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# Social Cognitive Factors Associated With Verbal Bullying And Defending

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**SOCIAL COGNITIVE FACTORS ASSOCIATED  
WITH VERBAL BULLYING AND DEFENDING**

by

**HEATHER L. CARROLL**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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**MAJOR: EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Approved by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

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Date

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## DEDICATION

To my parents, thank you for encouraging me,  
believing in me and instilling the value of education.

To my mum, thank you for editing, encouraging,  
loving and enduring the blood, sweat and tears with me.

To my dad, thank you for challenging me to succeed.

I wish you were here to revel in this accomplishment  
with me and hope you are looking down as

I walk across the stage on graduation day.

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*“The world is dangerous not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look at it without doing anything” (Albert Einstein)*

Bullying is the most pronounced form of aggression in schools, often associated with serious consequences (Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, Bonanno, Vaillancourt, & Henderson, 2010; Olweus, 1991). Types of bullying can include physical, verbal, relational, and electronic forms of aggression. Bullying can vary in terms of intensity, duration, and motives. Olweus (1993) identified bullying as a unique form of interpersonal aggression characterized by intentional harm that is repetitive and involves an imbalance in power, rendering it difficult for victims to defend themselves. Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco (2009) defined bullying in triadic terms, involving an interaction between the bully, the victim, and bystanders. Interactions among these individuals impact the outcome. As such, the bully does not act alone, rather he/she is influenced strongly by the bystanding audience that may propel or intensify the harm.

According to this perspective, bullying is therefore defined as “repeated exposure of an individual to negative interactions directly or indirectly inflicted by one or more dominant persons” (Twemlow et al., 2009, p. 78). Harm may result from direct physical or psychological contact and/or indirectly through bystanders’ encouragement or avoidance. Recent changes in the perceptions of bullying reflect a paradigm shift from focusing on bullying as a dyadic interaction to an increased emphasis on the group phenomenon (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing & Salmivalli, 2011; Salmivalli, 1999, 2010). Research has suggested that bullying can be influenced by peer behavior and their reactions, with the behavior of bystanders having a substantial positive or negative impact on bullying (Olweus, 1991; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz,

Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996, Salmivalli, 1999; Twemlow, Sacco, & Williams, 1996).

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (2002), a bystander is defined as a witness or nonparticipant spectator. In the context of bullying, individuals who witness peer altercations or aggression commonly are referred to as bystanders. Bystanders of school bullying are not limited to students. Rather, they can include a host of different adults, such as parents, teachers, support staff, custodians, and volunteers. Furthermore, bystanders are not removed onlookers; their actions or inactions can influence the situation substantially (Stueve et al., 2006)

Salmivalli et al. (1996) examined various roles adopted by bystanders in bullying situations. Participant roles are differentiated based on the degree of the bystander's involvement in the bullying episode. In addition to bullies and victims, Salmivalli et al. (1996) distinguished participant roles: assistants, reinforcers, outsiders and defenders. Assistants help the bully without directly attacking the victim. Reinforcers encourage the bully's behaviour by laughing and cheering. Outsiders withdraw from the situation in an effort to remain uninvolved, taking sides with neither the bully nor the victim. Defenders intervene on behalf of the victim to stop the bullying by advocating for them or getting adult help.

Bystanders are present and involved in some capacity in as many as 85% of all episodes of school bullying (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000). Most witnesses behave in ways that maintain rather than deter bullying (Salmivalli, 1999). When bystanders provide an audience by watching or laughing, the bullying behaviour is reinforced, which encourages or prolongs bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Youth frequently look to peers for input regarding how to respond when witnessing bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Passive bystanding can be interpreted as silent endorsement of behavior and can fuel negative behavior. The bullying episode tends to last longer when a greater number of bystanders are present and when bystanders fail to intervene to

end the bullying (O'Connell, Pepler & Craig, 1999). Unfortunately, only a relatively small number of bystanders take action. These individuals are deemed "upstanders," "defenders," or "interveners." When bystanders intervene, their interventions have been shown to be successful in a majority of cases (57%) (Hawkins, Pepler & Craig, 2001). So, how do we empower bystanders to engage in altruistic behavior? How do we encourage bystanders to act as defenders intervening to stand up to the bullies and support the victims? The answers to these questions require a greater understanding of personal and situational variables that influence the bystander role and improve interventions and efforts to minimize bullying.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The social-ecological model has emerged as a useful framework for conceptualizing bullying in schools. This model takes a comprehensive vantage by examining the social structure influencing and maintaining bullying behavior. The social-ecological model of bullying posits that behavior can be influenced by a complex interplay of individual characteristics and contextual systems. Systems move outward from the individual in concentric circles and include the family, school and peers, community, and cultural influences that can each affect behavior to sustain or inhibit bullying (Swearer & Espelage, 2004).

Within this framework, the centermost circle includes the individual participants in the bullying situation (i.e. bully, bully-victim, victim or bystanders). In this circle, intra-individual factors that may affect participation in the bullying episode include age, gender or level of personal aggression. The next circle consists of family influences. Within this circle, sibling and parents may encourage aggressive behavior or model bullying behaviors. Peer group influences also involve modeling of aggressive or prosocial behaviour. School influences at this circle may result from discipline policies, staff to student ratios, and environmental structure. Community factors may have an influence on behavior, such as the information projected from mass media,

crime rates, and available community resources. At the outermost circle, cultural values, politics, and the economy are expected to influence behavior. Legal sanctions and societal views regarding aggression and bullying are believed to guide behavior at this level. Overall, this model strives to account for the interplay of proximal and distal influences on individuals' lives that encourage and sustain or deter bullying (Swearer et al., 2006). A host of protective and risk factors can be identified at each level.

According to Bandura's social-cognitive theory, intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to human behavior. Social-cognitive theory suggests that human behavior results from "internal personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective, and biological events, behaviors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally" (Bandura, 2000, p. 329). Bandura (1986) recognized that human behavior involves more than an individual's reaction to their environment and posited that human behavior is the result of people internalizing their experiences that can help them adapt to their environments. Thus, human behavior results from a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

This theory provides a basis for understanding the present research. Bullying roles (i.e., bully, victim, bystander) can be a consequence of the interaction between an individual and the environment. Social learning can influence behavior in response to repeated observations of aggressive behavior of others (i.e. parents, peers siblings). Observing rewards of these behaviors (i.e. power, control, social status) reinforced the use of aggression in social interactions.

Another key element of social cognitive theory is the importance ascribed to self-regulatory functions, indicating that individuals' behaviors are encouraged and controlled by their values and morals (Bandura, 1986). With maturation, individuals develop values, standards and goals that become altered through experiences with others. High self-transcendence values

promote the welfare of others and have been linked to empathy, self-efficacy, and personal responsibility (Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010). Self-condemnation for violating personal values functions as deterrents against shameful behavior. However, individuals are more apt to engage in an unacceptable manner if they can defend their behaviors morally through a process described as moral disengagement (Bandura, 1986).

Self-efficacy also is a key element of social cognitive theory with implications for bullying and bystander behavior. For bystanders to stand up to the bully, they must believe in their ability to effect change. Social problems, such as bullying, often require a sustained concerted effort to stimulate change. Therefore, the perceived efficacy of the group (i.e., peers, teachers) is also important to student efforts to curtail bullying.

### **The Influence of Demographic Characteristics**

Aggression typically is described as a stable trait throughout childhood and adolescence (Farrington, 1991). However, developmental perspectives suggest that aggression in the form of bullying is highest during early adolescence and decreases over time (Nansel et al., 2001). Research suggested that younger students more frequently act as defenders and defender status becomes less common with age (Barichia & Bussey, 2011). Reports of bullying also become less common among older students (Smith & Shu, 2000; Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse & Neal, 2010).

Self-regulatory functions, such as moral disengagement, are thought to improve with age (Hymel et al., 2010; Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Lupinet & Caprara, 2008). Schwartz (2006) concluded that values are formed in adolescence and change little once developed. Research findings regarding the relationship between age and empathy levels vary. Some researchers suggested that empathetic responsiveness tends to increase with age until approximately the middle of elementary school (Feshbach, 1982; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987). Olweus and Enderson (1998) asserted that inconsistencies in previous research regarding developmental

trends in empathy resulted from the failure to consider the influence of gender. During adolescence, youth acquire a sense of personal agency, which is the capability to apply control over one's life (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2006). While efficacy beliefs influence personal agency, collective efficacy is a relatively new construct that has not been assessed in relation to bullying and age differences.

Numerous research studies have found that moral disengagement is more common among males than females (Bandura, Barbaranellis, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Grussendorf, McAlister, Sandström, Udd & Morrison, 2002; Obermann, 2011). Gender differences regarding values have found that girls tend to score higher than boys in self-transcendence values (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005; Silfver, Helkama, Lönnqvist & Verkasalo, 2008). Higher levels of empathy have been identified among females when compared to males (Almeida, Correia & Marinho, 2010; Olweus & Enderson, 1998). Olweus and Enderson (1998) concluded that among girls, understanding peers' feelings is age related, with increases occurring from 10 to 16 years of age. Thornberg and Jungert (2013) found that in comparison to boys, girls exhibited both lower defender self-efficacy and moral disengagement in bullying situations. However, Cappadocia, Pepler, Cummings, and Craig (2012) indicated that bystander intervention was positively associated with social self-efficacy among girls. Sapouna (2010) found that collective efficacy moderated the effect of gender on bullying perpetration, demonstrating that males were less inclined to participate in bullying in classrooms with higher degrees of collective efficacy.

### **Self-regulatory Functions**

**Values.** According to social cognitive theory, values represent an additional internal factor that, in conjunction with external factors, can influence human behavior. Within this framework, values serve as internal standards for self-regulatory functions. Schwartz et al. (2010) identified 10 values: (a) self-direction, (b) stimulation, (c) hedonism, (d) achievement, (e)



power, (f) security, (g) conformity, (h) tradition, (i) benevolence, and (j) universalism. Schwartz (1992) defined values as goals and motivations that function as ideologies that guide people through life. He further argued that values are “the criteria people use to select and justify actions and to evaluate people and events” (Schwartz, 2006, p. 1). Values are beliefs closely tied to affect. According to values theory, behavioral action results from an exchange between opposing values (Schwartz et al., 2010). Behavior upholding personal values results in positive implications; conversely negative implications result when opposing values are threatened or violated (Schwartz et al., 2012). Individuals tend to act in a manner that provides a balance for their opposing values. Individuals prioritize values based on perceived importance, determination of cost benefit analysis (Schwartz et al., 2010), and attainability (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997).

Schwartz et al. (2010) acknowledged that under some conditions, each of the 10 values may be applicable to prosocial behavior. However, universalism, benevolence, conformity, security, and power are thought to be most influential. High self-transcendence values (i.e., universalism and benevolence), emphasize the welfare of others, including: recognizing the needs of others, being empathetic, developing self-efficacy for assisting, and increasing personal responsibility. Heightened moral-based determinations also are associated with self-transcendence values (Schwartz et al., 2010). Ones’ decision to act in a prosocial manner can be strengthened and maintained further, even in the face of obstacles by high self-transcendence values (Schwartz et al., 2010). The importance assigned to particular values differs among individuals and groups. Factors associated with life stages, including opportunities, demands, and pressures may influence value priorities at different ages (Schwartz, 2006).

**Moral disengagement.** Reasons why students engage in reprehensible behavior such as bullying have been explored in previous research. Social cognitive theory espouses an interactionist perspective to morality whereby reciprocal interactions among cognitive, affective,

and social influences result in moral actions (Bandura, 2002). Individuals participating in immoral conduct typically are plagued with self-sanctions for deviating from moral standards (Bandura, 1999). Bandura (1999) theorized that individuals go through a process of moral disengagement in which they legitimize their behavior to avoid experiencing negative self-evaluations and guilt. Bandura (1999) identified four cognitive mechanisms that individuals use to justify their negative conduct: (a) cognitive restructuring, (b) minimizing ones agentive role, (c) disregarding the impact of their harmful behavior and blaming and (d) dehumanizing the victim. Bullies tend to use one or more cognitive mechanisms to justify their behavior (Bandura, 1999). Research indicated that youth actively involved in the perpetration of bullying may tend to be more morally disengaged than adolescents who do not bully (Gini, 2006; Menesini et al., 2003; Oberman, 2011). Research findings also suggested that defenders have low moral disengagement in comparison to bullies (Gini, 2006; Almeida et al., 2010). However, a smaller body of research exists regarding the influence of moral disengagement on bystanders. This study hypothesizes that moral disengagement functions as a disinhibitory process that influences an individual's propensity to intervene in bullying situations.

**Emotional Empathy.** Bandura (1986) identified empathy as an important factor in social cognition, influencing one's ability to recognize and react appropriately to emotions presented by others. Emotional empathy often is described as a vicarious emotional experience whereby an individual feels what another person feels (Bryant, 1982; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Empathy is considered to be a factor that can inhibit antisocial behavior and facilitate prosocial behavior (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006), and is an important construct to assess when examining bullying behavior and participant roles. Empathy appears to be an important distinguishing factor among children who adopt different participant roles within bullying situations, influencing how they behave. Prosocial behavior of victim defenders in bullying incidents is positively associated with

high levels of empathy (Gini, Albiero, Benelli & Altoè, 2007). High empathizers typically become distressed when witnessing human suffering. They tend to reduce their discomfort by alleviating the suffering of others. Taking action to behave altruistically in such circumstances is partly contingent on other determinants, including situational constraints, potential costs, available skills, and resources (Bandura, 1986).

### **Self-efficacy**

The definition of self-efficacy is the belief an individual has about his/her ability to achieve the anticipated result (Bandura, 1997), and it also may help to understand bullying and bystander behavior. Before an individual commits to an action, they must believe that they are capable of procuring the desired outcome. Findings from diverse research areas have referenced the influence of self-efficacy beliefs across different constructs. More recently, self-efficacy has been linked with specific behaviors related to bullying at school, including supporting peers who are bullied (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Confident beliefs regarding self-efficacy can have a positive impact on prosocial behavior (Caprara & Steca, 2005; Caprara, Steca, Cervone & Artistic, 2003). People with higher social self-efficacy are more likely to exhibit helping behaviors, while those with low social self-efficacy tend to be passive bystanders (Gini, Albiero, Benelli & Altoè, 2008).

### **Collective Efficacy**

Since bullying typically arises within a social context, examining factors of influence within the social environment is important. Researchers have studied collective efficacy as one aspect of school climate that may have an impact on bullying (Sapouna, 2010; Smith & Birney, 2005; Williams & Gurrea, 2011). Collective efficacy refers to a group's conviction that their combined efforts can be successful in attaining a desired goal. Collective efficacy is a construct that needs to be assessed in relationship to bullying roles, particularly bystander status. For

collective efficacy to prevail and influence actions, (i.e., intervention efforts), cohesion and trust within the school context are essential. Smith and Birney (2005) found that high levels of interpersonal trust and cohesion among students and staff were negatively associated with a decreased prevalence of bullying.

