole if you are the bully and no one's there with you."

Frisen, et al., (2007) found that children in their study reported similar results to the present study which seem to contradict findings in empirical research that bullies have high self-esteem. While it may be the case empirically that bullies have high self-esteem and social skills, the children in the present study felt the need to justify bullies' behaviors by attributing bullies' actions to problems at home and jealousy. These reasons seemed to be easier for them to understand as meanings for why people who bully participate in victimizing others, rather than the fact that they may simply enjoy causing other children pain. One child I spoke with told me, "And a lot of times people hit people with basketballs just because they have feelings that they can't let out." Another girl explained it this way,

> If you're having, like I said, trouble at home or something, then you try to act all cool at school and stuff and you make bad grades because of it and all that kind of stuff. You kind of pick on other people because of it…but they're really having trouble at home with family problems and they are just trying to act all cool about it, but they really need help and stuff you know. They really need help trying to get through all this.

Finally, one boy told me, "Sometimes they are sad and they have the wrong way of letting it out." Gifted children seemed to need to understand why a bully could be so mean. The only reasons they could think of were those that meant that the bully had some sort of external problem making him or her act in an unpleasant manner. Not one single child gave the reason that the bully might actually enjoy hurting others. I felt this was very revealing of our desire to understand negative things that happen as resulting from external problems.

Research question one was designed to assess the ways that gifted children talked about the experience of bullying. Out of this conversation, the children discussed what bullying is, who bullying happens to, where it happens at school, and finally, a justification of why bullies act the way they do. However, understanding the mechanics of bullying for the children was only the first half of what I hoped to learn. Additionally, I wanted to understand how children communicated to others about these experiences.

Disclosing Information to Others

Research question four was designed to illicit responses from the children that would shed light on the process of telling others about bullying. As was noted in the literature review, the disclosure of bullying to others is believed to be appropriate, especially for children. Children are often encouraged to talk to others (typically adults) about being bullied. Several themes emerged from the data regarding the disclosure of information to others. These themes were: why they would or would not tell, friends are people who can be there with you, parents are people who can support you emotionally,

and teachers try to physically and emotionally support, but usually fail. Each of these themes will be further discussed and analyzed in the following sections.

Don't snitch on me!! As soon as the groups started discussing the topic of telling others about bullying, issues of why or why not to tell people immediately came up. I identified this construct as trust. Trust has been found to be an important factor in why children talk to their peers about bullying (Boulton, 2005). Boulton (2005) found that trust was an important reason both for why children said they would and also why they would not disclose to their friends. This same sentiment was echoed in the present focus groups. Trust, to the children in this study, meant that the person they choose to tell will not tell others (especially the bully) that the victim told someone the bully was being mean to them. Before children would choose to disclose to anyone -- friends, parents, or teachers -- they first had to trust that they would not betray them to the bully or to administrators who might make the situation worse.

Trust, based on the belief that the information would not be shared, was an important issue for why children would tell friends. Once child told me, "Well you have to know the friend well enough to know, like, if they aren't going to snitch on you." Another child said, "You need to know the friend well enough to say, 'Well this friend won't snitch on me and she'll understand what I'm talking about so I don't mind telling her.'" Trust was also an important issue for why children would choose to not tell friends. For example, one of the students said, "You have to think, 'Well, I don't want to tell this friend because she's going to tell the whole school that this is happening and

then I'm going to get it—I'm going to get bullied even more by that one person because it spread around the school and the teachers heard about it."

When talking about adults, trust was still important, but not mentioned as frequently. One child told me that "…you have to, like, see what the teachers do whenever you tell somebody. It depends on what they do. You have to watch and see if you can trust them." Another child was very direct that counselors were not to be trusted, telling the group, "You can't trust the counselor. I would say tell a best friend." Finally, one child summed it up saying, "You know, you can tell anyone you trust." Whether children were trusting peers or adults, it was clear that you couldn't just tell anyone about your bullying. It needed to be someone you could feel safe telling because telling the wrong person could result in matters getting a whole lot worse.

Transcript data from the focus groups revealed that children talked about bullying with three groups of people: peers, parents, and teachers. Each of these groups emerged as providing specific and very different types of support. Children talked, or didn't talk, to each group for various reasons. As will be discussed, peers seemed to provide a distinct and physical type of support by standing beside each other when they were bullied. Parents provided emotional support by giving hugs and allowing open discussion without judgment. Teachers were a more complicated group who were portrayed as trying to provide both emotional and physical support to children, but rarely were perceived as being successful at either.

Talking to Peers

Friends were one of the most mentioned groups that children said that they would tell about bullying. Friends were seen as being the only group that could successfully buffer the occurrence and effects of bullying. When I asked who children would tell, one child summed up what many children voiced, saying, "Talking to friends is probably one of the most effective things." Another said, "I can always talk to my friends." Empirical evidence exists for the fact that children are more likely to talk to their friends about bullying (Boulton, 2005; Smith & Shu, 2000). The present study found that gifted children were also more likely to talk to their friends about bullying as well.

Will you be there when I need you? The focus groups revealed that children felt that their friends could do more for them "in the battlefield" than parents and teachers. One child explained the advantages of telling a friend by saying, "But it is good to tell your friends because they can tell their friends and then their friends and then they can, like, watch you to make sure you don't get bullied and they can help you when you do." One boy told me, "Your parents just say, 'Let's go tell' but your friends can stay with you during the times you are being bullied." Another child said, "Friends can stand up for you when you are being bullied." Friends were also important because they provided children with someone to verify bullying experiences. Two children explained this concept to me by saying,

- "And so, a friend could walk with you or a big group could walk with you and stuff."

- "Yeah! Because then you have eye witnesses. And so, people can tell that

  you aren't lying or whatever."

One girl stated simply, "Your friends can comfort you when you hurt, and that's why I would tell them."

Finally, the gifted children in the focus groups felt that children without friends were more likely to be bullied because they were alone. The present study found that, statistically, children who had at least one good friend were less likely to be bullied. The children in the focus groups were very adamant about the fact that friends helped a person not be bullied. One girl noted, "People who don't have friends get picked on more." Another child echoed this belief stating that, "Everyone knows that people pick on the people that don't have friends." A final statement from one of the girls was that, "Sometimes I notice that really smart people don't have a whole lot of friends. They have good friends, but not a whole lot of them. Still, it helps to have friends!" These children were convinced that friends were very important to controlling the effects of bullying. In the present study, friends are likely to be told about bullying because they are perceived as able to help in very real ways, on a daily basis, to help eliminate bullying. Not having friends was perceived as making a person much more likely to be a victim of bullying.

What About Grown-ups?

It has been noted in research that children often do not tell adults, though schools often base anti-bullying programs on the premise that victims should tell adults (Smith & Shu, 2000). Smith and Shu (2000) found that 30 percent of the children surveyed had

not ever told anyone about the bullying they experienced in school. Of those children who did tell, they were most likely to tell family and friends, followed by teachers. Interestingly, this study found that when children did tell adults, it almost always helped the child feel better about the situation. In the present study, gifted children and their non-gifted peers were not shown to have differences in their likelihood to tell adults. One child hesitantly discussed telling parents and slowly told me, "You know, talking to parents can help if they *really* listen."