Researchers have found that perceived collective efficacy to minimize bullying was related to defending behavior in a positive direction and passive bystanding in a negative direction (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Gini et al., 2008). A longitudinal study with a sample of predominantly Caucasian youth ( $n = 1,167$ ) between the ages of 12 and 15 years underscored the value of research using social cognitive factors as independent variables to predict students' defense of victims of bullying (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). They found that stronger collective efficacy beliefs in the combined ability of teachers and students to collaborate in minimizing bullying were related to more defending.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Current literature indicated that social cognitive variables can have an influence on students' behaviors in bullying situations. The responses of witnesses can play pivotal roles in condemning or condoning bullying behavior. If the variables that influence bullying situations can be determined, recommendations can be made to enhance and strengthen these factors in an effort to reduce school bullying. Using a social cognitive perspective, the current study investigated the following variables: participant roles, affective empathy, defender self-efficacy, values, moral disengagement and collective efficacy.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

1. Is there a difference in empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement between male and female students?

- H<sub>1</sub>: Female students will have higher levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, values (self-transcendence, and conservation), and collective efficacy than male students.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Male students will have higher levels of values (self-enhancement and openness to change) and moral disengagement than female students.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will differ in their levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement.
- H<sub>4</sub>: A statistically significant difference will be found for the interaction between gender and grade levels of middle school students on levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement.
2. Is there a difference in verbal bullying and defending between male and female students at different grade levels?
- H<sub>5</sub>: Male students will be more likely to use verbal bullying than female students.
- H<sub>6</sub>: Female students will be more likely to defend than male students.
- H<sub>7</sub>: As students advance in grade, their level of defending will decrease.
3. Can verbal bullying and defending be predicted from empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement?
- H<sub>8</sub>: Verbal bullying will be predicted by low levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and values (self-transcendence and conservation, and high levels of values (self-enhancement and openness to change) and high moral disengagement
- H<sub>9</sub>: Defending will be predicted from high levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence and conservation, and high levels of

values (self-enhancement and openness to change) and low levels of moral disengagement.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Olweus (1977, 1978, 2012) has conducted groundbreaking research since the 1970s in which he exposed the widespread existence and damage of school bullying. His Scandinavian research emanated from statistical rates of bullying and accompanying suicides indicative of this pervasive problem. School bullying has become an internationally acknowledged problem prompting global research. Research has been conducted in Australia, Canada, the United States and Japan (Ando, Asakura & Simons-Morton, 2005; Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Trach et al., 2010). Media attention and heightened public awareness surrounding bullying often is driven by reactions to tragedy that has led to increases in empirical research (Dooley, Pyzalski & Cross, 2009; Sawyer, Bradshaw & O'Brennan, 2008).

Two high profile examples include the murder of Reena Virk and the Columbine Massacre. Reena Virk was a 14-year-old Canadian student who was desperate for the acceptance of peers who taunted and ostracized her (Reena Virk's short life and lonely death, 1997). She was lured to a "party" one night where eight teenage peers beat her. One student intervened to stop the initial beating. However, two students followed her and continued to beat her before drowning her. After her death, several uninvolved students and teachers heard rumors regarding the events surrounding that evening, but no one reported it to the police. Her body was found eight days later (Reena Virk's short life and lonely death, 1997).

In the United States, two high school students at Columbine High School, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, attacked their school killing 12 students and 1 teacher before killing themselves (Lamb, 2008). Twenty-one students and teachers were injured directly and the community was left emotionally scarred. Bystanders failed to alert authorities to warning signs (i.e., a blog on how to create explosives and website with death threats). Multiple theories have been proposed

to identify a cause for this tragedy. While the definitive reason may never be known, reports that both killers were unpopular and were victims of bullying may have been a potential contributing factor.

The U.S. Secret Service (2000) reported the results of an extensive investigation that examined characteristics of school shooters in the United States. Data from 1974 to 2000 revealed 37 separate occurrences involving targeted school attacks. Investigations revealed that approximately 75% of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, or threatened by their peers prior to the attacks. In several cases, the school shooters previously had experienced severe repetitive bullying. In some cases, bullying was believed to have influenced the attacker and may have contributed to their decision to mount an attack at school. Bullying was not the impetus in all school attacks and not all students who have been bullied are at risk for violence (U.S. Secret Service, 2000). Before the school attacks, some people may have been cognizant of attackers' plans to victimize teachers and peers in their schools. Prior to most incidents, other people were aware of the attacker's idea and/or plan to attack. Typically, those who were privy to such information included other youth, such as friends, schoolmates, and siblings. This information rarely was made available to adults, suggesting that students, particularly bystanders, play an important role in prevention efforts (US Secret Service, 2000).

### **Rates of Bullying and Victimization**

Prevalence rates of school bullying are of international concern. Research has shown that students self-report regular victimization rates that range from 8 to 46%, while regular participation in the perpetration of bullying ranges between 5% and 30% (Olweus, 1991; Salmivalli, 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Sutton & Smith, 1999; Whitney & Smith, 1993). According to the Michigan Department of Education (2013), the percentage of self-reported bullying on school property was 24.0% during the 2012-2013 academic year. While prevalence



rates vary substantially due to methodological differences, it is improbable that any school is entirely devoid of bullying (Sassu, Elinoff, Bray, & Kehle, 2004). Bullying is considered the most underreported safety concern on United States school grounds (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Due to its covert nature, bullying often is challenging for school officials to recognize resulting in reluctance to report and prevalence rates that may be underestimated. Craig and Pepler (1997) conducted a study by observing interactions among schoolchildren. Their findings indicated that bullying occurs once every seven minutes on the playground and once every 25 minutes in the classroom. These incidents typically are of short duration, lasting 38 seconds on average. According O'Connell, Craig and Pepler (1999), an estimated one third of Canadian students have been bullied and most youth have witnessed bullying.

#### **Negative Outcomes Associated with Bullying.**

Bullying has severe consequences for victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and the school climate at large. Bullying affects victims' social, physical, emotional, psychological and educational development (Collins, McAleavy, & Adamson, 2004). Many victims of bullying report depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, illness, absenteeism resulting from school refusal, and a decrease in academic performance (Olweus, 1994); each of which may continue into adulthood. According to empirical studies, bullying has been cited as one of the host of potential contextual risk factors for suicidality (Furlong, Morrison & Greif, 2003; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould 2008). Cross sectional studies suggested that higher levels of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts are present among victims of bullying in comparison to those who have not been bullied (Kaminski & Fang, 2009).

Perpetrators of bullying also are at an elevated risk of maladjustment. Bullies have a higher likelihood of academic underachievement (Sassu et al., 2004). Behaving as a bully in one's youth can result in a developmental trajectory leading to subsequent criminal activity.

Scandinavian studies report a strong link between bullying behavior during school years and criminal activities in adulthood (Olweus, 1994). In one study, Olweus (1994) reported that 60 % of school children identified as bullies in grade 6 to 9 had at least one criminal conviction by their 24<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Bystanders can suffer negative effects from bullying. Uninvolved observers of bullying can experience cognitive dissonance due to the discord between their beliefs and intentions and their behavior (Craig & Pepler, 1997). This dissonance may cause distress and discomfort. Additional research suggested that observing victimization can be detrimental to mental health (Rivers, Poterat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009). Possible explanations for these negative outcomes have been attributed to three probable causes. First, distress may result from psychological re-victimization, whereby previous victimization may induce rumination of old feelings. Second, D'Augelli, Pilkington, and Hershberger (2002) acknowledged that observers may experience indirect co-victimization due to intense feelings of empathy for the victim. Finally, it has been argued that witnesses may be fearful of becoming the next victim (Rivers et al., 2009). Overall, Rivers et al. (2009) concluded that higher levels of mental health risk were associated with the perpetration, victimization, and the observation of bullying.

Additionally, classroom learning often is disrupted because of the time and attention afforded to bullying by teachers (Nucci, 2006). Bullying can create an environment that could cause victims and bystanders to experience stress, fear, and anxiety. Students, in school with a negative climate may lack feelings of safety that are necessary for a positive learning environment (Sassu et al., 2004). According to research, the majority (80-85%) of youth identify bullying as unacceptable (Rigby & Johnson, 2006), although peers generally do not intercede when watching (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; O'Connell et al., 1999). These findings highlight the importance of empirical research, grounded in a sound theoretical framework in

understanding the phenomenon and guiding the development of prevention and intervention programs.

### **The Importance of Researching Bullying as a Social Phenomenon**

The extant literature has focused primarily on the bully victim dyad (Hawkins et al., 2001; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Studies of this nature have provided valuable information, however they have neglected to assess the unique social aspects of bullying (O'Connell et al., 1999). Recent advances in the literature have led to the conceptualization of bullying as a social phenomenon/process. Bullying often is depicted as phenomenon that can be encouraged or discouraged by complex social relationships (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Investigating the social nature of bullying permits greater understanding of factors involved in encouraging, maintaining, or inhibiting bullying. The broader focus explains influences of interactions among individual variables, family, peers, school, community, and culture (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Research has shown that peer bystanders are present during many bullying episodes and may contribute to the disparagement of the victims and the cycle of violence.

### **Rates by which Students Witness Bullying**

Rigby and Johnson (2005) chaired the International Bystander Project to assess the frequency with which individuals regularly witnessed bullying. Participants involved in the project were from Israel, Italy, England, and Australia. They were presented with audio-video slides portraying incidents of physical, verbal, and sexual bullying. Participants then were required to report the frequency with which they witnessed such behavior using a 4-point Likert type scale. High response rates were reported similarly across countries. Fifty percent of students in Israel reported observing verbal and physical bullying at least weekly and one-third reported observing incidents of sexual bullying (Rolider & Ochayon, 2005). Forty percent of secondary school students in Australia indicated that witnessing verbal bullying on most days, whereas 19%

indicated witnessing physical bullying on most days (Rigby & Johnson, 2005). According to McLaughlin, Arnold and Boyd (2005), 60.4 % of students reported witnessing verbal bullying at least weekly, with 33% of students witnessing physical bullying on at least a weekly basis. Atlas and Pepler (1998) utilized remote audio and video recordings to determine that the mean rate of bullying in Toronto classrooms was twice per hour. Bystanders were reportedly present in 85% of the incidents (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). These findings indicated that for many students witnessing bullying is a routine occurrence at school.

### **The Influence of Bystanders During the Bullying Episode**

Peers often are attracted to bullying incidents by the fervor of aggression. Anecdotal and empirical research indicated that bystanders witnessed the vast majority of bullying incidents (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; O'Connell et al., 1999). Their mere presence can have a significant impact by encouraging or inhibiting bullying (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001). Bystander's presence in and of itself has been shown to increase the duration of bullying (O'Connell et al., 1999). O'Connell et al. (1999) noted the various behaviors taken by bystanders, identifying 54% of bystanders as passively observing the situation (which was noted to reinforce the behavior), while 21% actively joined the bullying, and 25% intervened.

Despite the high proportion of peer witnesses, and research suggesting that 80 to 90% of peer witnesses reported that bullying was unpleasant to watch and made them uncomfortable (Hawkins et al., 2001), relatively few bystanders take action to interrupt or stop bullying. Self-report studies indicated that 43 % of the students intervened to help victimized students, 33 % reported they should help but did not, and 24% felt it was none of their business (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995). However, these self-reports might not reflect actual behavior. Observational research suggested that bystanders stood up for the victim only 10 to 19% of the time, acting as silent witnesses 54% of the time and joining the bullying 21% of the time

(Hawkins et al., 2001). When bystanders do intervene, over half the time they are able to stop bullying within 10 seconds of intervening (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Craig et al. (2000) later noted that without support there was an equal probability that interveners would respond either aggressively or prosocially. When compared to adults, students are more apt to intervene in bullying, with their efforts tending to be more successful (Hawkins et al., 2001).

### **Participant Roles in Bullying**

In addition to bullies and victims, bystanders represent a fundamental part of the bullying process. Salmivalli et al. (1996) used research to delineate a variety of roles that bystanders assume. These participant roles refer to the level of involvement of individuals who observe and participate in bullying. Participant roles develop during social interactions and result from the interplay of personal and contextual variables (Salmivalli, 1999). The participant roles assumed by students and teachers create a social architecture for school bullying (Twemlow et al., 2009). The action or inaction of these individuals can affect the outcome of the bullying situation. Salmivalli's (1997) research determined that most youth have a definable participant role and suggested that 87% of students could be assigned to a particular participant role based on their peer-nominated behaviors. In addition to bullies and victims, Salmivalli identified four participant roles: assistants, reinforcers, outsiders, and defenders. Participant roles are considered to be mutually exclusive; however, it has been acknowledged that these roles may vary depending on the context and individuals involved. Each of these participant roles is discussed in detail below.

**Victims.** Victims can be placed in a variety of classifications. Among these classifications, victims are most commonly defined as passive or proactive. Olweus (1993) identified passive victims as the most prevalent type of victim. Passive victims seldom provoke attacks or retaliate against their aggressor. They are nonaggressive and represent approximately

two thirds of all bullying victims (Brockenbrough, Cornell & Loper, 2002). Victim studies suggested that their submissive and nonresistant responses to bullies perpetuate the aggression (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997). Proactive victims exhibit an aggressive interaction style. They tend to have short tempers and retaliate inefficiently when attacked (Olweus, 1993). Male victims are reportedly more likely to respond with counter aggression in comparison to female victims (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Risk factors that have been identified for victimization include peer-rejection, difficulties with interpersonal relationships, and experiencing loneliness (Crick and Grotpeter, 1995). According to the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD), approximately 17% of students in grade 6-10 were identified as victims.

**Bullies.** Research has conceptualized several different types of bullies. According to Beale (2001), there are four distinct types of bullies including: (a) physical bullies who behave aggressively (i.e., hitting and kicking), (b) verbal bullies who humiliate and attack their victims with words, (c) relational bullies who seek to damage another's friendship and reputation (i.e., exclusion, gossiping, rumors), and (d) reactive bullies who provoke others to instigate a fight. As technology has advanced, so has bullying. Cyberbullying, commonly known as harassing peers over the Internet, is another form of bullying. Bullies invariably harass victims and pressure others to join them (Tani, Greenman, Schneider & Fregoso, 2003).

Among child and adolescent samples, studies suggested prevalence rates of bullies to range from 5 to 15% (Craig & Harel, 2004). Bullies often are motivated by the quest for high status among peers (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Self-reported endorsement of bullying is significantly lower than peer reports, suggesting students underestimate their tendency to behave as bullies (Salmivalli, Huttunen & Lagerspetz, 1997). In addition to bullies, individuals with pro-bullying roles also include assistants and reinforcers.

**Assistants.** Assistants support and assist the bully without directly attacking the victim. They often are not empathetic to the plight of the victim (Poyhonen & Salmivalli, 2008). Research suggested that boys tend to act as assistants more frequently than girls (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Salmivalli et al., 1997). Peers who align with the bully may become desensitized and aggressive (Craig, Pepler & Atlas, 2000). Research indicates that approximately 20 to 30% of students can be categorized as assistants or reinforcers (Menesini, Melan & Pignatti, 2000; Sutton & Smith, 1999).

**Reinforcers.** Individuals who reinforce the bully provide an audience and positive feedback to the bully. During bullying episodes, reinforcers frequently laugh and cheer on the bully inciting further aggression. Research suggested that boys more commonly assume the role of reinforcers than girls (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Salmivalli, 1997). Reinforcers are believed to lack empathy (Poyhonen & Salmivalli, 2008). When bullies are reinforced by their cohorts, classroom bullying tends to increase. Conversely, when defenders support the victims, the level of bullying in the classroom decreases (Karna, Voeten, Poskiparta & Salmivalli, 2010).