Geez, Mom!! Concerning telling parents about bullying, children divided up into two camps which was illustrated by a child who said, "Well sometimes they might help, but they might make it worse." Parents were seen as a source of emotional support against bullying. One child said, "You can like, cry to your parents and let out your feelings and give them a big hug." Another told me, "…because your parents let you let your feelings out." Parents were also believed to be a good choice for disclosure because parents know you best and, as one child put it, "Your parents, you know they are going to take your side."

However, while many children thought parents would offer emotional support, some children were adamant about the problems of talking with parents about bullying. For the kids who didn't want to talk to their parents, it was summed up by this general statement from a girl who exclaimed, "Oh no! I can't tell my parents anything because they will tell!" Most of the children who did not want to talk to their parents expressed this feeling because they did not want their parents to call the school and intensify the situation. One child said, "Most of the time you definitely don't want to tell your mom

because then she will call the school and rat you out and everything. And then the bullies will know you told your Mommy and they will bully you more." Another child said, "Oh if your parents call the school it is terrible." It appeared in the present study that the children would tell their parents about being bullied when they believed their parents would provide emotional support. However, if children believed that their parents might contact the school, they were reluctant to disclose information about bullying to them. Parents were most effective and most likely to be a person children disclosed to if they provided emotional support to the children by letting them express their emotions, and providing them with hugs and other emotional help.

Teach me what to do. Teachers were the final group of adults that children in the present study discussed as people to whom they might disclose information about bullying. Teachers were one of the most complicated groups that children described. Children felt that teachers were often willing to help, but that more often than not, their help was ineffective. Teachers tried to provide a complicated combination of physical support like peers, as well as emotional support like parents. However, teachers were perceived by the children in the focus groups as ineffective at both types of support. Two children spoke positively about telling teachers saying, "Sometimes teachers can look out for you, keep an eye on you." and "Yeah, they'll be watching out for you." However, the majority of children in the present study felt that teachers were ineffective.

In the area of emotional support, teachers were seen as trying to be supportive, but failing. One girl said, "Your teachers they usually freak out and are like, 'Oh my God! Are you ok?' And you are like, 'No I'm not ok, I'm being bullied!' and no offense

to female teachers, but they try to give you sympathy and sometimes they just—freak out—and it doesn't help. It just, sort of, you just, are even worse!" Another child said, "This one kid started bullying me last year, and I kept telling the teacher, but she never believed me." Emotional support seemed to be a reason that children told teachers, but they often believed that the emotional support given was ineffective.

Additionally, children discussed how teachers try to provide children with physical support by removing bullies and watching children. As with emotional support, children also perceived teachers as lacking in ability to provide appropriate physical support. One girl said,

Whenever a person doesn't want to tell the teacher, it's because they don't know what's going to happen. They think, 'Oh well, that teacher is going to say, so-and-so told me that you did this and so we are going to put you in ISS this week.' Or whatever, and then that person is going to retaliate and hit you or attack you again and you just think, well, it's not going to do any good and she's just going to hate me more for turning her in.

Teachers might try to remove the problem, but when teachers attempted to help, the children felt that the bullies would retaliate and bully more, thus rendering the punishment useless. Another boy told the group,

Or like you'll tell a teacher or whatever and then the bully, after they get in trouble, they'll leave you alone for a certain amount of time and then once you think they're never going to bully you again, they start back up again. And you just think, 'Well, even if I tell on them again it's still going to keep happening so

there's no use in telling. I'm just going to have to live with it until we get out of

school.'

While teachers are available to children, and might seem to be an obvious choice for

disclosure, the gifted children involved in this study seemed to find teachers unable to

provide the support that friends and parents could provide, making teachers the least

desirable group to tell.

Summary of Qualitative Results

Qualitative results from the focus groups revealed several interesting themes

regarding gifted children's perceptions about bullying and about disclosing bullying to

peers and adults. Qualitative results showed that gifted children believed that bullying

had to happen repeatedly, but was also more complex than simply recurrence. Themes

also emerged regarding bullying being more likely to occur where there is no adult

supervision, and that it was more likely to occur to people with physical and intellectual

differences from the norm. Interestingly, several of the children in the focus groups

spoke about why bullying happens, providing the explanation that bullies are "sad

inside."

Additionally, when examining who children talk to and why, trust was of utmost

importance, with peers and parents both seeming to fulfill important trustworthy roles

for children. Peers were able to provide a physical role in bullying by being with the

victim to help prevent future bullying. On the other hand, parents were good for

providing an emotional support to children. Reports on teachers revealed that children

hoped their teachers might be able to provide both an emotional role by empathizing,

understanding, and relating to children, as well as a physical role by removing bullies and being present to prevent occurrences of bullying. However, in the present study, the children reported almost all negative information about the effectiveness of teachers' emotional and physical support.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Discussion

Research Questions and Findings

This study considered the experiences of gifted middle school children with regard to school bullying and examined the relationship between giftedness and children's willingness to disclose information about bullying to others. Previous research has shown that gifted children are a distinctive group of children in schools with distinctive educational needs (Silverman, 2000). This study sought to add to the literature by focusing on understanding gifted children as a population with unique needs and ways of viewing bullying at school. The first part of the study examined distinctions between gifted and non-gifted children regarding varying aspects of bullying. It was expected that differences would exist between gifted students and their non-gifted peers in several ways, including experiencing different amounts of bullying, different types of bullying, and differences in discussing bullying. It was also expected that different types of bullying would affect the likelihood that children would disclose that they were bullied to peers and adults. Additionally, the present study attempted to gain a deeper insight into the actual experience of being gifted and bullying in middle school. It was expected that gifted children would have a unique way of talking about the experience of bullying in school as well as a unique way of thinking about and engaging in disclosure of bullying.

The present study revealed several interesting findings regarding the proposed hypotheses. First, gifted children reported more weekly bullying and more weekly name-calling than non-gifted peers. Gifted children were less likely to report engaging in general weekly bullying as well as general hitting or kicking of other children than their non-gifted peers. Gifted children were found to be more likely to talk to their peers about bullying, though no differences existed between gifted children and their non-gifted peers in their likelihood of telling adults. Finally, it was found that no differences existed for the type of bullying experienced or the likelihood that children would disclose information. Qualitative analysis revealed that, while gifted children echoed previously reported ideas regarding what bullying is and who the victims of bullying are, gifted children did have unique ways of thinking about bullying. These children explained that bullying occurs repeatedly, but it is more complex than simply repetitive action; that it usually occurs where there is no adult supervision; that victims are likely to be physically different or smart; and that bullies are likely to be "sad inside" for unique reasons. Peers and parents were found to be the people gifted children talked to the most, and teachers the least. These findings are important and reveal implications for both understanding gifted children as well as helping improve bullying interventions for children who are gifted.

While the findings of the present study add to current literature, it should be noted that there were limitations to the study. The main limitation was that focus groups were not available for each of the schools where surveys were collected. This was due to a variety of factors including schools not wanting to participate in the focus groups

and scheduling difficulties. Therefore, the voices expressed in this study add to the understanding of the quantitative analysis, but a voice from each school is noticeably missing. Future studies should include focus group data from each of the schools where quantitative data is collected. Additionally, the present study was limited by the fact that children were the participants. This required a great amount of work to get permission from the parents and the children. There is probably an amount of bias in the people who chose to return the permission forms for their children. Additionally, there were school to school differences in administration procedures, which made it more or less likely to get returned permission forms from children. While it is impossible to eliminate the necessary permissions, future work in this vein should be more explicit about school expectations and arrange times for surveys, focus groups, and interviews with the schools at the time research begins.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

<div align="center">*Explanation of Findings*</div>

Although there were limitations to the research, the findings yielded through this study provide insights that have important implications for theory, practice, and interventions. Through the analysis of the data, several general areas of findings emerged that highlight the importance of the current research. The present study adds to the current body of research a greater understanding of gifted children and the fact that they experience greater amounts of bullying in school, the different ways that social support may or may not be effective for gifted children, the ways in which gifted

children engage in sense making of bullying behavior, and the importance of having one good friend in the prevention and buffering of bullying.

Gifted Children Are Bullied More

The first major finding in the current study was that gifted children did report being bullied more frequently than their non-gifted peers. Specifically, gifted children in the present study reported experiencing greater amounts of weekly bullying than other children as well as higher amounts of weekly name calling. This was consistent with the hypothesis in the current study that gifted children would experience different amounts of bullying than their non-gifted peers. Because no literature is known to exist showing that gifted children report that they are more likely to be bullied, this finding is a very important addition to the current literature. While no previous research was found specifically targeting gifted children's likelihood of being bullied, previous research has shown that children with special needs are more likely to experience bullying in school (e.g., Van Cleave & Davis, 2006). The current study adds to this literature the fact that gifted children may also be perceived as "different," and therefore, be more likely to be bullied.

Additionally, research has found that victims of bullying experience a variety of negative outcomes (e.g., Juvonen, et al., 2000) and the findings of the current study show that gifted children are more likely to be bullied weekly, and would therefore be more likely to experience the negative effects of bullying. Because these children are gifted, their feelings (both negative and positive) are likely to be more intense than other children's emotions (Schuler, 2002). Literature has also shown that one of the

characteristics of gifted children is an increased sensitivity to various stimuli (Silverman, 2000). Sword (2003) wrote that gifted children feel emotions with a greater intensity and will often relive feelings they experience over and over. Based on these characteristics of gifted children, it may be the case that they are more sensitive to negative behaviors from other children than their peers. This could lead them to perceive a greater number of behaviors as bullying than other children would perceive.

While the current study revealed that gifted children report higher amounts of weekly bullying than other students, previous research has revealed that teachers tend to rate gifted children as the least likely group to be bullied (Estell, Farmer, Irvin, Crowther, Akos, & Boudah, 2009). Because the present study showed that gifted children reported higher amounts of weekly bullying than their non-gifted peers, it is essential that teachers, parents, and administrators notice the importance of giftedness and the potential impact giftedness has on children's social relationships and peer interaction in school.

The finding that gifted children report more bullying than other children has several implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, it adds to the understanding of giftedness. It has been proposed that gifted children are more sensitive than their peers (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977; Silverman 2000), and the present study adds to this understanding of greater sensitivity. Additionally, scholars of gifted children have pointed to the fact that gifted children are a unique population of children, possessing characteristics that make them different from their peers and in need of unique educational development (Silverman, 2000). The current study adds to this sense

of "difference" between gifted children and non-gifted children. Whether because of differences in the treatment they receive from other children or the ways in which they interpret interaction with peers, gifted children are experiencing the world differently than other children.

Additionally, this finding has important practical implications for teachers and administrators who work with gifted children. Because gifted children may experience bullying with greater sensitivity, teachers and counselors should help gifted children identify true bullying behaviors, and help them process the emotions they feel when they are bullied. Additionally, because teachers often do not think that gifted children are bullied (Estell, et al., 2009), the present findings are important for teachers and administrators. There is a difference in teachers' perceptions of children's experiences and gifted children's actual lived experiences in schools. Teachers need to develop a greater understanding of the true experience of gifted children and bullying.

Finally, this finding also has important implications for interventions. Counselors should take special note of gifted children who are bullied and acknowledge the differences that make them more sensitive to bullying. It should be imperative in school districts that gifted children are monitored for being victims of bullying, and counseled on how to cope with the experiences. Future interventions should also focus specifically on the gifted as a population that may experience greater amounts of bullying in schools. Teachers, administrators, and parents should be made aware of the fact that being gifted may lead to higher amounts of bullying. Teachers need to be included in interventions regarding bullying, and be equipped with a realistic view of

what school experiences are like for gifted children. Linda Silverman (2000) points out that gifted children are often assumed to be able to take care of themselves. However, future interventions should educate teachers that gifted children may sometimes be at a greater risk than other children, particularly with regard to bullying.

Social Support Works (or Does Not Work) in Different Ways

The second major set of findings was that social support emerged as an important factor in bullying. Interestingly, different groups of people (parents, teachers, and peers) played different roles that children found to be sometimes effective and sometimes not effective in helping prevent or buffer the effects of bullying. Social support has been found to be an important buffer for bullied children in school (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). The present study adds to the understanding of social support and the roles that various players have when giving social support. Additionally, it was evident from the current study that trust was a critical and necessary element before gifted children felt comfortable disclosing to anyone. Gifted children explained the importance of trust in the disclosure process. Without trust (believing the person will not tell others about the bullying), children are not very likely to talk about bullying. Other studies have shown that children report trust as a very important issue for why they would or would not tell another person about bullying (e.g., Boulton, 2005). In the present study, once children felt comfortable disclosing information, they revealed a variety of reasons regarding disclosure to parents, teachers, or friends. The importance of each of these groups for the gifted children in the current study will be discussed in further detail.

Social support has been found to be an important factor in processing and buffering bullying for children (Rigby, 2000). Khan and Antonucci (1980) write that social support is a complex concept consisting of a variety of factors, including material assistance (actions), cognitive assistance (advice and assistance with "thinking through"), and emotional assistance. This support is believed to have a positive impact on children when it is present and a negative impact when it is absent (Rigby, 2000). Gifted children in the present study identified three groups of people (parents, teachers, and peers) who could potentially provide (or not provide) social support, with each group emerging as important for differing reasons. These groups are in line with other research examining bullying and who children turn to for support (e.g. Rigby 2000). In this study, gifted children were not more or less likely to talk to adults than their non-gifted peers. However, they did shed light on why they would chose to talk or not to talk to parents, teachers, and peers. Interestingly, gifted children were found to be more likely than their non-gifted peers to talk to friends about bullying.