**Outsiders.** In situations involving bullying, outsiders are likely to remove themselves from the incident. They do not side with the bully or the victim and try to remain uninvolved. Their efforts often are driven by self-preservation, remaining uninvolved so they do not become the next target. Unbeknownst to outsiders, their passive attendance can silently imply approval for bullying (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Salmivalli, 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Research studies have identified that outsider roles are most frequently adopted by girls. Research also suggested that the majority of bystanders can be categorized as outsiders (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Approximately 20 to 30% of the student population is reportedly categorized as outsiders (Menesini et al., 2000; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Outsiders have been identified as empathetic; however they do not have the self-efficacy to help the victim (Poyhonen & Salmivalli, 2008).

**Defenders.** Defenders adopt the most prosocial role. These individuals advocate for the victims and are supportive of the victim, providing comfort and consoling them. Defenders try to make others stop bullying by intervening on behalf of the victim or getting adult help. Younger students (Barchia & Bussey, 2011) and girls are most frequently identified as defenders (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Considerable research suggested that defending victims decreases as adolescents mature (Menesini et al., 2003; O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 1999). Defenders are said to enjoy a positive peer status and tend to be well liked and popular (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Researchers (Menesini et al., 2000; Sutton & Smith, 1999) suggested that defenders make up 20% of the student population. Defenders have been identified as empathetic (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009; Poyhonen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2012) and tend to exhibit a level of high defender self-efficacy (Poyhonen & Salmivalli, 2008).

### **Factors Influencing Bystander Behavior**

Personal and situational variables appeared to be associated with dissimilar bystander response in bullying incidents (Oh & Hazler, 2009). Personal variables included gender, age, and social status. Girls were more likely to apply assertive and positive strategies in response to bullying. Older students were identified as being less responsive in bullying incidents. Finally, individuals with high social status were more likely to act as defenders (Oh & Hazler, 2009). Situational variables refer to differing reactions depending on the type of aggression. For example, individuals were less likely to intervene in direct physical bullying.

### **Moral Reasoning**

Kohlberg (1976, 1986) argued that moral reasoning is the basis for ethical behavior. Moral reasoning is a cognitive problem solving process employed to determine whether an idea is ethically right or wrong. Kohlberg's theory posited that justice is the underlying crux of moral reasoning. The process of moral development is justice oriented and has six identifiable



developmental stages, subsumed under three levels: pre-conventional reasoning, conventional reasoning, and post-conventional reasoning. Kohlberg (1986) suggested that most adolescents reason at a conventional level: whereby, an individual's moral standards are influenced by interpersonal relationships. He also argued that peer interaction is an important component that challenges individuals to alter their moral orientation (Kohlberg, 1986). Kohlberg's theory has been criticized for focusing exclusively on moral thought, while minimizing its translation into moral behavior. This concept is of serious concern, as thinking does not always translate into action.

### **Moral Development and Aggression**

As children develop, their moral standards of right and wrong evolve and influence their behavior. Individuals typically behave in ways that provide satisfaction and avoid behavior that violates intrinsic moral standards to avoid self-condemnation. Recently researchers have begun investigating children's moral reasoning regarding aggression. Murray-Close, Crick and Galotti (2006) conducted research to assess upper elementary students' moral reasoning about aggression. Specifically, they examined if students perceived physical and relational aggression as a moral issue that is fundamental to right and wrong, a social conventional issue, regulated by social norms used to maintain order, or a personal issue regarding personal choice. They found that youth tended to assume a moral orientation regarding aggression. Consideration to fairness and human welfare were key in viewing aggressive behaviour as just or unjust. Children who were more aggressive were less likely to attribute aggression to a moral issue (Murray-Close et al., 2006). Additional researchers also concluded that bullying cannot be fully understood without considering the moral aspects involved (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004).

Research by Gini (2006) compared the bullying participant role status of youth with responses regarding stories that assessed the understanding of cognitions and emotions.

Comprehension of moral emotions and propensity for moral disengagement were also examined. Results revealed that victims evidenced some difficulties with the social cognition tasks, while bullies did not. Moral disengagement was more likely to be present among aggressive children. Defenders exhibited higher levels of moral sensibility. Gini (2006) emphasized the need for further research assessing empathy and moral behavior.

### **Moral Disengagement in Bullying**

Bandura's theory of moral disengagement unites moral and socio-cognitive approaches to explain various types of immoral behaviour. Self-sanctions are fundamental in the regulation of inhumane conduct. Moral disengagement is a social-cognitive process enabling individuals to engage in behaviors that are harmful to others in the absence of, or with minimized self-sanctions, resulting from moral standards. These self-regulatory mechanisms only operate when activated (Bandura, 1990). Mechanisms of moral disengagement do not function solely in instances involving the perpetration of inhumanities arising in extraordinary circumstances. These mechanisms also can occur daily when individuals habitually engage in activities that create personal benefits, while incurring injurious costs to others (Bandura, 1990). Moral disengagement acts as a cognitive mediator between moral principles and actions that may be inconsistent with moral principles (Bandura, 1990). Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance postulated that a state of psychological tension is induced when one's behavior is inconsistent with one's beliefs. Such tension is aversive, therefore individuals seek to reduce it by altering their behavior or their beliefs.

Many processes enable self-sanctions to be disengaged from deleterious behavior. According to Bandura (1999), cognitive mediations, mechanisms of moral disengagement, are employed by individuals who behave aggressively to alter their beliefs and thus alleviate cognitive dissonance. Without reduction of cognitive dissonance, such aggressive behavior

would be too aversive to execute. Such moral self-regulatory mechanisms could be selectively engaged or disengaged depending on the influences of social and psychological processes. According to Bandura (1999), individuals may selectively disengage from self-sanctions that would usually influence behavior through four major cognitive mechanisms: (a) cognitive restructuring, (b) minimizing ones agentive role, (c) disregarding or distorting the negative impact of harmful behavior, and (d) blaming and dehumanizing the victim. Through these psychological mechanisms, “good people do bad things” (Bandura, 1999).

Cognitive restructuring refers to beliefs that justify behavior by viewing it in a positive light using moral justification, euphemistic labelling, or advantageous comparison. Moral justification involves legitimizing behavior by portraying negative behavior as serving a moral or social purpose (Bandura, 1999). With social justifications, bullying behavior was viewed as normal and socially acceptable. This social justification frequently occurred when peers and adults minimized or ignored bullying and failed to intervene, which could be interpreted as condoning bullying. Bullying was valued for “teaching” victims about behaviors that deviated from those in the peer group. Approximately 45% of boys and 30% of girls thought bullying was a way to educate victims (Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1994). Oliver et al. (1994) also found that 39% of middle school students believed that bullying “helped” victims become tougher. Additional research suggested that while most adolescents endorsed attitudes that were opposed to bullying, bullies possessed pro-bullying attitudes inferring they had enacted moral disengagement to justify their behavior (Rigby & Slee, 1991).

Language also can influence peoples’ thought patterns, which in turn can influence their actions. Actions can be viewed very differently relative to the labeling of the behaviors. Euphemistic language has a disinhibitory power (Bandura, 1990). Euphemistic labelling masks reprehensible behavior by using convoluted verbiage that makes negative behavior sound benign

or respectable (Bandura, 1999). Examples include minimizing behavior by claiming they were “just kidding” or it was “just a joke.” Language also has been used by adults when referring to bullying as normative or a rite of passage (“boys will be boys,” Hymel et al., 2010). Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier (2008) provided data to support the perception that interventions by teachers were dependent on whether they thought bullying was acceptable.

Advantageous comparison is an additional form of cognitive restructuring that involves making an action appear less harmful by equating it to a much worse action. By exploiting comparisons, reprehensible actions can be viewed as righteous in contrast to more egregious behaviour (Bandura, 1990). When applied to bullying, advantageous comparison may involve bystanders claiming that they are not responsible for the harm to the victim because they just watched and were not actually inflicting harm. Bandura et al. (1996) argued that cognitive restructuring by means of moral justification is a valuable psychological mechanism for disengagement from moral self-sanctions. By morally restructuring behaviour in this manner, self-deterrents are eliminated and self-approval is gained (Bandura, 1990).

The second mechanism of moral disengagement involves obscuring personal agency by minimizing one’s agentic role by displacing or diffusing responsibility to attribute negative behaviour to external causes. This cognitive strategy enables individuals to minimize personal responsibility of harm doing by viewing it as prescribed by an authority (Bandura, 1990). Thus, they do not consider themselves responsible for their action and are spared from self-sanctions. Milgram’s (1974) learning experiments first described this concept, indicating that people are capable of inflicting great harm to others if some legitimate authority accepts responsibility for such acts. Only one-third of Milgram’s (1974) subjects refused to continue administering electric shocks to others despite obvious pain to the recipient. Among incidents of school bullying,

students often refuse to assume responsibility for addressing bullying; instead they view the problem as the responsibility of adults only (i.e., teachers or parents).

According to Bandura (1996), diffusion of responsibility refers to obscured or minimized personal agency resulting from the shared responsibility of a group. Social psychology research indicated the nature and composition of a group is important in determining outcomes. Individuals are more likely to accept group norms when there is unanimity (Asch, 1955) and the group consists of high-status individuals (Driskell & Mullen, 1990). Bullying research also has found that individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors with others that they would not consider doing alone. The sense of anonymity a group provides can lead to a reduction in self-consciousness (Hymel et al., 2010). Latane and Darley (1968) conducted research indicating that bystander intervention decreases when there are multiple witnesses to a harmful situation.

The third mechanism involves ignoring the negative effects of destructive behaviors. This mechanism involves moving away from the destructive behavior and emphasizing good instead of bad outcomes. Bandura (1991) postulated that inflicting harm is easier when the victim's suffering is not visible. Indirect cyber-bullying affords the perpetrator greater distance from the victim, making the behaviour easier to rationalize. Hymel et al. (2010) also acknowledged that the tendency for victims of bullying to hide their pain might promote moral disengagement inadvertently. Self-censure is unlikely to become activated when the detrimental ramifications of behavior are ignored, minimized, distorted or disbelieved (Bandura, 1990).

Bystanders' attitudes towards bullying and victims could play a decisive role in intervention rates. Research by Pergolizzi et al. (2009) exposed alarming levels of apathy toward bullying. Fifty percent of their early adolescent sample said they did nothing to intervene the last time they witnessed bullying and 40% indicated that they believed the bullying was none of their business (Pergolizzi et al., 2009). Almeida et al. (2010) conducted research with Portuguese

adolescents to assess their general attitudes toward bullying. Their research revealed that positive attitudes towards bullying were associated with high levels of moral disengagement. Conversely, low levels of moral disengagement were related to negative attitudes toward the bully (Almeida et al., 2010).

Blaming and dehumanizing the victim is the final mechanism of moral disengagement outlined by Bandura. By viewing victims as deserving and or responsible for bullying they are deemed acceptable targets (Bandura, 1990). Bullying victims often are referred to as different (i.e., “losers” or “pathetic”). Such labels were used by bullies to convince themselves and others that their actions were rational and eliminate any self-sanctions associated with inflicting harm. Olweus (1978) initiated the study of students’ perceptions of bullying. His research indicated that bullies targeted students who were perceived to be physically and or emotionally weak. Subsequent research concluded that middle school students credited external attributes, such as being different, being weak, and wearing certain clothes, as causes for bullying (Swearer & Carey, 2003).

Researchers studying the association between bullies and emotions associated with moral disengagement, such as indifference and pride, found that peer nominated bullies evidenced higher levels of moral disengagement in response to bullying scenarios in which they were placed in the bully role (Menesini et al., 2003). Hymel, Rock-Henderson, and Bonnano (2005) found that youth who endorsed a high rate of bullying perpetration had higher levels of moral disengagement when compared to peers with lower rates of bullying behavior. One’s negative conduct could be justified when viewed as a defensive reaction to hostile provocation (Bandura, 1990). Victims then are blamed for instigating the behavior and the suffering that results from the bullying incident. By blaming others or circumstances, actions were deemed justifiable and could result in feelings of self-righteousness (Bandura, 1990). Obermann’s (2011) research was

designed to determine the association between bystanders' actions in situations involving bullying and their levels of moral disengagement, while controlling for gender and active involvement as a bully or victim. Findings from this study suggested that both active and passive involvement in bullying was related to moral disengagement. Results also indicated that unconcerned bystanders presented with substantially higher levels of moral disengagement than defenders. Outsiders had significantly higher disengagement than defenders. Differences in disengagement between defenders and guilty bystanders were not reported (Obermann, 2011).

Prior research suggested that bullies have a tendency to become morally disengaged (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Gini, 2006; Hymel et al., 2005; Menesini et al., 2003; Obermann, 2011; Paciello et al., 2008). An analysis of the bullies' justifications for their actions indicated that bullies relied on egocentric reasoning. Personal motives and advantages associated with bullying justify and maintain their "heinous" behavior (Mensini et al., 2003). Gini (2006) suggested defenders had the lowest level of moral disengagement. Those who provided reinforcement and assistance to bullies reportedly had higher levels of moral disengagement (Gini, 2006). The current study aims to extend Obermann's (2011) research and include additional variables to assess the impact of empathy, self-efficacy, and collective efficacy. Cross-cultural research suggested that males, more than female, tend to exhibit greater moral disengagement (Almeida et al., 2010; Bandura et al., 1996; Oberman, 2011). Murray-Close et al. (2006) reported that females were more apt to interpret physical and relational aggression as a moral issue. Moral disengagement also decreased with age (Paciello et al., 2008), given that an individual's capacity for self-regulation, perspective taking, and social adjustment typically improved with age, resulting in enhanced moral reasoning. Given that previous research suggested that moral disengagement may differ relative to the gender and age of adolescents, the relationship between moral disengagement and age and gender will be investigated.

The social cognitive process of moral disengagement involves a gradual weakening of self-sanctions. Individuals initially perform questionable acts that are tolerated with minimal self-censure. This discomfort diminishes through repeated occurrences where levels of malevolent behavior progressively increase. Eventually, heinous acts can be performed without causing considerable distress (Bandura, 1990). Moral disengagement also can gradually evolve from adolescent bullying to additional antisocial acts later in life.

**Morality and Bullying.** Youth may show differing moral values resulting in behavior they deem to be “right” or “wrong” (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). Research suggests that some youth tend to bully due to their favoring of self-enhancement goals over relationship enhancing goals (Crick & Dogde, 1994). Self-transcendence values, (benevolence and universalism), stimulate well-being and tolerance, helpfulness, and equality and they are negatively correlated with aggressive behavior (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004).

Limited research has found relationships between values and bullying. Knafo (2003) found an inverse association between universalism and bullying and a positive relationship between self-enhancement values (power and achievement) and bullying. Openness to change maintains an emphasis on independent thought and action that tends to be associated with aggressive behavior (Goff & Goddard, 1999). Consequently, conservation values, with its emphasis on upholding tradition and social norms, encourage socially acceptable behavior (Knafo, 2003). Menesini, Nocentini, and Camodeca (2013) found support for a relationship between traditional bullying and low self-transcendence values. They also found that cyberbullying was predicted by self-enhancement. Moral disengagement appeared to be a central mechanism connecting values to bullying. Both self-enhancement and openness to change values influenced bullying through morally disengaged behavior. This finding indicated that morality is



an important mediating factor that could cause values to become maladaptive and result in antisocial behavior (Menesini et al., 2013).

### **Values**

Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) argued that efforts to understand bullying also require an understanding of values. Values represent guiding principles that motivate individuals to act and influence judgments and justifications regarding one's behavior and the behavior of others (Schwartz, 1992). Values affect an individual's acceptance or rejection of particular norms. All intentional actions have either positive consequences when values are upheld or negative consequences for competing values. Although values are believed to be universal, individuals and groups can display substantial differences in the importance they ascribe to values (Schwartz et al., 2012).

**Schwartz's theory of basic values.** Schwartz (1992, 1994) developed a theory regarding a comprehensive range of basic motivational contents and values. Schwartz's theory distinguished 10 different personal values that were believed to be culturally universal. The values were distinct motivationally and were derived from three universal requirements of the human condition: (a) needs of the individual as biological organisms, (b) requisites of social interactions, and (c) needs associated with collective survival and welfare (Schwartz et al., 2005). The 10 basic values are distinguished from one another based on their central motivational goals, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

*Schwartz's Ten Basic Values and Their Central Motivational Goals*

Basic Value	Central Motivational Goal
Self-direction	Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring.
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.
Benevolence	Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the "in-group")
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

(Schwartz, 2006, p. 2)

Values are philosophical attributes that are associated with emotions. Activation of values can trigger emotional responses. For example, individuals who value independence talk about it passionately. Threats to their independence can cause arousal and despair if they are unable to maintain it (Schwartz, 2006).

**The structure and relationship between basic values.** The structure of value relations is important. The tenets of the theory stipulate that the pursuit of values have repercussions that could result in tension among some values and congruence with others. For example, achievement values usually conflict with benevolence values (Schwartz et al., 2012). This lack of congruence makes sense because values of self-success can interfere with the actions intended to promote the welfare of others; whereas achievement and power values are typically compatible. Pursuing personal success can be strengthened by efforts to increase power over others. Active

efforts in adhering to values result in practical, psychological and social consequences (Schwartz, 2012). Generally, promoting one value (i.e., bullying a peer-power) may violate a competing value (i.e. tolerance and acceptance of others-universalism), creating dissonance. The relations between values are depicted in a circle, as illustrated in Figure 1.

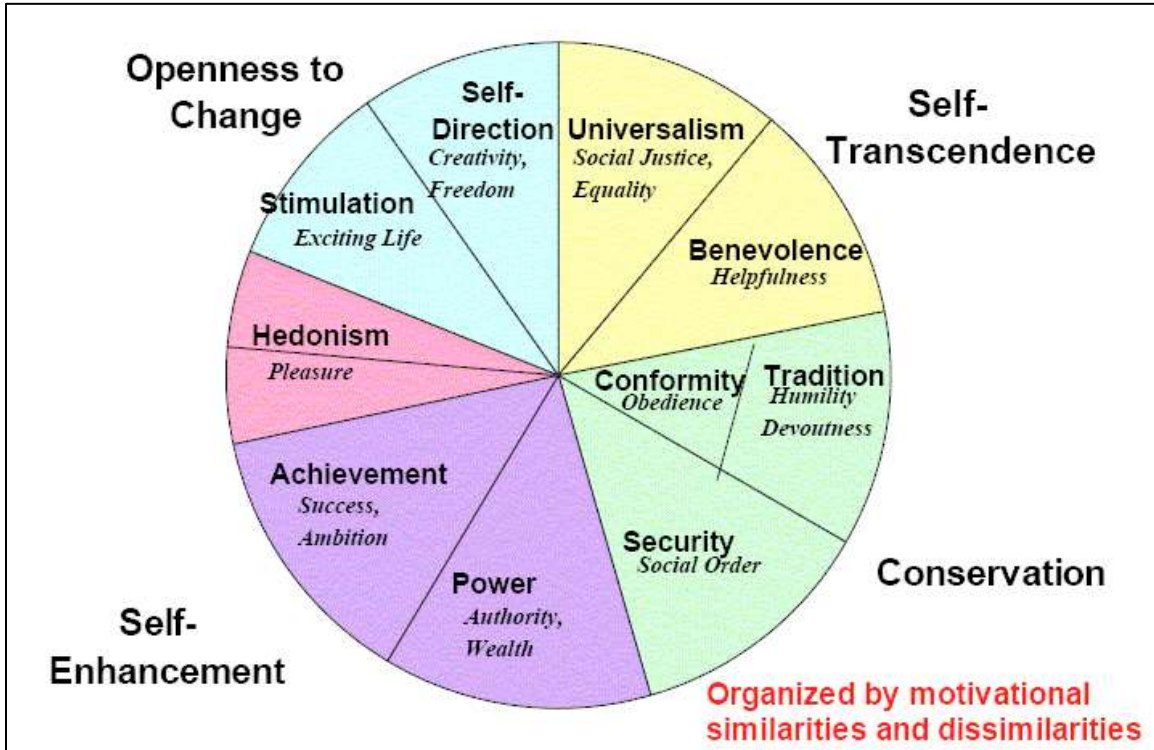


Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Relations Among 10 Motivational Types of Values (Schwartz, 2006, p. 3).

Overall, the circular depiction of the values symbolizes a motivational continuum. Values adjacent to each other share similar motivations. Conflicting values are situated across from each other to display the competing values. Due to compatibilities and conflicts of values, relations among values and other variables create a sine wave type curve (Schwartz, 1992). For example, if a particular variable is correlated in a positive direction with achievement, the theory suggests that it should then correlate negatively with benevolence. Due to the circular relationships,

correlations with other values should decrease as it moves around the circular structure (Myyry & Helkama, 2001).

The 10 values are divided into four core constructs: openness to change (including: hedonism, stimulation and self-direction), conservation (including: security, conformity and tradition), self-enhancement (including: hedonism, achievement and power) and self-transcendence (including universalism and benevolence), as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

*Four Higher-Order Values and the Broad Motivational Goal Shared by the Basic Values of Which They Are Composed*

Higher-Order Values	Motivational Goal
Openness to change (stimulation, hedonism & self-direction)	Pursuing whatever intellectual or emotional directions one wishes, however unpredictable or uncertain the outcomes.
Conservation (conformity, tradition, & security)	Preserving the status quo and the certainty it provides in relationship with close others, institutions, and traditions.
Self-enhancement (achievement, hedonism & power)	Enhancing one's own personal interests (even at the expense of others)
Self-transcendence (universalism & benevolence)	Transcending one's selfish concerns and promoting the welfare of others, close and distant, and of nature.

(Schwartz, 2006, p. 3)

The values model is divided into two bipolar dimensions of higher order values signifying the compatibility and antagonism among them, as illustrated in Table 3. On one dimension, self-enhancement contrasts with self-transcendence. As a result, values emphasizing prestige, control, dominance and personal success contrast with values favoring altruism and equity. On the second dimension, openness to change is contrasted with conservation. As a result, values of independence and excitement contradict values engendering conformity and tradition. The central motivations of hedonism, including pleasure and personal gratification, are

deemed appropriate for both values of openness to change and self-enhancement. Value dimensions are systematically related. Consequently strict adherence to one value tends to result in low endorsement of the opposing value (Schwartz, 1992). Due to this constellation, Schwartz determined that a profile of values was more meaningful than the analysis than single values. Researchers were then able to map individual and group profiles, which have since been theoretically related to numerous value-oriented human behaviors. For example, research by Schwartz (1996) revealed that children exhibiting cooperative behavior endorsed benevolence orientated values, whereas endorsement of power-oriented values was negatively correlated with cooperative behavior.

Table 3

*Two Basic Dimensions of Higher-Order Values*

Basic Dimensions	Oppositions
Self-enhancement vs. Self-transcendence	On this dimension, power and achievement values oppose universalism and benevolence values. Both of the former emphasize pursuit of self-interests, whereas both of the latter involve concern for the welfare and interest of others.
Openness to change vs. Conservation	On this dimension, self-direction and stimulation values oppose security, conformity and tradition values. Both of the former emphasize independent action, thought and feelings and readiness for new experience, whereas all of the latter emphasize self-restriction, order and resistance to change. Hedonism shares elements of both openness and self-enhancement, but in most cases hedonism is closer to openness to change.

(Schwartz, 2006, p. 3)

**How the basic values influence prosocial behavior.** Schwartz et al. (2010)

acknowledges that under some conditions, all ten of the values may be applicable to prosocial behavior. However, universalism, benevolence, conformity, security and power are believed to be most germane. There are a few distinguishing features worth noting. Benevolence values emphasize the well-being of specific groups, whereas universalism values emphasize the well-being of all. Both benevolence and conformity values endorse cooperative and supportive social relations. While benevolence values emphasize the well-being of others, conformity values encourage prosocial behavior in an effort to circumvent negative ramifications for individuals. Security and power values are generally competing values of prosocial behavior (Schwartz et al., 2010). Studies with Arab and Jewish adolescents found that youth who valued power reported more violent behavior; whereas youth valuing universalism and conformity reported less violent behavior (Knafo, Daniel, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008). Caution is advised when assessing the relationship of values to prosocial behavior, it is not wise to overlook competing values as they may also have important contributions (Schwartz et al., 2010).

**Value activation.** To affect behavior, values need to be activated (Verplanken & Holland, 2002). Activation of values does not necessarily involve cognizant considerations. Schwartz (1997) identified four steps necessary for activation. The first step involves being aware of needs. Self-transcendence values identify the needs of others. Values also influence the interpretation of need. For example, self-transcendence values enable bystanders to perceive an attack as needing assistance; while, security values decrease likelihood of intervention due to security values emphasis on avoiding harm (Schwartz et al., 2010). The second step, involves the awareness that feasible actions can address the need. Values are not believed to be pertinent to this step. The third step involves ones perception of their ability to effect change (Schwartz et al., 2010). Research by Caprara and Steca (2007) identified an association between self-

transcendence values and self-efficacy regarding prosocial behavior. The last step necessary for activation entails acknowledgement of accountability to participate. This area has not yet been evaluated empirically (Schwartz et al., 2010). Values emphasizing interpersonal relations may induce responsibility and in turn involvement. Self-transcendence values are suggestive of this relationship, whereas self-enhancement values may induce the opposite effect due to the focus on the individual at the expense of the group (Schwartz et al., 2010).

**Values as a source of motivation.** After attainable courses of action have been identified and individuals feel some responsibility to act, their values can propel action. Anticipation of successful value related outcomes generates positive affective responses, whereas perceptions that action will threaten values can induce negative affect (Schwartz, 2006). Since actions can be influenced by multiple competing values the determination of action results from the weighing of resultant positive and negative affective outcomes (Schwartz, 2006). Prosocial actions typically result from the activation of self-transcendent values. Activation of opposing, self-enhancement, values also result due to the possibility that they may be compromised. Failure to acknowledge the impact of opposing values may underestimate the influence of the values on course of action (Schwartz et al., 2010). Balance between the costs and benefits of competing values are necessary to stimulate action or inaction (Schwartz et al., 2010).

**Factors that influence values priorities.** Values create a hierarchy of importance forming a system of value priorities. The relative importance of a value determines its influence on behavior. Shared experiences resulting from similar life circumstance and similar social structures (i.e. age, cohort, gender, etc.) influence value priorities (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). Value priorities are often adapted to align with life circumstances, with the exception of power and security values, which become heightened when threatened (Schwartz, 2006). People typically upgrade value priorities that can be easily attained and downgrade the importance of

values that are not within their reach (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997). Factors associated with life stages, including opportunities, demands and pressures may influence value priorities at different ages (Schwartz, 2006).

**Adolescence.** Children typically adopt and follow the rules and values of others, mainly their parents. During adolescence, youth develop the ability to think about and define their own morals and values. Questioning the values of adults is a common part of development. Researchers studying values among adolescents have yielding mixed findings. Schwartz et al. (2001) concluded from research regarding early adolescents in Israel that relations between values are not fully crystalized until approximately 13 years of age. Conversely, Bubeck and Bilsky's (2004) research with German youth indicated that youth as young as 10 years of age displayed highly differentiated values structures, similar to those identified in adult samples. Substantial socialization experiences in early life (i.e. family, school, and media influence) were attributed to the early development of values. Schwartz (2006) later concluded that values are formed in adolescence and change little once developed.

Youth in the current study were born ranging from the late 1990s until early 2000s and are considered a part of generation Z. This cohort grew up amidst economic distress. They have been immersed in technology throughout their lives. Growing up with personal computers, smart phones, social media, and the Internet. The 24/7 technology access and social media has amplified and rehashed global tragedies, including: the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Sandy, the Sandy Hook massacre and the Boston marathon attacks.

These youth are being raised by Generation Xers, who are distinct for their individual-oriented parenting style (i.e. parent-triggered laws; Magid, 2012). Research has suggested that Generation Xers identify self-direction as the most important value, suggesting they consider independence and creativity to be important (Lyons, 2004). To date, research has not been



conducted regarding the values of Generation Z. However, Lyons' (2004) research indicated that younger generations tend to emphasize self-interest values (i.e. self-enhancement and openness to change values), whereas older generations tend to emphasize more altruistic values (i.e. self-transcendence and conservatism values). The Generation Z cohort developed in a time of blurred gender roles, with increased single parent households, blended families and families with same-sex parents. Youth from this cohort are considered to be the most racially and ethnic diverse cohort. They are projected to be the last North American generation with a Caucasian majority (Magrid, 2012). Members of Generation Z are witness to America's first bi-racial president. These factors and countless more are influential in shaping the values they will adopt.

Gender differences in values have been consistently reported. Results from 47 national samples using the Schwartz value system indicated that males report power and achievement values as higher in priority than females. Females report higher value priorities for benevolence (Smith et al., 2002). Gender role socialization has been used to suggest that males and females behave in accordance with the stereotypes associated with their gender roles (Eagly in Myyry & Helkaman, 2001).

### **Self-efficacy Beliefs**

Caprara and Steca (2007) argued that self-efficacy is a necessary component, in conjunction with values to elicit prosocial behavior. They argued that self-efficacy contributes by managing emotions and relationships. Caprara and Steca (2007) used social learning theory to affirm their belief that personal prosocial agency enables individuals to set goals and follow through with the goals that align with their personal values and perceived abilities. While values determine the types of goals that individuals pursue, their perceived capabilities limit the range of their efforts to achieve their goals. Individuals would not behave in ways that transcend self-interests if these efforts could cause personal risk, sacrifice, or loss unless they value the

wellbeing of others (Caprara & Steca, 2007). However, without the belief in one's ability to effect change, even the best intentions cannot be met. Caprara and Steca (2007) posited that both personal values, to which they refer to as "I will" and self-efficacy beliefs, to which they refer to as "I can," are necessary to behave in circumstances that incur both sacrifice and loss. Caprara and Steca (2007) found support for their model, arguing that self-efficacy beliefs and self-transcendence values work cooperatively to promote prosocial behavior. However, the sample was limited to Italian participants. Gender differences identified in this model was supported fully for females and partially for males. Capara and Steca (2007) hypothesized that differing gender role expectations and competing values could reduce the association between self-efficacy and self-transcendence values among males.

### **Self-efficacy and Collective Efficacy**

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory asserted that human behavior is the product of the interaction among three factors: personal, environmental and behavioral. Personal factors are person-specific, such as self-efficacy. Environmental factors refer to characteristics of situations residing outside the individual, such as other people. Lastly, behavioral factors entail the behaviors executed by an individual. This triad of factors interacts and influences each other, and has been referred to as reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986). The strength and direction of influence resulting from these three factors vary with respect to situations, people, and activities.

Bandura (1977) used social cognitive theory to introduce the construct of self-efficacy, which he defined as "beliefs in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Previous studies have substantiated the influence of efficacy judgments on effort and perseverance, learning, performance, and motivation (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004). Social Cognitive Theory indicates that efficacy beliefs are believed to influence choices of both individuals and organizations,

depending on the strength of these beliefs. Agency refers to the level of control that individuals exhibit over their own lives. Social cognitive theory acknowledges that personal agency is influenced by sociostructural influences and therefore extends to collective agency (Bandura, 1997).