Parents as social support. Gifted children reported that parents were one group with whom they might be willing to share information about bullying. Parents were seen as potential providers of emotional assistance, but efforts at support were not always successful. Additionally, parents were seen as able to take material support actions by talking with principals or teachers, but this was seen as a very negative action that often resulted in making bullying worse. Unlike teachers and peers, parents are not at school with children, and therefore, it makes sense that the children saw them as able to provide more emotional support than material support. Parents have been found to be important

players in a child's bullying experience. For example, Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, and Gargus (2009) found that victims of bullying who felt supported emotionally by their parents were less likely to report depressive symptoms than children who reported not feeling supported by their parents. Matsunaga (2009) found that children who do not tell their family about bullying feel more negatively about the bullying situation at school.

These findings, along with the present study's focus on parents as emotional support show that gifted children need parents to provide them with support that is unique from teacher and peers and is more emotional in nature. This finding adds to the current literature on parenting of the gifted. The present findings suggest that parents would probably be most successful if they support children with hugs, kisses, and reminders of how much they love their children. However, when it comes to "actions," the children in the present study indicated that parents are not always successful in helping and often they make things worse. Debora Ruf (2005) writes about gifted children's ability to get along with and relate to adults. Because of this characteristic of the population, parents should perhaps include the child in conversations about "actions" to take against bullying. As the children in this study imply, parents were noted to play an important emotional support role, but it may not always be wise for parents to take an activist role against bullying in their child's life.

Teachers as social support. Gifted children also discussed the role teachers play in social support. Teachers were a complex group of people, being seen as theoretically helpful, but often not actually helpful. It has been found in other studies that children

report being less likely to disclose information to teachers than other sources because they worry that teachers will do nothing, which makes the victim feel worse about the situation (Smith & Shu, 2000). The present study found this to be true of the gifted children. These children discussed teachers as a poor source for support, because they were perceived as wanting to help children, but being very unsuccessful at actually helping. Many times throughout the focus groups, children echoed the findings of Smith and Shu (2000) that teachers would make them feel worse about what was happening because it was feared teachers would do nothing to stop the bullying. Gifted children's heightened sensitivity (Silverman, 2000) might lead children to see this lack of action as being particularly distressing.

While gifted children often cited teachers as providing poor emotional support, they did support teachers' abilities to provide material support. One important finding of the present study expressed by the gifted children was that teachers could sometimes buffer you from being bullied in the first place by simply being present in certain locations. The mere presence of adults in places where adults are typically scarce may be enough to buffer some of the likelihood that children will experience bullying. This was a potential for social support from teachers.

The information on teachers and the roles that they play are an important addition to existing literature. The finding that gifted children believe the presence of teachers in locations where bullying is likely to occur is an opportunity for schools to provide children with material support. This finding has very practical implications for school districts because with a small amount of effort, schools could locate places where

bullying is most likely to occur and station teachers in these places, perhaps reducing the occurrence of bullying.

   Peers as social support. Finally, peers were seen by gifted children as playing important emotional support roles, as well as material support roles in prevention of bullying. Peers have been found in other literature to be an important factor in helping children understand and deal with bullying (Boulton, 2005). Indeed, peers are perceived as so important and so effective in helping with bullying that interventions have been created utilizing peer counselors (Boulton, 2005). The present study adds to the literature that friends are not only good for emotional support, but also for material support. In other words, friends can "do" things to protect you from bullies. Gifted children have been shown to have some difficulty with friendships because of their uneven development (Robinson, et al. 2007). However, other scholars like Silverman (2000) point out that when gifted children are provided with opportunities to be around like-minded children, they often develop deep and fruitful peer relationships. Therefore, it may be the case that when friends are available, they are a readily used source of social support for gifted children due to the deep nature of the friendship that non-gifted children may not experience in the same manner. Because gifted children in the present study were more likely to talk to their friends than their non-gifted peers were, it is likely that gifted children are forming more deep and meaningful relationships than their non-gifted classmates.

   The findings on peers in the present study have important implications for theory and for interventions. Theoretically, the present study does not support the fact that

gifted children are less likely to have friends; instead it supports the idea that gifted

children may actually be forming more meaningful and deeper relationships with peers,

leading them to disclose more information to friends than non-gifted children would.

This could lead to interventions that focus on the importance of peer friendships for the

gifted, and supporting those friends who are told about bullying by teaching students

what steps to take when a friend reveals they are being bullied.

Making Sense of the Bullies

When gifted children were asked about bullying, children in every focus group

talked about the bullies themselves, even though no questions directly asked about why

bullies participate in bullying other children. It was an intriguing finding that gifted

children were emphatic about the fact that bullies behave the way they do because they

are "sad inside". This was the most cited reason in the present study for why bullies hurt

other children. A study in 2007 by Frisen, et al., asked children to rate the reasons that

children bully others and classified these responses into nine categories: low self esteem

(28%), bully feels cool (26%), the bully has problems (15%), peer pressure (9%), bully

is annoyed with the victim (5%), the bully is jealous of the victim (4%), lack of respect

(4%), bully is also a victim (4%), and other (5%). While the children in the Friesen et al.

(2007) did list "having problems" as a reason that children would bully others, this was

believed by only 15% of the children surveyed.

In a study by Peterson and Ray (2006b), studying gifted children and bullying,

the researchers found that the notion that bullies were sad because of problems at home

or at school was often cited as a cause of bullying. However, the children in Peterson

and Ray's study also talked about internal reasons for bullying (e.g., they enjoy bullying, they have poor self-esteem). In the current study, gifted children believed that external factors were the single most important factor in understanding why bullies acted in the ways they do. It is also important to note that the gifted children in the present study made the distinction that bullies do not simply have low self-esteem; they have problems such as problems at home, at school, with friends, etc. that cause them to bully others. These are external problems rather than internal problems. While the children in this study recognized that bullies were sad (an internal feeling), they were quick to make external attributions regarding this feeling. Bullies were not viewed as internally mean people, they were believed to be acting in a mean way because of external factors.

Wiener (1985) writes that attribution theory explains the ways in which people evaluate, or make sense of, events that directly affect them emotionally and assign meanings to those events. This theory helps shed light on the gifted children's responses to why bullies hurt other children. Weiner (1985) explains that there are internal and external attributions. External attributions explain behaviors as stemming from something outside of a person's control while internal attributions explain behaviors as coming from an internal characteristic of the person, something inside them (Kelley & Michela, 1980).