Efficacy beliefs are future-oriented judgments regarding situation specific abilities. These beliefs are not necessarily accurate accounts of their true ability, rather they emphasize perceived competencies to execute an activity. This distinction is noteworthy because individuals often misjudge their true abilities and these perceptions may influence their action or effort (Goddard et al., 2004). Nonetheless, these beliefs influence action and or inaction. Individuals, who are devoid of efficacy beliefs to procure a specific outcome despite potential obstacles, would have little incentive to act or persist when challenges are encountered. Research suggested that self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to be indicative of behavior than outcome expectations (Schunk & Miller, 2002).

Studies, particular to academic ability, have shown reciprocal relationships between youths' causal attributions and their beliefs in their personal efficacy (Chen & Usher, 2013; Usher & Pajares, 2006). This line of research revealed that highly efficacious youth attributed performance outcomes to personally controllable factors and failures to factors they could change. Conversely, individuals with low self-efficacy tend to ascribe failure to factors that could not be changed, resulting in increased helplessness and despair (Silver, Mitchell, & Gist, 1995). Such attributions can result in students making adaptive changes in response to failure. Research findings suggested that people who were provided with a strategy or who received feedback regarding efforts subsequent to their academic performance tended to report increases in personal efficacy (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). If this concept holds true when applied to self-efficacy for defending victims of bullying, school personnel would need to develop interventions

with students in using specific strategies for confronting bullies. Teachers and counselors would need to provide feedback regarding the valor of the students' efforts to support a peer in need, regardless of outcome. Such efforts may aid in augmenting attributions and influencing perceived self-efficacy.

How youth perceive their capabilities during adolescence is influenced by cognitive, physical, and social changes that evolve during this time. Improvements are noted in cognitive abstraction, reflection, and social comparison (Hartner, 1998). Peers often are the prime source of influence during adolescence and research suggested that adolescent's self-efficacy could be influenced by peers (Schunk & Miller, 2002). Peer modeling can demonstrate success that can increase self-efficacy. Consequently, peer modeling of unsuccessful behavior can decrease self-efficacy. During adolescence, youth are developing a sense of personal agency, which is a profound shift from childhood. Expectations are increasing regarding their ability to assume responsibility for their actions (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

Gini et al. (2008) conducted research to assess factors that differentiated individuals who intervened in bullying (defenders) from those who passively stood by (outsiders). Findings from this study revealed that individuals with high social self-efficacy were more likely to intervene, while low social self-efficacy was related to passive bystanding (Gini et al., 2008).

The preponderance of research on efficacy has focused on individual agency. Social cognitive theory extends its conception to include a shared sense of efficacy or collective efficacy. Bandura acknowledged that both collective and self-efficacy beliefs "have similar sources, serve similar functions, and operate through similar processes" (Bandura, 1997, p. 478). Albeit related, these concepts are distinct. Self-efficacy differs from collective efficacy in focus, with the former focusing on the individual, the latter focusing on the group. Collective efficacy is greater than the total of personal efficacies; instead, it is a collaborative attempt that needs social

cohesion (Bandura, 1977). Collective group-based efficacy beliefs also are believed to exist in reference to the group's ability to achieve a specific goal. Bandura (1997) defined collective efficacy as the group's perception of its ability to achieve a specific outcome communally.

Collective efficacy is comprised of two fundamental concepts. The first of which is shared trust and reciprocal support. The second involves an understanding that collective action is mutually beneficial and necessary to achieve group interests, commonly known as informal social control. Informal social control results from shared responsibility among community members for protecting and promoting common good, rather than formal controls such as institutionalized officers to maintain order (i.e., police; Williams & Guerra, 2011). Within the school context, informal social control could involve students and teachers working together to intervene in bullying situations.

Collective efficacy perceptions influence the determination and resolve groups use when pursuing goals. Consequently, perceived collective efficacy beliefs reflect the normative and behavioral influences that affect a group or organization (Goddard et al., 2004). Where high collective efficacy beliefs prevail, group members whose actions are inconsistent with group expectations are likely to be sanctioned by the group and social persuasion. Therefore, collective efficacy beliefs function to promote particular actions and limit others (Goddard et al., 2004).

Efficacy beliefs, both individual and collective, are influenced by four principles: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences are the most powerful influences on efficacy (Goddard et al., 2004). This insight into successful past collective efforts can have a positive influence on efficacy for similar future efforts. Vicarious learning involves watching someone else perform a similar task successfully. This factor typically is considered a less dependable influence on efficacy than more direct experiences, such as master experiences due to its reliance on social comparison

(Bandura, 1977). Efficacy increases when a model performs well and decreases when a model performs poorly. Verbal persuasion involves performance feedback provided by a respected individual. The degree of influence on which verbal persuasion depends is the integrity, trustworthiness, and skill of the individual providing the feedback. Affective states denote one's level of anxiety or excitement that can affect efficacy perceptions (Bandura, 1977). However, minimal research exists on the group's affective states influencing collective efficacy. While these principles have received considerable research attention for individual self-efficacy, minimal research has been conducted to assess the influence of these principles on collective efficacy.

Considerable research attests to the direct effect that efficacy has on performance (Bandura, 1993; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010). Both self-efficacy and collective efficacy are important constructs because they influence or may be influenced by each other. Two large meta-analyses reviewed more than 67 studies and determined that collective efficacy was positive related to group performance (Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi & Beaubien, 2002; Stajkovic, Lee, & Nyberg, 2009). Research findings indicated that efficacy expectations influenced goal setting, choice of activity, expended effort, strategies, and persistence (Bandura, 1977; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

Bullying is a social problem that occurs within a social context and therefore, examining the complexity of influences within the social architecture that cultivates and maintains bullying is prudent. Much of the literature on bullying has emphasized individual characteristics rather than social and contextual variables that contribute to the onset and maintenance of bullying. Research has assessed school context, specifically school climate, however, this concept tends to be vague and imprecise. Absent from research in this area is a comprehensive theoretical framework that aligns school context with bullying (Williams & Guerra, 2011). The reactions of

peers and teachers in bullying situations may influence an individual's response. Bandura (1997) argued that each person's behavior can be affected by his/her self-efficacy beliefs, as well as collective efficacy beliefs. Perceptions of confidence in collaborative school efforts to stop bullying may increase the likelihood of individuals defending victims of bullying. Bandura (1997) defined perceived collective efficacy as the shared beliefs held by a group regarding their abilities to organize and execute the acts needed to produce a specific outcome.

Collective efficacy is not a new concept; however, its use in the study of bullying is. Previous research assessing collective efficacy has been derived from neighborhood studies of crime and violence. Within this area, higher collective efficacy beliefs among residents of a neighborhood have been associated with lower rates of neighborhood violence (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997). Collective efficacy also is becoming more prominent in educational research, particularly in the realm of teacher efficacy. Prior research has identified a significant association between perceived collective efficacy beliefs and academic outcomes (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001). Some studies have expanded this concept to assess its relationship to bullying perpetration (Williams & Guerra, 2011; Sapouna, 2010), victimization (Sapouna, 2010) and peer defenders of bullying (Barchia & Bussey, 2011).

The social nature of schools involving regular interactions between students and teachers and inherent social controls create an environment that is ideal to evaluate both bullying and collective efficacy. Research by Williams and Guerra (2011) lent support to the assessment of students' perceptions of collective efficacy to aid in understanding factors that influence bullying within the school environment. These researchers found that student attitudes toward collective efficacy were significantly associated in a negative direction to the rate of bullying perpetration over time. Barichia and Bussey (2011) found that collective efficacy beliefs that collaborative efforts of teachers and students to stop peer aggression was related to higher rates of defending

behavior. This research highlighted that realizing the influence that collective efficacy beliefs have on students' and teachers' intervention in bullying situations is important. Additionally, research results yielded negative associations between collective efficacy and victimization, however collective efficacy did not result in a significant association with bullying perpetration (Sapouna, 2010).

### **Empathy**

Empathy, particularly emotional empathy, also has been identified as a contributing factor that can motivate helping behavior. This association is believed to stem from the compassion and concern an individual feels when witnessing a victim in distress (Hoffman, 2000). The relationship between emotional empathy and helping behavior suggests that values, such as benevolence, also may be related (Myry & Helkama, 2001). Benevolence values are motivated by concern for the well-being of individuals with whom one has regular interactions (Schwartz, 2006). Universalism values also may be related if emotional empathy is aroused by a group of unrelated individuals. Myry and Helkama (2001) found the highest correlation between universalism and empathy, the second highest correlation was identified between benevolence and empathy. Power was identified as have the lowest correlation with empathy. Findings were in alignment with the assumption that emotional empathy is a motivator of prosocial behavior and behavior designed to enhance the welfare of others, which are significant features of universalism and benevolence values. Negative correlations also were identified with the competing values of power and achievement (Myry & Helkama, 2001).

**Empathy defined.** Empathy is an important element of social cognition, influencing ones' ability to recognize and react appropriately to emotions presented by others. Empathy also facilitates emotional communication and encourages prosocial behavior (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009). Research literature often distinguishes between cognitive and emotional



components of empathy. Empathy is often referred to as a two dimensional construct consisting of an affective emotional dimension and a cognitive dimension.

Affective empathy denotes an emotional reaction (i.e., compassion) to the emotional response of another (i.e., sadness; Spreng et al., 2009). Affective empathy often is described as a vicarious emotional experience when an individual feels what another person feels. Affective empathy commonly is referred to as empathetic concern. Emotional reactions, as a part of affective empathy, are not based on cognitive understanding of emotion, although this reaction could help an individual comprehend the action. Emotional reactions may be congruent with, or identical to, the emotions experienced by the target (Losoya & Eisenberg, 2000; Mussen & Eisenberg, 2001). Affective emotional responses also may be either other- or self-oriented. Other-oriented feelings of distress exhibited in response to witnessing others in distress may include feeling regretful or concerned, which commonly is referred to as empathetic concern. In contrast, self-oriented feelings may include anxiety or distress, commonly referred to as empathetic distress (Losoya & Eisenberg, 2000).

Cognitive empathy is defined as an intellectual understanding of another person's emotional state and commonly is referred to as perspective taking whereby one can identify and understand another's perspective. Cognitive understanding is primarily an intellectual process.

Overall, empathy is an elusive construct to define and measure. A broad range of definitions of empathy can be viewed across studies. The extant research literature is confounded by the inconsistent operationalization and measurement of empathy, making studies difficult to compare (Miller & Eisenburg, 1988). Caravita, Blasio & Salmivalli (2009) reported that affective empathy is more characteristic of defending bullying. Therefore, for the purpose of the current study, empathy will be operationalized and assessed purely in affective terms.

**Empathy and moral behavior.** An important component of moral behavior is the capacity for empathy (Hymel et al., 2010). Empathy can inhibit antisocial behavior. Empathy underlies prosocial behavior and provides a buffer against aggressive behavior (Hoffman, 2000). Positive feelings, such as empathy, contribute to adolescents' moral development. Moral disengagement and empathy are two contrasting constructs. Empathy is a more person-specific construct. However, empathy is a robust predictor of moral disengagement (Hyde, Shaw & Moilanen, 2010). Two prominent meta-analyses support a negative association between empathy and antisocial behavior (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004; Miller & Eisenber, 1988). Both moral disengagement and a lack of empathy can be linked or viewed as distinct constructs. Individuals possessing low levels of empathy direct their moral disengagement towards other individuals by disregarding another person's sense of well-being. Moral disengagement, conversely, refers to disengagement that is oriented to society's global values as opposed to individual concerns. Empathy may constitute a component of moral disengagement, however it is centered less on a general sense of disenfranchisement and more on specific concerns for others (Hyde et al., 2010).

Research assessed the role of moral emotions and reasoning and their relationship to bullying (Menesini et al., 2003). They specifically focused on moral emotions, such as guilt, shame, indifference, and pride, indicating that a strong relationship exists with moral behavior. Research suggested that guilt was related to pro-social moral behavior that served to provide tension, remorse, and regret regarding inappropriate behavior (Menesini et al., 2003). Shame is described as an intense painful emotion leading to feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness. This emotion often lends itself to an avoidant response. Indifference involves a lack of negative feelings in response to undesirable behavior that deactivates moral controls and typically results in a lack of empathetic feelings towards victims. Pride is a positive self-assessment of emotion

(Lewis, Alessandri & Sullivan, 1992). In the case of bullying, an individual who disregards a morality-based value judgment may have negative feelings regarding transgressions towards a victim or can experience euphoria or arrogance if revelling in victory. Research findings indicated that bullies show that highest levels of moral disengagement resulting from their egocentric reasoning (Menesini et al., 2003).

**Empathy and prosocial behavior.** Prosocial behavior is defined as any voluntary action performed with the intention of benefiting another person (Mussen & Eisenberg, 2001). The purest form of prosocial behavior is motivated by altruism. Altruism refers to selflessly helping another person with no apparent reward for one's actions. Batson et al. (1991) proposed the empathy-altruism hypothesis in which he claimed that helping behavior is dependent on whether one feels empathy for the target and consideration must be given to the costs and rewards for helping (i.e., social exchange concerns). Homan (1958) explained social-exchange theory, indicating that individuals help to gain rewards from the individual in need of help, while minimizing costs.

Empathy is a form of prosocial behavior. Empathy is higher among those who behave prosocially and lower among individuals who behave aggressively. Research suggested that empathy facilitated prosocial behavior and inhibited antisocial behavior (Jolliffe & Farrinton, 2006). Prosocial youth displayed more empathetic awareness than bullies or victims (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003). The defenders' prosocial behavior toward victims has also been directly related to with high levels of empathy (Gini et al., 2007). Gender differences have been identified in prosocial behavior. Notably, prosocial females present with more empathetic awareness. Warden & Mackinnon (2003) found that prosocial boys were less empathetic than antisocial girls. However, some researchers argue that empathy may not be a prerequisite for prosocial behavior as previously suggested (Eisenber & Fabes, 1998).

**Empathy and aggression.** Research suggested that empathy could reduce or inhibit aggressive behavior (Gini et al., 2007). Both cognitive and emotional facets of empathy rationalize aggressive behavior. Cognitive empathy can enhance an individual's role-taking ability, mitigating effects of bullying. Affective empathy can permit aggressors to feel their victim's pain, thereby suppressing their aggressive behavior to prevent negative emotions associated with a victim's distress. Miller and Eisenberg (1988) found an inverse relationship between empathy and aggression, whereby the more affective empathy reported, the less aggressive behavior.

**Empathy and bullying.** Research suggested the possibility that bullies possess adequate or high levels of cognitive empathy, but possess insufficient affective empathy (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001). Bullies may be deficient in the ability to recognize and acknowledge the emotional ramifications of their aggression. Bullies also may lack the ability to understand the victim's feelings (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001). Endresen and Olweus (2001) suggested an association between low empathy and bullying, demonstrating a statistically significant negative correlation ( $r = -.15$ ) between reported bullying behavior and empathy. Additional research by Swearer and Espelage (2004) supported the contention that empathy was inversely related to bullying.