In the present study, gifted children made external attributions both for bullies as well as victims. Other research on gifted children supports the idea that gifted children view external attributions as the reasons children are most bullied (e.g., any sort of differences in appearance) and giftedness to these children is viewed the same way; as a

difference (Peterson & Ray, 2006b). However, in other studies (e.g., Frisen, et al., 2007; Peterson & Ray 2006b) where both gifted and non-gifted children have explained bullying behavior, it has been seen as stemming from internal problems of the bully (low self-esteem, jealousy) more than external problems (abuse at home, bullies are victims as well). Christian (2009) writes that, "attribution theory, greatly simplified, says that we tend to 'blame' someone's behavior on internal factors (their disposition, their personality) rather than external factors (their circumstances, the unique situation)" (p.28). Interestingly, the present study shows that gifted children were more likely to explain bullies behaviors in ways that are external attributions rather than internal, placing less blame on the bullies for their behaviors.

Recent research in brain activity of bullies has shown that bullies may actually enjoy bullying others (Quill, 2009). The findings from the present study highlight the importance for gifted children of making attributions for bullies' behaviors that focus on the fact that bullies are not simply mean, but that they are sad because sad things or frustrating things have happened to them. This is an important distinction for gifted children. As was discussed in the literature review, gifted children are characterized by their overexcitabilities, or sensitivities to social and emotional issues (Silverman, 2000). One characteristic of these sensitivities is that gifted children have deeper emotional feelings than their age-mates, as well as deeper concerns for others (Silverman, 2000). The present study adds to the body of literature on overexcitabilities. It appears that gifted children do have a deeper concern for bullies, attributing their hurtfulness to problems at home, or feelings of sadness resulting from problems in the bully's life,

rather than internal problems of jealousy or meanness. The gifted children in the present study also discussed the complexity of emotions for bullies, adding that bullies probably have feelings that they cannot express and so bully as an emotional release. This is an example of the deepened understanding of the complexities of bullies that is unique to gifted children.

The present finding that gifted children are more likely to attribute bullies' behaviors to external problems has important implications for theory as well as for practice of teachers and counselors. Theoretically, this finding adds to the understanding of gifted children and their sensitivity towards, and empathy for, others. This study has helped to illuminate the ways in which gifted children think and make sense of their world. While other children may be prone to see bullies as jealous or mean, gifted children are more sensitive to the fact that bullies may be facing complex emotional issues in their personal lives.

This finding also translates into important issues for practitioners who work with gifted children. Counselors should be particularly careful to review attributions regarding bullies with gifted children. They should be sensitive to the fact that gifted children see deep emotional reasons for bullies hurting others, and are more prone to think more deeply than their non-gifted peers about why bullies behave the way they do. It is important that counselors and other people who work with gifted children help them navigate issues of blaming and understanding, and help these children to evaluate the bullying situation.

The Importance of One Good Friend

One very interesting and unexpected finding of this study revealed the importance of not being isolated. The present study revealed that having just one good friend at school significantly decreased the likelihood that children would be bullied at school. As discussed previously, social support from peers has been found to be an important factor in buffering the effects of bullying on victims (Flaspohler, et al., 2009). However, studies like the Flaspohler et al. (2009) study find that general feelings of peer support are important. However, current findings add to the literature that it is not necessarily the case that children feel supported by large numbers of peers, but that by simply having one friend, children may be more protected from bullies.

Theoretically, this adds to the literature on understanding bullying. As with the Estell et al. (2009) study, isolation emerges as an important part of bullying. Not only is it the case that feeling peer support is important, but research is beginning to suggest that isolation may play an important role in victimization. While traditional studies of bullying have focused on the importance of social support, more attention may need to be paid to social isolation. It may be the case that it is not the fact that social support is especially helpful in preventing bullying, but rather that social isolation is particularly harmful to children. This is not to say that social support is not important, but that the findings of the present study imply that when it comes to prevention efforts, it may be isolation that is more likely to lead to victimization than it is social support from peers that buffers against bullying.

Additionally, while this research adds the theoretical concept of "one good friend" as important, it will be necessary for future research to tease out the meaning of what "one good friend" is and examine questions of age, context, and location of a child's friend. The finding on the importance of one good friend also has important implications for people working with gifted children. Children who are noted to not have even one friend may need special attention and buffering from bullying. Future research should more closely examine this group of children and determine what interventions might help them. This finding also indicates that future interventions would benefit from focusing more on social development than on actual bullying behaviors.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Despite the fact that bullying is seen by some as a natural part of growing up (Simmons, 2002), bullying can lead to tragic and lasting negative effects on children (e.g., Sullivan, et al., 2006; Winfrey, 2009). The present study sheds light on an often overlooked population within our schools, the gifted, and added to the very small body of research on gifted children who are bullied. This study revealed interesting findings which deepen the understanding of the sensitivity of gifted children, and allowed a look at differences in gifted children's experiences with bullying compared to the experiences of their non-gifted peers. Further, it considered the important communicative issue of when and how gifted children disclose information about bullying to others. In sum, the present study revealed the importance of seeing gifted children as a unique population in regard to bullying.

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APPENDIX A

To the Principal of _____ School:

My name is Rachel Jumper, and I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M in the Department of Communication. I am beginning my dissertation and I am interested in using your school in my dissertation research. My dissertation is being directed by Katherine Miller (kimiller@tamu.edu), and the member of the College of Education on my committee is Joyce Juntune (j-juntune@tamu.edu) who is an expert in the area of gifted and talented students.

My research interests are in bullying behaviors of middle school students. I am particularly interested in looking at differences in the experience of being bullied/bullies between gifted students and students not identified as gifted.

If you agreed to participate in the study, I would give all the students in your school a survey to complete about bully behaviors in school. This would identify types of bullying experienced, what years it is most experienced, types of bully behavior used by children, and if children talk about being bullied/bullies and with whom they talk. The survey would take about 40 minutes for the students to complete.

In addition to the surveys for all students, I would like to conduct focus groups with children in the school who have been identified as gifted. Focus groups would last anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour. These focus groups would narrow in on the experience of being gifted and being bullied/a bully in middle school. When each focus group end, I would also offer students the opportunity to be interviewed on an individual basis.

I hope to begin data collection in September 2008. I am attaching a brief overview of the research and measures for you to review. I will be contacting you soon to follow up on this initial introduction, tell you more about the study, and discuss whether it would be possible for students at your school to participate in the study. In the meantime, feel free to contact me with any questions you have regarding the study. My e-mail is rjumper@tamu.edu.

Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Rachel Leah Jumper

PARENT PERMISSION FORM
The Experience of Bullying in Schools

Introduction
The purpose of this form is to provide you (as the parent of a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to let your child participate in this research study. Also, if you decide to let your child be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Your child has been asked to participate in a research study about bully/victim behaviors in school and how being part of a group at school affects the way bullying is perceived. Your child was selected as a possible participant because he or she was identified as being in the 5th-8th grade in their school. The purpose of the study is to examine how much bullying occurs in school, and how different groups of children handle bullying/being bullies.

What will my child be asked to do?
If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, your child will be asked to fill out a survey about his or her experiences with bullying/being a bully in school. Participation in the survey should take approximately one hour.

What are the risks involved in this study?
Risks from your child's participation in this study are unlikely but some temporary discomfort may occur while thinking about past events that may have transpired between your child and any bullies.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
Your child may benefit from this study by thinking about how to prevent bullying from happening at school or helping your child to avoid participating in bullying behaviors at school. In addition, this study will help understand how students experience bullying and may lead to more effective interventions.