**Empathy and bystanders' participant roles.** As previously noted, research evidence indicated that peers were watching in approximately 85% of all bullying incidents (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Given the significant presence of peer bystanders, evaluating the influence of each role in the bullying process is important to understand their influences on the perpetuation or reduction of bullying. Peer nomination research (Salmivalli, Lappalainen & Lagerspetz, 1998) indicated that among middle school students, approximately 8 to 10% of individuals were nominated as bullies, 6 to 13% assistants, 16 to 17% as reinforcers, 17 to 20% as defenders, and

26 to 30% as outsiders and 5 to 11% as victims. The participant roles that individuals adopt in response to bullying are likely to be influenced by empathy. Affective empathy is believed to be more relevant to defending than cognitive empathy (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009).

Research by Gini et al. (2007) provided evidence of the relation between empathy and participant roles. They found positive associations between defending and high levels of empathy and negative associations between probullying behavior and empathy. Empathy also was related directly to active defending and passive bystanding behavior. While empathetic openness is a key requisite for prosocial actions, it is not sufficient, as other variables may promote or restrict children's desire to help victims of bullying. Research suggested that individuals presenting with a heightened awareness and understanding of their peers' emotions could act in ways to ease their distress. Individuals with low empathy may not be able to relieve the distress of others, as they do not experience vicarious emotional states (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Additionally, individuals with low empathy might not be able to relate their negative behaviors to the way that their peers react to them (Hare, 1999). Others have posited that a causal relationship may exist between people with low levels of empathy and bullying tendencies (Olweus, 1991; Rigby, 1997). Empathy appears to be an important variable that can influence how youth behave in bullying situations.

**Influence of age and gender on empathy.** Age and gender differences have emerged in the literature relative to the influence of empathy in bullying situations. As a result, researchers (Caravita et al., 2009; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003) suggested that others should evaluate the moderating effects of age and sex on empathy and defending. Females, in particular, have higher levels of both affective and cognitive empathy (Almeida et al., 2010). For all students, regardless of gender, low affective empathy was significantly associated to higher frequency of bullying (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). According to Olweus and Enderson (1998), girls invariably were

found to demonstrate greater empathy than boys. Both males and females reported greater empathetic concern for girls in distress. Barchia and Bussey (2011) found that higher empathy was related to increased defending among girls. However, their research did not reveal an association between empathy and defending among boys.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

**Ecological systems theory.** According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), individuals are active participants in their own development, as such; individuals adapt and influence social interactions. Within this model, attention is given to the effect of environmental influences on the growth and development of an individual. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that an individual's social network could be divided into four intersecting systems that are referred to as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Each system included roles, norms, and rules that could have a substantial affect on development. Proximal and distal influences could affect outcomes. Proximal influences refer to interactions that occur regularly and over extended time in the immediate environment (i.e., microsystem). Distal influences are more indirect and typically provide influence from environments beyond the immediate setting (i.e., exosystem variables).

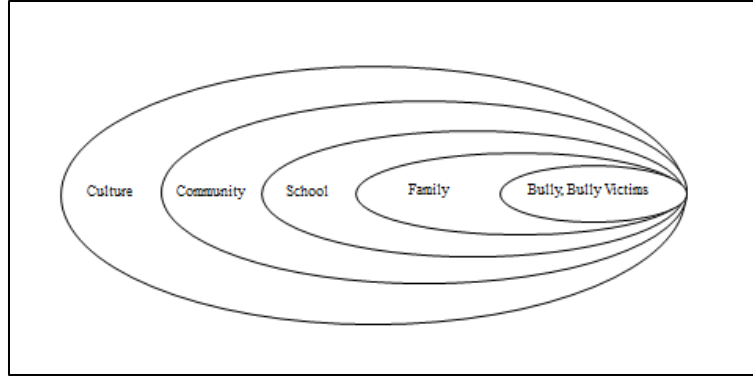
The first context of development is the microsystem that consists of an individual or groups of individuals interacting in their proximate setting (i.e., home, school). Direct influences on the bullying behavior of youth occur within this setting. Structures denoted within the microsystem include: factors residing within the individual, peers, family, school, neighborhood etc. The mesosystem involves interrelationships among various social environments (microsystems), such as the relationship between family and school. The exosystem refers to systems that provide an indirect effect on an individual (e.g. school district). The macrosystem involves cultural values, customs, and laws (e.g. political norms, school policy, media

influences). Bronfenbrenner later added another system named the chronosystem. The chronosystem evolved in response to an individual's life experiences and includes environmental events and changes occurring over the lifespan (e.g. death of a parent, physiological changes occurring with age, changing societal attitudes towards bullying over time etc.). Bronfenbrenner's theory gave rise to the social ecological model of bullying developed by Swearer and Espelage (2004). The adapted model provides a theoretical context within which bullying behaviors can be better understood.

### **Swearer & Espelage's social ecological framework**

Bullying has been defined as a "constellation of behavioral interactions" (Swearer & Doll, 2001, p. 9). The development or inhibition of prosocial and antisocial behaviors result from multifaceted interactions between individuals and their environment (Lerner, Hess, & Nitz, 1991; Sameroff, 1975). According to the framework, problems do not originate within the individual or isolated environment; rather they arise from interrelations among them (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Both theoretical and empirical research confirmed that bullying phenomena are reciprocally affected by individual, family, school, peers, community, and society (Swearer et al., 2006).

The social ecology of bullying and the multiple contexts involved are integral facets in establishing and maintaining bullying (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Swearer and Espelage adapted Bronfenbrenner's model to reflect bullying behavior. They used Bronfenbrenner's four systems, however, they re-labeled each system to apply specifically to bullying behavior (Figure 2). Similar to Bronfenbrenner's model, Swearer and Espelage's social-ecological model for bullying starts with the individual and moves outward from proximal to distal influences. The framework was created to explain the interplay of influence stemming from individuals, families, peers, schools, communities, and culture.



*Figure 2.* The Social Ecological Model of Bullying (Swearer & Espelage, 2004)

**The role of the individual.** The first context described by Swearer and Espelage (2004) focused on the individual or groups of individuals (i.e., bully, bully-victim, victim, and bystander). At this level, youth are active participants in the bullying process. Participant roles, such as bully, victim, bystander, and defender, also would be included here. Included in this context were variables that had a direct influence on the individual, including: age, gender, race, sexual orientation, health status etc.

The nature of bullying may manifest differently with age. Borg's (1998) study indicated that overt physical bullying is more common among young children, whereas covert forms of bullying are more common among older children. Early adolescence is an important period for youth, a time when they explore new social roles and seek high status among their peers. Adolescents often are willing to use aggression to obtain desired social status (Pellegrini, 2002). As a result, the occurrence of bullying typically intensifies in the middle school years (Espelage & Home, 2008). Previous research literature suggested that boys typically are more likely to be involved in bullying behaviors (Espelage, Bosworth & Simon, 2000; Rigby, 1997). Past studies also suggested that boys are categorized more frequently as targets and perpetrators of physical bullying, whereas girls are more likely to be participants of relational bullying. However, research regarding the influence of gender on bullying suggested mixed findings. Espelage,



Mebane, and Swearer (2004) contended that gender interacts at each level of the socioecology of schools, including peers, families, and communities.

Research suggested that the relationship between culture and aggressive behavior is complicated and can be affected by diversity in the classroom, school, and community (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2001). Sexual orientation also has been linked to bullying, as bullying is more common among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth in American schools than among youth who identify as heterosexual (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Health status, including obesity, has also been linked with perpetration (Janssen, Craig, Boyce & Pickett, 2004) and victimization by bullies (Kukaswadia, 2009). Much of the existing literature regarding bullying and victimization has focused exclusively on variables within the individual level. However, Swearer et al. (2006) asserted that the variables at the individual level were inter-related to other situations throughout the social ecology of bullying.

**The role of the family.** The next layer of the social-ecological model focuses on familial influences that can include influences, such as attachment style, parenting style, and modeling. Bowlby (1977) argued that families help children develop an internal working model that guides and influences future interpersonal relationships. He further postulated that individuals who have caregivers who are responsive and sensitive develop secure attachments to their parents, whereas insecure attachments often result when caregivers are inconsistent and insensitive (Bowlby, 1977). Individuals with insecure attachments tend to develop a “victim schema” where they adopt weak and helpless interaction styles in response to their domineering and controlling parents (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). An individual with a “victim schema” can become an easy target for bullies. Individuals who have an insecure attachment also are at risk of developing a “bully schema.” This schema often is the result of parenting that is characterized by discord and rejection (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). These parents tend to condone aggression. These early

parent-child interactions tend to lead to insecure or avoidant attachment styles and can result in hostile and aloof interpersonal relationships (Scroufe & Fleeson, 1986).

Research has found that antecedents to bullying included minimal parental involvement (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003) and diminished parental support (Holt & Espelage, 2007). Modeling behavior from home also is common in that children and adolescents who witness coercive interactions at home are like to repeat this behavior with peers at school (Eddy, Reid, & Fetrow, 2000). Authoritarian parenting and punitive punishment also has been linked to perpetration of bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). Dysfunctional family interactions in general have been associated with aggression in children (Duncan, 2004).

**The roles of school and peers.** The next layer of the model encompasses the school and peer group. Students spend the majority of their day at school. The school setting has considerable influence on academic, social, and emotional functioning. Within the school environment, attitudes toward aggression and role models can influence bullying behavior (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Schools with pro-bullying climates have higher prevalence of bullying (Espelage, Mebane & Swearer, 2004). Environmental factors, such as adult supervision, also can affect the occurrence of bullying and perceptions of school safety (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Conversely, other studies have found that the school environment exhibits only marginal influences on bullying (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Barboza and colleagues (2009) found that the likelihood of bullying was lower when perceived social support from teachers was higher. More specifically, their findings indicated that the frequency of bullying was dependent upon the degree to which teachers, (a) actively promoted student welfare, (b) showed interest in helping students in need, (c) permitted alternate forms of self-expression, (d) promoted cooperation, and (e) sought to create a fair and just school environment (Barboza et al., 2009).

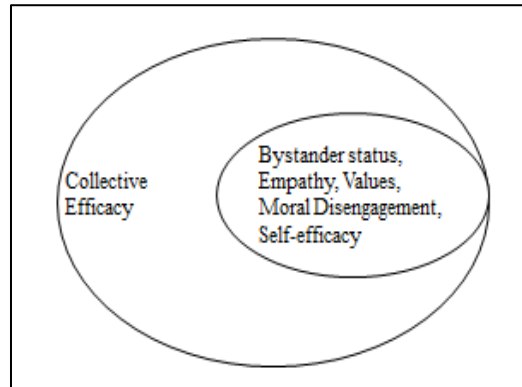
Adolescence is a time when youth seek autonomy from parents and rely on peers for acceptance and social support. Peers act as a primary socialization source during this time period. Bullying can result from deleterious peer friendships and limited support by peers. On the contrary, strong friendships can protect and buffer peer victimization (Rigby, 2005). Overall, peer groups play an important role in encouraging or suppressing bullying (Espelage et al., 2000).

**The roles of the community and culture.** The final two contextual levels of the social-ecological model include indirect influences on individuals, community, and culture. Communities are comprised of neighborhoods, religious institutions, recreational centers, libraries, and community organizations. Influences from these and other organizations can have considerable influence on promoting or deterring bullying. Schools are located in neighborhoods, with unsafe neighborhoods coupled with inadequate adult supervision and negative peer influences providing an environment that can foster bullying (Hong & Espealage, 2012).

Cultural norms and beliefs also can provide risk and protective factors for bullying behavior. Bullying prevention programs often address communities (Cox, 1997), although empirical research of these variables has been limited. Census and police data commonly are used to collect aggregate community demographics for comparison with developmental outcomes. Factors, such as poverty, mobility, crime, single-parent families, and racial diversity, have been evaluated and associated with youth outcomes. High rates of poverty within a community stand out as substantially related to undesirable youth outcomes, including aggression and delinquency (Plybon & Kliewer, 2001).

Collaboration among all levels of the social-ecological system can provide valuable insight regarding bullying and victimization among students. It is beyond the scope of the current study to investigate variables from every layer within the social-ecological model. Instead, a few

parts of the social-ecology of bullying were examined in the present study to understand the interplay between a few variables of the model. Figure 3 presents a graphic representation of the social-ecological factors that were examined in the current study.



*Figure 3. The Social Ecology of Bullying Assessed in the Current Study*

The social-ecological model has been used previously to provide insight into factors that maintain or discourage bullying. Many variables within the social context may provide influence. Espelage and Swearer's (2004) social-ecological model is an effective theoretical framework to conceptualize bullying. However, the comprehensive nature of the social-ecological theory makes it difficult to assess all aspects in one study. Therefore, the current study intends to generate information regarding relevant factors that encourage individuals to intervene in bullying by defending the victim or delineate factors that could inhibit one from intervening, leading to passive observation (i.e. outsider status).

According to the social-ecological model, both proximal and distal variables influence bullying by encouraging or discouraging such behavior. Those variables having a direct impact are located more proximal to the participants (i.e., individual variables). The individual variables that will be assessed in the current study include: participant roles with particular emphasis on defenders, affective empathy, defender self-efficacy, values, and moral disengagement.

The second layer of the social-ecological model under investigation in this study is the school and peer group. At this level, the current study focuses on perceived collective efficacy of school staff and peers working together to intervene in bullying situations to effect change. Research (Williams & Guerra, 2011) suggested that the investment of school staff fosters engagement among students. When adults in the school are not invested in the school, disengagement among students can result. School personnel who accept, overlook, or disregard bullying behaviors are implying that they support bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Teachers' response capability when faced with bullying has been shown to influence student perceptions of intervention (Swearer et al., 2006). Nearly half of students surveyed thought that bullying could not be stopped (Adair, Dixon, Moore, & Sutherland, 2000). When students perceive that teachers lack awareness of and responsiveness to bullying, they are apt to feel hopeless and hold pessimistic beliefs regarding plausible effective interventions (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Houndoumadi & Pateraki, 2001).

Peers also can have a profound effect on adolescents; frequently modeling prosocial and antisocial behavior. As previously mentioned, a bidirectional relationship exists in these contexts, with peers having the ability to influence the behavior of bullies and bullies also having the ability to influence bystanders. When bullies' behavior is unsanctioned, their peers may perceive that this behavior is just or tolerable and can be executed without fear of consequences. Conversely, peers also can act in ways that reinforce bullying through cheering or watching passively (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon. Prevention and intervention efforts must be developed to target the multiple contextual influences that either influence or inhibit bullying (Espelage & Horne, 2008).

### Definition of Terms

Affective Empathy	Vicarious experience of another's emotions (Bryant, 1982). Also referred to as empathetic concern. Characterized by the tendency to experience feelings of concern or sympathy toward others.
Bully	Individual responsible for perpetrating harm, systematically victimizes a weaker peer (Olweus, 1993).
Bullying	Bullying is typically unprovoked and deliberate harm directed at another (Coie, Dodge, Terry & Wright, 1991). Bullying is repeated over time and power differential is involved (Olweus, 1991).
Bystander	Witness; person present, but not involved (Webster's dictionary).
Collective Efficacy	The term collective efficacy denotes the perceptions in the ability of a group to attain a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997). For the purpose of this study research will focus on perceived collective efficacy to stop bullying in the school context.
Indirect Bullying	Indirect bullying includes social exclusion, malicious rumour spreading, withdrawal of friendship or purposefully avoiding someone. "It is a form of social manipulation, attacking the target in circuitous ways" (Osterman et al., 1998, p.1)
Moral Disengagement	Moral disengagement refers to a process whereby self-sanctions for immoral conduct are disengaged from moral standards by justifying immoral conduct (Bandura et al., 1996). Utilization of legitimization practices facilitating selective disengagement of moral acts. Permit individuals to commit malevolent acts without experiencing negative self-evaluation or guilt (Bandura, 1999).

Physical Bullying	Face to face confrontation involving threat or use of physical force (Espelage & Sweater, 2003). Intentional, repetitive physical assault (e.g. hitting/kicking) targeting a weaker peer.
Prosocial Behaviour	“Voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another” (Eisenberg & Fabes (1998, p. 702)
Relational Aggression	“Behaviours that are intended to significantly damage another child’s friendships or feelings of inclusion in the peer group” (e.g. social exclusion, gossiping, rumours, withdrawing friendship) (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p. 711).
Self-Efficacy	Individuals perception regarding their ability to exercise influence over life events. Such perceptions or believes influence how people feel, think and behave (Bandura, 1993). Beliefs in one’s ability to produce desired results by one’s own actions (Bandura, 1995).
Verbal Bullying	Intentional, repetitive, verbal abuse involving name-calling, harassment, threats and intimidation (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).
Victim	Recipient or target of repetitive maltreatment. Individual with weaker power differential.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Participants

Participants were recruited from three middle schools in one public school district located in Southeastern Michigan. The target district was comprised of one early childhood center, nine elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools. The district also housed one Head Start program. The total student body included approximately 8,400 students. Although the community is considered relatively affluent, 22% of the population received free and reduced lunch (personal communication with Dr. Harwood, 4/10/13). The target district was located in Northwestern Wayne County.

Students aged 10-15 years (grades 6 to 8) were recruited from three middle schools in the community. The current age group was selected and deemed optimal on the basis of a few key principles. Bullying is prevalent during late childhood and early adolescence (Charach et al., 1995) and steadily declines in secondary school years (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Bullying is expected to be a common phenomenon among the target participants. To include relational aggression it was prudent to include target students who had reached sufficient levels of cognitive and social sophistication to identify and carry out such behavior. Research indicates that relational aggression substantially increases at ages 11 and 15, especially among girls (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen, 1992).

To determine the appropriate sample size for the study, a power analysis using G\*Power 3.1 was used. For a multivariate analysis of variance with six groups and three dependent variables, an effect size of .25, an alpha level of .05, and a power of .80, a sample of 180 middle school students was needed. As the number of participants increase, the power also increases, with 279 students needed to achieve a power of .95.



A total of 434 consent forms were sent to the parents of students at the three middle schools, and 11 parents did not give permission for their child to participate in the study. Of the remaining 423 students who could have participated in the study, 113 were involved in other school-related activities or were absent on the day that the survey was completed. A total of 310 middle school students in three schools in one school district completed the survey using SurveyMonkey. After cleaning the data, 28 cases were removed because of incomplete data. The remaining 282 cases were used in the data analysis. Crosstabulations were used to compare the demographic data by gender. Table 4 presents results of this analysis.

The largest group of students were 13 years of age ( $n = 106$ , 37.5%). This number included 38 (43.7%) boys and 68 (34.9%) girls. A total of 25 students (8.9 %) reported their age to be 11, 8 (9.2%) were male and 17 (8.7%) were female. Among the 82 (29.1%) students who reported their age as 12 years, 19 (21.8%) were male and 63 (32.3%) were female. Twenty-four point one percent ( $n=68$ ) of respondents reported that they were 14 years old, 22 (25.3 %) were males and 46 (23.6%) were females. One female student indicated she was 15 years old.

The seventh grade students were the largest group ( $n = 105$ , 37.4%) in the study. Thirty-eight (44.2%) boys and 67 (34.4%) girls were in the seventh grade. Seventy-five students reported that they were in sixth grade. Twenty-two (25.6 %) were males and fifty-three (27.2%) were females. Among the 101 (35.9%) eighth grade students in the study, 26 (30.2%) were male and 75 (38.4%) were female.

The majority of students in the study were Caucasian ( $n = 205$ , 72.7%), including 61 (70.2%) males and 144 (73.8%) females. Twelve (13.9%) male and 23 (11.8%) female students were African American. The remaining students reported ethnicities including American Indian/Alaskan Native ( $n = 4$ , 1.4%), Asian/Pacific Islander ( $n = 5$ , 1.8%), Hispanic ( $n = 3$ ,

1.1%), Middle Eastern ( $n = 8$ , 2.8%), and multi-racial ( $n = 20$ , 7.1%). Two (0.7%) reported their ethnicity was “other.”

Table 4

*Demographic Characteristics by Gender (n = 282)*

Demographic Characteristics	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Age</b>						
11	8	9.2	17	8.7	25	8.9
12	19	21.8	63	32.3	82	29.1
13	38	43.7	68	34.9	106	37.5
14	22	25.3	46	23.6	68	24.1
15	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
<b>Grade in School</b>						
Sixth	22	25.6	53	27.2	75	26.7
Seventh	38	44.2	67	34.4	105	37.4
Eighth	26	30.2	75	38.4	101	35.9
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
African American	12	13.9	23	11.8	35	12.4
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0	0.0	4	2.1	4	1.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1.1	4	2.1	5	1.8
Caucasian	61	70.2	144	73.8	205	72.7
Hispanic	1	1.1	2	1.0	3	1.1
Middle Eastern	2	2.3	6	3.1	8	2.8
Multi-racial	9	10.3	11	5.6	20	7.1
Other	1	1.1	1	0.5	2	0.7
<b>Family Structure</b>						
Mother and Father	65	74.8	153	78.9	218	77.5
Mother only	12	13.8	25	12.9	38	13.2
Father only	2	2.3	2	1.0	4	1.4
Mother and Stepfather	5	5.7	10	5.2	15	5.3
Father and Stepmother	2	2.3	1	0.5	3	1.1
Grandparents	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.4
Other relatives	1	1.1	2	1.0	3	1.1

A total of 218 (77.5%) of the students were living with both their mother and father. This number included 65 (74.8%) males and 153 (78.9%) females. Thirty-eight (13.2%) students, including 12 (13.8%) male and 25 (12.9%) females were living with their mothers. Of the 4 (1.4%) students who were living with their fathers, 2 (2.3%) were male and 2 (1.0%) were

female. Other family structures included mother and stepfather ( $n = 15$ , 5.3%), father and stepmother ( $n = 3$ , 1.1%), grandparents ( $n = 1$ , 0.4%), and other relatives ( $n = 3$ , 1.1%).

### Measures

The following instruments were used: Participant Roles Questionnaire-Self Report (Schaber, 2007), Moral Disengagement Scale for Peer Aggression (Barchia & Bussey, 2011), Self-efficacy for Defending (Barchia & Bussey, 2011), Collective Efficacy for Defending (Barchia & Bussey, 2011), Bryant's Empathy Scale for Children and Adolescents (Bryant, 1982), Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz et al., 2001), and a demographic survey. The surveys were completed online using SurveyMonkey by all participants. (See Appendix A for copies of all instruments).

Self-report measures, similar to those that were used in the current study, have been used extensively in research. Self-report questionnaires are particularly advantageous because they permit youth to disclose experiences of bullying involvement and victimization often occurring covertly at home and school (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Bullying often takes place in environments that are unlikely to draw attention of adults (e.g., bathrooms, bus etc.). Therefore, anonymous self-report measures are ideal for assessing the details regarding this frequently hidden behavior. Research conducted by Crick and Bigbee (1998) did not reveal bias when comparing self-reports and peer reports in identifying the rate of bullying and victimization. Additional research supports the use of self-report data verifying its validity by comparing it with school discipline records. Swearer and Cary's (2003) research reported that bullies accounted for the most office discipline referrals. Self-report assessment also provides less ethical and methodological challenges inherent in other forms of assessment, such as direct observation and peer nomination.

**Participant Role Questionnaire-Self-Report.** To identify the bystander roles youth adopt in bullying situations, the Participant Role Questionnaire - Self-Report (PRQ-SR; Schaber, 2007) was used. The self-report version of the scale was based on the Participant Role Questionnaire (PRQ) originally developed and revised by Salmivalli et al. (1996). The original scale consisted of 50 items, with the latest revision of the scale reduced to 15 items (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). The original PRQ was designed to assess bullying and bystander behavior in bullying situations, and used a peer nomination format, in which participants, provided with a class list, were asked to indicate what their classmates would do typically in response to behavioral descriptions of bullying situations.

In this study, the PRQ-SR was used in a revised form in which the format was augmented to include specific vignettes personifying different bullying behaviors rather than statements (Schaber, 2007). This 15-item questionnaire asked students to envision situations in which another student was being bullied. The original PRQ included an overreliance on overt forms of bullying whereas the revised scale included social and relational aggression (Schaber, 2007). The five vignettes were used to assist in developing a context for the different behaviors that were assumed to aid in respondents' understanding of different bullying situations, and to assess five different roles (i.e., bully, assistant, reinforcer, outsider, defender; Schaber, 2007). Following each vignette, participants were asked to indicate how often they would behave like the characters in that situation using a 3-point scale: never, sometimes or often. Both male and female versions were provided.

The subscales from the original PRQ, measuring the five different participant roles that youth may adopt when bullying occurs were retained in the revised version of the PRQ-SR. Three items were used to represent each of the five participant roles. For example, one item from the original PRQ read: "comes around to watch the situation." The vignette described the same

behavior and asked the following question “How often would you be like Christi and come around to watch the situation?” A total score for each subscale was calculated by summing the three items comprising the subscale. A mean score for each participant role was obtained by dividing the subscale’s total score by 3, the number of items on the subscale, to create a mean score for each participant role.

Internal consistency reported for these five scales indicated moderate reliability for each scale: bully scale  $\alpha = .68$ , assistant scale  $\alpha = .65$ , reinforcer scale  $\alpha = .67$ , defender scale  $\alpha = .79$  and for the outsider scale  $\alpha = .60$  (Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpaa & Peets, 2005). Schaber (2007) tested the five subscales for internal consistency using a sample of fourth grade students. The obtained alpha coefficients were .72 for bully, .75 for assistant, .80 for reinforcer, .51 for defender, and .74 for outsider.

Salmivalli and Voeten (2004) examined the validity of the PRQ. They correlated the peer scores of 573 children with self-ratings on the same scales. The results were statistically significant, indicating that their peers’ ratings were related to their self-ratings on the same items. Salmivalli and Nieminen (2002) found that children whose bully scores indicated they were bullies also were likely to have high scores on teacher-reported aggressive scales. According to Schafer, Korn, Broadbeck, Wolke & Schulz (2005), the scores for the subscales measuring bully, assistant, and reinforcer were highly correlated, but were considered to be separate factors rather than one latent variable. The PRQ–Self-report was tested for readability, using the Flesch-Kincaid readability test. The scale had a 4.4 grade level, indicating that students in the fourth month of the fourth grade should be able to read and comprehend the items on the scale.

**Moral Disengagement Scale for Peer Aggression.** This self-report scale was based on the Moral Disengagement Scale (MDS) originally developed by Bandura et al. (1996) The original scale consisted of 32 items and was designed to assess the propensity of the individuals

to use cognitive mechanisms enabling them to avoid self-sanctions and justify aggressive and violent behavior (Bandura, 1995). This measure was revised by Barchia and Bussey (2011) and included the retention of nine items relevant to peer aggression, with five items specific for peer aggression added to assess rationales regarding: physical aggression, relational aggression, peer aggression, verbal aggression, not intervening in bullying and one general item about bullying. The revised scale included a total of 14 items (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Similar to Bandura's Moral Disengagement Scale, the Moral Disengagement Scale for Peer Aggression assessed the four major cognitive mechanisms: cognitive restructuring, minimizing one's agentive role, disregarding or distorting the negative impact of harmful behavior, and blaming and dehumanizing the victim.

Respondents were asked to rate the strength of their endorsement of each statement using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (don't agree) to 4 (totally agree). Sample items include "It's okay to treat badly someone who is annoying," "It's okay for a kid to hit someone who is bullying them," and "It's okay to leave someone out if they are annoying." Higher scores indicated higher levels of moral disengagement. The numeric ratings for the 14 items were summed to obtain a total score. The total score was divided by the number of items to create a mean score for each participant. The Flesch-Kincaid readability test was used to test the items on the Moral Disengagement for Peer Aggression scale for readability. The results of this assessment indicated that the Moral Disengagement for Peer Aggression scale had a grade level readability of 5.8, indicating that students in the eighth month of the fifth grade would be able to read and comprehend the items on the scale.

The reliability of the Moral Disengagement Scale for Peer Aggression ( $n = 14$ ) is reported adequate. Barchia and Bussey (2011) reported good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Barchia and Bussey (2011) conducted a principal axis factor analysis using Oblimin rotation.

Two factors emerged from the analysis that was moderately correlated. Barchia and Bussey used the Schmid-Leiman solution to determine if an overall higher order factor was underlying the two extracted (Schmid & Leiman, Wolff & Preising as cited in Barchia & Bussey, 2011). The findings indicated that a single factor measuring moral disengagement was accounting for 64.5% of the variance. When compared to the original results, it was determined that the single factor was accounting for a greater amount of variance than either of the first order factors (17.3% and 18.1% respectively). The factor analysis results were similar for both male and female students. Based on these findings, the single factor of moral disengagement was used in the Barchia and Bussey (2011) study.

**Self-efficacy for Defending.** Self-efficacy for defending victims of bullying was measured using a three-item scale developed by Barchia and Bussey (2011). Each item assessed the individual's efficacy (belief in their personal ability) to intervene by telling the aggressor to stop various forms of aggression (physical, relational and verbal). Participants rated their level of agreement on how well they could defend victims of physical, relational and verbal bullying on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not well) to 7 (very well). A sample of the items on this scale included: "How well can you: Tell a student who slaps, punches, or pushes another student to stop?"

The Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test was used to determine the grade level of the Self-efficacy for Defending scale. The outcome of this test indicate the items on this scale had a readability grade level of 6.0, indicating that students starting sixth grade would be able to read and comprehend the items on this scale. The ratings on the three items were summed and divided by 3 to obtain a mean score that reflects the original unit of measure.

The alpha coefficient of .87 provided reliability support (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). A principal components factor analysis was used to determine the construct validity of the Self-

Efficacy for Defending scale. The three items loaded on one factor, with loadings ranging from .75 to .84 (Barchia & Bussey, 2011).

**Collective Efficacy for Defending.** Collective efficacy was assessed using a 10-item scale that measured student's perceived collective efficacy to stop peer aggression at school (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Participants responded to questions pertaining to students' and teachers' perceptions of their ability to cooperate to end aggressive behaviors. For example, participants were asked to rate "How well can students and teachers at your school: Work together to stop bullying?; work together to stop students from slapping each other?, etc." Responses were assessed using a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (not well) to 7 (very well). The items on the Collective Efficacy Scale were tested for grade level readability using the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test. The scale had a grade level of 6.0, providing evidence that students in the sixth grade should be able to read and comprehend the items on this scale. Numeric ratings for each of the 10 items were summed to obtain a total score. The total score was divided by 10 to create a mean score that reflected the original rating scale.

Barchia and Bussey (2011) reported excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha=.96$ ). A single factor emerged from a factor analysis, accounting for 75.3% of the variance. Based on this analysis, collective efficacy was assessed using a single scale. No differences were noted in the factor analyses for gender (Barchia & Bussey, 2011).