Does my child have to participate?
No, your child doesn't have to be in this research study. You can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

This research study will take place during regular classroom activities; however, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternate activity will be available. The child's teacher will give an alternative project to the students during the time that participating children are completing the survey.

What if my child does not want to participate?
In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study. If you child does not want to participate they will not be included in the study and there will be no penalty. If your child initially agrees to be in the study he/she can change their mind later without any penalty.

Who will know about my child's participation in this research study?
This study is confidential. Your child's name and information will be changed for the purposes of this study. For the survey portion of the study, names will not be required. Therefore, there will be no link between the survey and your child.

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking your child to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Rachel Jumper and Katherine Miller will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

You can contact Rachel Jumper, (979) 845-5125, rjumper@tamu.edu, or Dr. Katherine Miller, kimiller@tamu.edu, both in the Department of Communication at Texas A&M University with any questions about this study

Whom do I contact about my child's rights as a research participant?
This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Please retain this portion of the form for your records. Sign and detach the final page if you agree to let your child participate. Please return the signed forms to your child's teacher.

Signature
Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to allow your child to participate in this study.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Printed Name of Child: _____

School Child Attends: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS SHEET TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 16TH

PARENT PERMISSION FORM
The Experience of Bullying in Schools -Gifted

Introduction
The purpose of this form is to provide you (as the parent of a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to let your child participate in this research study. Also, if you decide to let your child be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Your child has been asked to participate in a research study about bully/victim behaviors in school and how being gifted affects the way bullying is perceived. Your child was selected as a possible participant because he or she was identified as being in the 5th-8th grade in their school and has been identified by the school district as gifted. The purpose of the study is to examine how much bullying occurs in school, and how different groups of children handle bullying/being bullies.

What will my child be asked to do?
If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, your child will be asked to fill out a survey about his or her experiences with bullying/being a bully in school. Participation in this portion of the study should take approximately one hour. In addition to the survey, gifted students who participate will be asked to sign up for a focus group. Focus group participants will meet together and discuss a variety of topics relating to being bullied/being a bully at school. A counselor will be present in the room during the group. This portion of the study should last 30-60 minutes. Following the focus groups children will be asked if they wish to participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will be for children who have information they want to share, but are uncomfortable relating to the whole group. Interviews will last no longer than one hour.

Your child will be audio recorded during the focus group and interview portions of the study. Audio recordings are used to make transcripts of the group so that accurate information is recorded. Only your child's voice will be on the tape. Names are changed for research purposes. If you choose not to let your child be audio recorded, they may still participate in an individual interview, and if there are enough children, a separate unrecorded focus group will be conducted.

What are the risks involved in this study?
Risks from your child's participation in this study are unlikely but some temporary discomfort may occur while thinking about past events that may have transpired between your child and any bullies.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
Your child may benefit from this study by thinking about how to prevent bullying from happening at school or helping your child to avoid participating in bullying behaviors at school. In addition, this study will help understand how gifted students experience bullying and may lead to more effective interventions targeted to gifted children.

Does my child have to participate?
No, your child doesn't have to be in this research study. You can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The survey portion of this research study will take place during regular classroom activities; however, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternate activity will be available. The child's teacher will give an alternative project to the students during the time that participating children are completing the survey. The focus group portion of the study will take place at the child's school, and will be conducted during a free period or after school. All focus groups will take place in a classroom at the child's school. Interviews will also take place on your child's school campus and occur during a free period or after school. All interviews will take place in a room assigned by the principal.

What if my child does not want to participate?
In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study. If you child does not want to participate they will not be included in the study and there will be no penalty. If your child initially agrees to be in the study he/she can change their mind later without any penalty.
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Who will know about my child's participation in this research study?
This study is confidential. Your child's name and information will be changed for the purposes of this study. For the survey portion of the study, names will not be required. Therefore, there will be no link between the survey and your child.

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking your child to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Rachel Jumper and Katherine Miller will have access to the records.

If you choose to allow your child to participate in this study, they will be audio recorded during the focus group. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Rachel Leah Jumper and Dr. Katherine Miller will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for three years and then erased.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?
You can contact Rachel Jumper, rjumper@tamu.edu, or Dr. Katherine Miller, kimiller@tamu.edu, both in the Department of Communication at Texas A&M University with any questions about this study

Whom do I contact about my child's rights as a research participant?
This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

You may retain the first two pages for your own records. Please sign and detach the signature page and return to your child's teacher.

Signature
Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to allow your child to participate in this study.

_____I agree to let my child be audio recorded (will be destroyed after 3 years)
_____I do not agree to let my child be audio recorded

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____   Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Printed Name of Child: **_____**

Name of School Child Attends: _____

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT NO LATER THAN **

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire on bullying for students
Copyright: Dan Olweus 1996-2006 BVP-Olweus

Name of school: _____

Grade:_____Date:_____

How long have you gone to this school (circle one)? Since:
Kindergarten   1st grade   2nd grade   3rd grade   4th grade
            5th grade   6th grade   7th grade   8th grade

You will find questions in this booklet about your life in school and your life at home. There are several answers next to each question. Answer the question by marking an **X** in the box next to the answer that best describes how you feel about school. If you really dislike school, put an **X** in the box next to "I dislike school very much". If you really like school, put an **X** in the box nest to "I like school very much", and so on. Only mark **one of the boxes**. Try to keep the mark inside of the box.

Now put an X in the box next to the answer that best describes how you feel about school.

1	How do you like school?	❏ I dislike school very much
		❏ I dislike school
		❏ I neither like nor dislike school
		❏ I like school
		❏ I like school very much

If you **mark the wrong box,** you can change your answer like this: Make the wrong box completely black:■. Then put an **X** in the box where you want your answer to be.

Don't put your name on this booklet. No one will know how you have answered these questions. But it is important that you answer carefully and how you really feel. Sometimes it is hard to decide what to answer. The just answer how you think it is. If you have questions, raise your hand.

Most of the questions are about **your life in school in the past couple of months, that is, the period from the start of school after summer/winter holiday vacation until now.** So when you answer, you should think of how it has been during the past 2 or 3 months and **not only how it is just now.** The questions about your life at home should be answered for how your family is now.

2	Are you a boy or a girl?	❏ girl
		❏ boy

| 3 | How many brothers and sisters do you have who live at home with you? | ❐ Zero
❐ One
❐ Two
❐ Three
❐ Four
❐ Five or more |

| 4 | Which of the following best describes you? | ❐ I am the oldest child in my family
❐ I am a middle child in my family
❐ I am the youngest child in my family
❐ I am the only child in my family |

| 5 | Which of the following best describes your family? (you can mark as many as you need to tell about your family) | ❐ I live with two parents
❐ I live with one parent
❐ I have a step-parent
❐ I live with someone other than parents.
❐ None of these describe my family |
| 5b | If none of these describe your family or you want to tell us more, use this space to tell us how your family could be described:_____ | |

| 6 | How many good friends do you have in your school? | ❐ None
❐ I have 1 good friend at my school
❐ I have 2 or 3 good friends
❐ I have 4 or 5 good friends
❐ I have 6 or more good friends |

7a	Have you been identified by your school as "gifted and talented"	❏ Yes ❏ No ❏ I'm not sure
7b	Do you participate in special classes or activities for kids who are gifted?	❏ Yes ❏ No
7c	Please list these activities or classes that you participate in: _____ _____ _____	

8	Which of the following best describes you?	❏ I am Hispanic ❏ I am African American ❏ I am Asian ❏ I am Caucasian ❏ None of these describes me
	If none of these describe you, please use this space to describe yourself: _____	

About being bullied by other students

Here are some questions about being bullied by other students. First we define or explain the word bullying. We say **a student is being bullied when another student, or several other students:**

- Say mean or hurtful things or make fun of him or her or call him or her mean and hurtful names

- Completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose

- Hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock him or her inside a room

- Tell lies or spread false rumors about him or her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her

- And other hurtful things like that.

When we talk about bullying, these things happen **repeatedly,** and it is **difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself.** We also call it bullying, when a student is teased repeatedly in a mean and hurtful way.

But we **don't call it bullying** when the teasing is done in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is **not bullying** when two students of about equal strength or power argue or fight.

9	How often have you been **bullied at school in the past couple of months?**	❑ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months. ❑ It has only happened once or twice ❑ 2 or 3 times a month ❑ About once a week ❑ Several times a week

Have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months in one or more of the following ways? Please answer all questions.

10	I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way	❑ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❑ only once or twice ❑ 2 or 3 times a month ❑ about once a week ❑ several times a week

11	Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me	❑ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❑ only once or twice ❑ 2 or 3 times a month ❑ about once a week ❑ several times a week

12	I was hit, kicked, pushed shoved around, or locked indoors	❑ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❑ only once or twice ❑ 2 or 3 times a month ❑ about once a week ❑ several times a week

13	Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me	❑ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❑ only once or twice ❑ 2 or 3 times a month ❑ about once a week ❑ several times a week

14 the	I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged	❐ it hasn't happened to me in past couple of months ❐ only once or twice ❐ 2 or 3 times a month ❐ about once a week ❐ several times a week

15	I was threatened or forced to do things I didn't want to do	❐ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❐ only once or twice ❐ 2 or 3 times a month ❐ about once a week ❐ several times a week

16	I was bullied with mean names or comments about my race or color	❐ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❐ only once or twice ❐ 2 or 3 times a month ❐ about once a week ❐ several times a week

17a	I was bullied with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my mobile phone or over the internet (computer). (Please remember that it is not bullying when it is done in a friendly and playful way.)	❐ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❐ only once or twice ❐ 2 or 3 times a month ❐ about once a week ❐ several times a week
17b	In case you were bullied on your mobile phone or over the Internet, how was it done?	❐ only on the mobile phone ❐ only over the Internet ❐ in both ways

Please describe in what way:
_____
_____

18 the	I was bullied in another way	❐ it hasn't happened to me in

past couple of months
❐ only once or twice
❐ 2 or 3 times a month
❐ about once a week
❐ several times a week

Please describe in what way:

_____

_____

19	In which grade is the student or students who bully you?	❐ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months ❐ in my grade ❐ in a higher grade ❐ in a lower grade ❐ in different grades

20	Have you been bullied by **boys or girls?**	❐ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months ❐ mainly by 1 girl ❐ by several girls ❐ mainly by 1 boy ❐ by several boys ❐ by both boys and girls

21	**By how many students** Have you usually been bullied?	❐ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months ❐ mainly by 1 student ❐ by a group of 2-3 students ❐ by a group of 4-9 students ❐ by a group of more than 9 students ❐ by several different students or groups of students

22	**How long** has the bullying lasted?	❐ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
		❐ it lasted one or two weeks
		❐ it lasted about a month
		❐ it lasted about 6 months
		❐ it lasted about a year
		❐ it has gone on for several years

23	**Where** have you been bullied?	❐ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
		❐ I have been **bullied in one or more of the following places** in the past couple of months (continue below):

Please put an X if you have been bullied:

23a during physical education ❐
     class or on the athletic field

23b in the hallways/stairwells ❐

23c in class (when the teacher ❐
     was in the room)

23d in class (when the teacher ❐
     was **not** in the room)

23e in the bathroom ❐

23f in gym class or the gym ❐
     locker room

23g in the lunch room ❐

23h on the way to and from ❐
     School

23i at the school bus stop ❐

23j on the school bus ❐

23k somewhere else in school ❐ in this case, please write where:

_____

_____

24	Have you **told anyone that you have been bullied in the past couple of months?**	❐ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months ❐ I have been bullied, **but I have not not told anyone** ❐ I have been bullied and **I have told Somebody about it**

Please put an X if you have told:

24a	One of your teachers	❐
24b	another adult at school (a different teacher, the principal, the school nurse, the custodian/ school caretaker, the school counselor	❐
24c	your parent(s)/guardian(s)	❐
24d	your brother(s) or sister(s)	❐
24e	your friend(s)	❐
24f	somebody else	❐ in this case please write who:

_____

_____

25	How often do **the teachers or other adults at school** try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?	❐ almost never ❐ once in awhile ❐ sometimes ❐ often ❐ almost always

26	How often do **other students** try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?	❐ almost never ❐ once in awhile ❐ sometimes ❐ often ❐ almost always

| 27 | Has **any adult at home** contacted the school o try to stop your being bullied at school in the past couple of months? | ❏ I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
❏ no, they haven't contacted the school
❏ yes, they have contacted the school on once
❏ yes, they have contacted the school several times |

| 28 | When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you **feel or think?** | ❏ that is probably what he or she deserves
❏ I don't feel much
❏ I feel a bit sorry for him or her
❏ I feel sorry for him or her and want to help him or her |

About bullying other students

| 29 | How often have you **taken part in another student(s)** at school in the past couple of months? | ❏ I haven't bullied another student(s) **bullying** in school in past couple of months
❏ it has only happened once or twice
❏ 2 or 3 times a month
❏ about once a week
❏ several times a week |

Have you bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months in one or more of the following ways? Please answer all the questions:

| 30 | I called another student(s) mean names, made fun or teased him or her in a hurtful way | ❏ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
❏ only once or twice
❏ 2 or 3 times a month
❏ about once a week
❏ several times a week |

| 31 | I kept him or her out of things on purpose, excluded him or her from my group of friends or completely ignored him or her | ❏ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
❏ only once or twice
❏ 2 or 3 times a month
❏ about once a week
❏ several times a week |

32	I hit, kicked, pushed, and shoved him or her around or locked him or her indoors	❒ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❒ only once or twice ❒ 2 or 3 times a month ❒ about once a week ❒ several times a week

33	I spread false rumors about him or her and tried to make others dislike him or her	❒ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❒ only once or twice ❒ 2 or 3 times a month ❒ about once a week ❒ several times a week

34	I took money or other things from him or her or damaged his or her belongings	❒ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❒ only once or twice ❒ 2 or 3 times a month ❒ about once a week ❒ several times a week

35	I threatened or forced him or her to do things he or she didn't want to do	❒ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❒ only once or twice ❒ 2 or 3 times a month ❒ about once a week ❒ several times a week

36	I bullied him or her with mean names or comments about his or her race or color	❒ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❒ only once or twice ❒ 2 or 3 times a month ❒ about once a week ❒ several times a week

37a	I bullied him or her with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my mobile phone or over the internet (computer). (Please remember that it is not bullying when it is done in a friendly and playful way.)	❑ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❑ only once or twice ❑ 2 or 3 times a month ❑ about once a week ❑ several times a week
37b	In case you bullied another student(s) on your mobile phone or over the Internet (computer), how was it done?	❑ only on the mobile phone ❑ only over the Internet ❑ in both ways

Please describe in what way:

_____
_____

38	I bullied him or her in another way	❑ it hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months ❑ only once or twice ❑ 2 or 3 times a month ❑ about once a week ❑ several times a week

Please describe in what way:

_____
_____

39	Have **your teacher(s) or any other teacher(s)** talked with you about your bullying other students at school in the past couple of months?	❑ I haven't bullied another student(s) ❑ no, they haven't talked with me about it ❑ yes, they have talked with me about it once ❑ yes, they have talked with me several times

40	Has **any adult at home** talked with you about your bullying other students at school in the past couple of months?	❑ I haven't bullied another student(s) ❑ no, they haven't talked with me about it ❑ yes, they haven talked with me about it once ❑ yes, they have talked with me about it several times

41	Do you think you could join in bullying a student whom you don't like?	❏ yes ❏ yes, maybe ❏ I don't know ❏ no, I don't think so ❏ no ❏ definitely no
42	How do you **usually react** if you see or understand that a student your age is being bullied by other students?	❏ I have never noticed that students my age have been bullied ❏ I take part in the bullying ❏ I don't do anything, but I think the bullying is OK ❏ I just watch what goes on ❏ I don't do anything, but I think I ought to help the bullied student ❏ I try to help the bullied student in one way or another
43	How often are you **afraid of being bullied** by other students in your school?	❏ never ❏ seldom ❏ sometimes ❏ fairly often ❏ often ❏ very often
44	Overall, how much do you think **your teacher(s)** have done to counteract bullying in the past couple of months?	❏ little or nothing ❏ fairly little ❏ somewhat ❏ a good deal ❏ much

THANK YOU!!!

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Protocol

Verbal consent as each child enters room: Hi, my name is Rachel. I do research at Texas A&M University. What's your name? It's nice to meet you. What grade are you in? How is school going? Today you are going to be participating in a focus group with other gifted kids. IF you decide to stay and talk with us, we will be talking about bulling here at your school. We are going to audio record our conversation today, but only your voice will be on the tape so that we can record your answers. Do you have any questions about what a focus group is? Do you have any questions about the study? I would really love for you to stay and talk with us today, but the choice is all yours. Remember that if we talk about anything that makes you uncomfortable you don't have to participate and you can choose to talk to me in private so that nobody else knows what you say. You can decide to be in the focus group now, and change your mind during the group. If you do that, you don't have to say anything else during the focus group, or you can go ahead and step out into the hallway. If you don't want to participate, you don't have to stay, but if you want to talk with us today, then have a seat!

After all children have consented and been seated: Hey everybody! Thanks for coming today. Today, we are going to be talking about bullying. I want to remind you that you have the opportunity to meet with me privately if you do not wish to share something with the whole group. I will be passing out a sheet to each of you after we finish talking today and you can mark on that paper that you want to meet privately to talk about bullying.

Each of you was asked as you came into the room if you wanted to participate in the focus group. Remember that you may stop participating at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Also, you are not required to share any information with the group that makes you nervous, embarrassed, or that you just want to keep private.

Since bullying can be a sensitive topic, I would like to remind each of you that you should not talk about what is discussed outside of this room as it might be hurtful to other students. While I ask that you do not talk about what is said, I cannot guarantee that what you say will not be discussed by the other children participating so if you have information you feel is too private to be shared, please remember that you may choose to have a follow-up private interview when we finish. In addition, since bullying is a sensitive topic, please do not use the names of people as we discuss bullying. Instead of using names, you may just say "A person at school…" or "A person in my class…".

So let's get started! Today I want for us to discuss what it means to be bullied, how you thin it is different for different groups of kids on campus, and what you do when

bullying happens. You may have been bullied yourself or maybe you have just seen other kids get bullied at school. Either way, I want for you to share stories about what you have experienced or seen.

What it means to be bullied:
- ❖ When people talk about bullying, what sorts of behaviors are they talking about?
- ❖ When you think about bullying, what does it mean?
- ❖ How often does a problem have to occur for it to be considered bullying?
- ❖ What are the certain times during the school day when it is more likely to occur?
- ❖ Is bullying a problem at your school?

Ok, so now that we have talked about what it actually means to be bullied, I want for us to talk about if bullying is different for different groups of kids at your school. Usually at schools certain kids hang out together and get labeled for certain traits. I'd like to know more about if this occurs at your school, and if these groups are affected more or less by bullying.
- ❖ What sorts of groups do kids at your school belong to?
- ❖ Which of these groups are more likely to get picked on?
- ❖ What physical attributes do people get bullied about?
- ❖ What groups are less likely to get picked on?
- ❖ Are kids who are "smart" picked on more than other kids?
- ❖ Why do you think this is so?
- ❖ Are there certain places kids hang out where bullying is more likely to occur?
    - o What places?
- ❖ Are there certain groups that bullies are more likely to belong to?
    - o What groups?

Now I would like to talk about what happens AFTER kids get bullied. This is stuff like who you talk to, if you take action, and what your friends do to help you deal with bullying.
- ❖ What do you do after you get bullied?
- ❖ What people do you talk to about it?
    - o Friends? Teachers? Principals? Parents?
- ❖ Does talking to adults help you feel better?
- ❖ How do you tell them about it?
- ❖ Are there particular ways that you deal with bullies in school?
- ❖ What do you tell your friends who are bullied?
- ❖ What strategies do you use to avoid bullies?

Before we leave, I am going to pass around a sheet of paper for all of you to fill out. If you still have more that you want to tell me, but didn't want to share with the whole group, you can circle that you would like to have an individual conversation with me and I will schedule a time to meet with just you so you can tell me what you did not want to share today. Thank you all very much for your time.

VITA

Name: Rachel Leah Jumper

Address: 102 Bolton Hall, 4234 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843

Email Address: rjumper@tamu.edu

Education: B.A., Speech Communication, Texas A&M University, 2003

                   M.S., Human Development and Family Studies, Auburn University,
                   2005

                   Ph.D., Communication, Texas A&M University, 2009