**Empathy Scale for Children and Adolescents.** Empathy was measured using Bryant's (1982) Empathy Scale for Children and Adolescents. This 22-item self-report questionnaire was used to measure affective empathy defined as "vicarious emotional response to the perceived emotional experience of others" (Bryant, 1982, p. 414). Since empathy is a highly personal experience that is not always apparent to others, self-report measures are ideal for assessing this construct. The scale inquired about one's tendencies to experience empathy for others.



Participants were presented with scenarios believed to evoke empathy and asked to rate the degree of their feelings in response to the given scenario. The scale was designed to serve as a downward extension of Mehrabian and Epstein's (1972) measure of emotional empathy in adults. Bryant's scale retained 17 of Mehrabian and Epstein's original 33 items. However, the wording of these items was augmented to be more appropriate for children and adolescents. Five additional items were added to the scale.

Students were asked to respond to items based on the following statement "Remember to rate each item based on how YOU feel." Sample items on this scale include "It makes me sad to see a girl who can't find anyone to play with;" "People who kiss and hug in public are silly;" and "Boys who cry because they are happy are silly." A 9-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from 1 (very strong disagreement) to 9 (very strong agreement) was used to rate the items. The readability of the items on Bryant's Empathy Scale for Children and Adolescents was tested using the Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test. The results of this analysis showed that the scale had a grade level readability of 3.7, providing evidence that children in the seventh month of the third grade should be able to read and comprehend the items on the scale. The total score is divided by 22 to create a mean score that reflects the original scale of measurement.

The internal consistency of the 22-item scale was tested using Cronbach alpha coefficients (Bryant, 1982). The alpha coefficient of .79 obtained for seventh grade students indicated adequate internal consistency. The stability of the scale was tested. The test-retest reliability for seventh grade students using the 9-point scale was .83, which indicated good stability.

Bryant (1982) tested the Empathy Scale for Children and Adolescents for convergent and discriminant validity. The scores on the children's empathy scale were correlated with other measures of empathy, such as the Mehrabian and Epstein Questionnaire Measure of Emotional

Empathy and Feshbach and Roe Affective Situations Test for Empathy. The correlations between the two scales were statistically significant, for both males and the females. These findings supported the convergent validity of the scale. Discriminant validity was assessed by correlating the scores on the children's empathy scale with the reading achievement scores from school records. The correlations obtained on these analyses were small and non-significant. These scores indicated that empathy was not related to the ability to read.

**Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ).** Participants completed a 40-item version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire developed by Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, and Harris (2001). The PVQ was developed to assess 10 basic value orientations. The number of items measuring each value range from 3 (for stimulation and power) to 6 (for universalism). Short, two sentence verbal portraits were provided indicating an individual's goals, wishes, and aspirations. For example, "It's very important to me to help the people around me. I want to care for other people" is a measure of Benevolence. Describing an individual by what he/she believes is important (i.e., goals and wishes), the verbal portraits represent the individual's values without overtly expressing values as the focus of the research (Schwartz, 2005). In response to each portrait, participants were required to answer, "How much like you is this person?" Respondent's own values were inferred from the similarity to which they match those described in the portrait. Separate male and female versions were utilized. Schwartz estimated that the 40-item version of the PVQ should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Respondents rated the strength of their affiliation with each statement using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 6 (very much like me). The scores for each of the 10 values was accomplished by summing the numeric values for each value and dividing by the number of items to obtain a mean score. A mean score was then calculated by summing the numeric ratings for all items and dividing by 40. The scores for the values were then "centered"

for each of the 10 values by subtracting the mean score for each value from the mean score for the 40 items.

Reliability was tested in two ways (Schwartz, 2005). Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to test the items on each subscale for internal consistency. The alpha coefficients ranged from .37 for tradition to .79 for hedonism. The low alpha coefficients may have been due to having only two items on each subscale. The survey items also were tested for stability in Israel and Germany. The test-retest correlations for a 2-week period for the Israeli sample ranged from .66 for self-direction to .88 for security. The German sample tested at a 6-week interval had test-retest correlations that ranged from .62 for benevolence to .80 for tradition. These results provided evidence that the PVQ had adequate to good stability.

Schwartz (2005) tested the criterion validity of the PVQ using age and educational level. He hypothesized that as people matured, age would be positive related to security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. In contrast, he hypothesized that age would be negatively related to self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and power. The results revealed statistically significant correlations between age and each of the values in the anticipated direction. The results for education were mixed, with statistically significant positive correlations obtained for security, benevolence, universalism, self-direction, and stimulation and statistically significant negative correlations for conformity, tradition, achievement, and power. The positive correlations showed that participants who were more educated tended to have higher scores on the value subscales and negative correlations indicated that lower levels of education were related to higher scores on the value subscales. These findings provide evidence that the PVQ has adequate criterion validity.

The PVQ was tested for readability, using the Flesch-Kincaid readability test. The scale has a 5.5 grade level, indicating that students in the fifth month of the fifth grade should be able to read and comprehend the items on the scale.

**Demographics.** A demographic survey was provided to obtain information regarding the participant's age, grade, gender, racial/ethnic identity, and living arrangements. The survey items used a combination of forced choice and fill-in-the-blank response formats.

### **Procedures**

Approval for this study was received from Wayne State University's Institutional Review Board. Permission was also obtained from the target district's superintendent and the principals of the middle schools selected for the study. Participants were recruited from enrollment records and included both general education and special education students. However, students enrolled in self-contained categorical classrooms were excluded due to the nature and severity of their disabilities. Passive parental consent was obtained prior to study initiation. The research information sheet from the principal investigator explained the nature of the study, their child's participation, assurances of confidentiality, and volunteer nature of participation was sent to parents and/or guardians. The parents were asked to return the tear-off portion of the research information sheet within five working days if they did not want their child to participate in the study. Eleven parents refused permission for their child to participate in the study. A copy of the research information sheet can be found in Appendix B.

The researcher read the adolescent assent form outlining the nature and purpose of the study to the participants (See Appendix C). Potential risks and benefits were disclosed in this document. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary, confidential and could be terminated without penalty at any time. The submission of the completed surveys was

evidence of the participant's assent to be in the study. The students were encouraged to ask any questions they had regarding their participation.

Once guardian consent and adolescent assent were obtained, students were invited to the school computer lab to complete Internet-based questionnaires during regular school hours. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants and provided instructions regarding using the computer to complete the surveys. Participants completed the online questionnaire independently in groups of approximately 30. Administration occurred during the second semester of the school year. A teacher was in the computer lab to assist the students in accessing the survey and provided technical help when needed. Survey administration was held at the three schools on different days.

Surveys were formatted to accommodate the online specifications using [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). Permission to use and reformat the surveys was obtained from authors prior to use. Online administration was selected due to its ease of use, familiarity to the participants, low cost, automated data collection, and environmentally friendly nature. Online surveys are ideal because they permit responses to be sent immediately to the principal investigator via email, or posted to a database file.

Recent developments in the use of online survey methodologies have led to skepticism and further research. Researchers have not found significant influences of survey mode in their analyses and suggest that psychological samples using online methods are consistent with traditional methods (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava & John, 2004; Yun & Trumbo, 2000). Common concerns regarding online data collection included lack of environmental control, low response rates, technical difficulties, participant motivation and concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality.

Typically, Internet based surveys reduce researcher's control over the participants' environment. However, in this study a trained administrator was present at each session. Concerns regarding low response rates resulting from technical difficulties interacting with the Internet survey were negated by having participants utilize school computers and by having the teacher available to trouble shoot. The researcher also was available to explain unclear terms to the respondents, keep them motivated, reassure them about the confidentiality of their answers and encourage complete responses.

Reasonable attempts were made to protect the transmission of confidential survey information, while it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure. As previously mentioned, participants were informed that survey completion was voluntary and anonymous and passive assent was obtained in addition to passive parental consent. Concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality were also addressed prior to the administration by providing links to Survey Monkey's privacy policy and security statement. Online materials also have the potential to be intercepted by computer hackers. To address this concern, the online survey was equipped with an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) encryption feature protecting sensitive data along the communication pathway between the respondent's computer and the Survey Monkey server. Additionally, respondents used secure school computers.

Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were provided a snack size candy bar as a token of appreciation. Additionally, participants were entered into a lottery for the chance to win a gift card from a local merchant. The winners were selected randomly from the pool of participants. School personnel distributed the gift card once the data collection phase was complete.

### **Data Analysis**

The IBM-SPSS, ver. 21.0 was used for analyzing the data. The survey responses were

exported from the Survey Monkey website and imported into the SPSS software via a Microsoft Excel file for data analysis. The data analysis was presented in three sections. The first section used frequency distributions and measures of central tendency and dispersion to provide a profile of the personal and school characteristics of the sample. The second section of the data analysis provided base line data on the scaled variables and an intercorrelation matrix that provided information on the relationships among the variables. The third section provided the results of the inferential statistical analyses used to test the hypotheses and address the research questions. All decisions regarding statistical significance of the findings were made using a criterion alpha level of .05. Table 5 presents research questions and hypotheses along with statistical analyses.

Table 5

*Statistical Analysis*

Research Question and Hypotheses	Variables	Statistical Analysis
<p>1. Is there a difference in empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement between male and female students?</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: Female students will have higher levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, values (self-transcendence, and conservation), and collective efficacy than male students.</p> <p>H<sub>2</sub>: Male students will have higher levels of values (self-enhancement and openness to change) and moral disengagement than female students.</p> <p>H<sub>3</sub>: Sixth, seventh, and eighth</p>	<p><u>Dependent Variables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Defender Self-Efficacy</li> <li>• Collective Efficacy</li> <li>• Moral Disengagement</li> <li>• Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-transcendence</li> <li>• Conservation</li> <li>• Self-enhancement</li> <li>• Openness to change</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Independent Variable</u></p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Grade in School</p>	<p>A 2 x 3 factorial multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine if empathy, defender efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement differ between male and female sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students.</p> <p>If a statistically significant omnibus F is obtained on the MANOVA, the between subjects effects was tested to determine which of the five dependent variables are contributing to the statistically significant difference.</p> <p>For gender, the mean scores was compared to determine the direction of the difference for the four</p>

Research Question and Hypotheses	Variables	Statistical Analysis
<p>grade students will differ in their levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement.</p> <p>H<sub>4</sub>: A statistically significant difference will be found for the interaction between gender and grade levels of middle school students on levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement.</p>		<p>dependent variables.</p> <p>For grade level, Scheffé a posteriori tests was used to compare all possible pairwise comparisons to determine if there is a statistically significant difference on all pairwise comparisons.</p> <p>For the interaction between gender and grade level, simple effects analysis was to test for differences between the levels.</p>
<p>2. Is there a difference in verbal bullying and defending between male and female students at different grade levels?</p> <p>H<sub>5</sub>: Male students will be more likely to use verbal bullying than female students.</p> <p>H<sub>6</sub>: Female students will be more likely to defend than male students.</p> <p>H<sub>7</sub>: As students advance in grade, their level of defending will decrease.</p>	<p><u>Dependent Variables</u></p> <p>Participant Roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Bullying</li> <li>• Defending</li> </ul> <p><u>Independent Variable</u></p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Grade</p>	<p>A 2 x 3 factorial multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine if verbal bullying and defending differ between male and female students.</p> <p>If a statistically significant omnibus F is obtained on the MANOVA, the between subjects effects was tested to determine which of the five dependent variables are contributing to the statistically significant difference.</p> <p>For gender, the mean scores was compared to determine the direction of the difference for the five dependent variables.</p>
<p>3. Can verbal bullying and defending be predicted from empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to</p>	<p><u>Criterion Variables</u></p> <p>Participant Roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Bullying</li> <li>• Defending</li> </ul> <p><u>Predictor Variables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> </ul>	<p>Multiple regression analyses was used to determine which of the predictor variables can be used to predict or explain participant roles.</p>



Research Question and Hypotheses	Variables	Statistical Analysis
<p>change), and moral disengagement?</p> <p>H<sub>8</sub>: Verbal bullying will be predicted by low levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and values (self-transcendence and conservation, and high levels of values (self-enhancement and openness to change) and high moral disengagement</p> <p>H<sub>9</sub>: Defending will be predicted from high levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence and conservation, and high levels of values (self-enhancement and openness to change) and low levels of moral disengagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defender Self-Efficacy</li> <li>• Collective Efficacy</li> <li>• Moral Disengagement</li> <li>• Values               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-transcendence</li> <li>• Conservation</li> <li>• Self-enhancement</li> <li>• Openness to change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of the current study was to investigate bystanders' responses in bullying situations. Using a social cognitive perspective, the current study investigated the following variables: participant roles, affective empathy, defender self-efficacy, values, moral disengagement and collective efficacy. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analyses used to address each of the research questions for this study.

#### **Preliminary Analyses**

A factor analysis was used to confirm the five participant roles (bully, defender, outsider, reinforce, and assistant) on the Participant Role Questionnaire-Self report (PRQ-SR). Using a varimax rotation, five factors emerged which explained 54.69% of the variance in the PRQ-SR. Each factor had an eigenvalue greater than 1.00, indicating they were accounting for a statistically significant amount of variance. Table 6 presents the results of the factor analysis.

In examining the results of the factor analysis for the PRQ-SR, the existence of the five participant role models described by Schaber (2007) was not supported. Instead, two factors, bullying (items 1, 4, 5) and defending (items 3, 11), explained a sufficient amount of variance in participant roles. When the two factors were tested for internal consistency, the Cronbach alpha for bullying was low ( $\alpha = .45$ ). Removing item 1 ("one of the kids that laughed") from the bullying subscale increased the internal consistency of the subscale to .73. With the removal of item 1, the subscale was renamed to verbal bullying. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of .56 for the defending subscale was low, but accepted for this study, considering a small number of items ( $n=2$ ). The remaining participant roles were not used in the present study because of the low reliability of the subscales.

Table 6

*Factor Analysis on Participant Role Questionnaire (PRQ) Self-Report*

Item	<u>Factor</u>					Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	<b>.59</b>	-.29	.06	-.16	.39	.61
2	-.33	-.48	-.11	.12	.42	.54
3	.04	<b>.78</b>	-.18	-.11	-.01	.65
4	<b>.70</b>	.14	.11	.21	.02	.61
5	<b>.64</b>	-.02	.06	.05	-.04	.42
6	.08	.06	.22	<b>.50</b>	.30	.40
7	-.06	.02	-.06	<b>.75</b>	.06	.58
8	-.23	.36	.06	<b>-.64</b>	.12	.60
9	.12	-.14	<b>.67</b>	.09	.15	.52
10	.06	-.01	<b>.81</b>	.01	-.19	.69
11	-.13	<b>.74</b>	-.01	.03	.15	.59
12	-.20	.26	.46	.02	.36	.45
13	.37	-.11	.55	-.12	-.02	.47
14	.45	-.25	.26	-.12	<b>.51</b>	.61
15	.05	.18	-.07	.16	<b>.67</b>	.51
Eigenvalues	2.64	1.72	1.44	1.28	1.14	
% of Variance	17.57	11.44	9.61	8.51	1.14	

**Reliability.**

Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to determine the internal consistency as a measure of reliability for each of the scaled variables. Table 7 presents results of these analyses.

Table 7

*Cronbach Alpha Coefficients: Scaled Variables*

Measure	Number of Items	$\alpha$
Participant Role Questionnaire – Self-Report		
Verbal Bullying	2	.73
Defending	2	.56
Moral Disengagement	14	.84
Defender Self-Efficacy	3	.86
Collective Efficacy	10	.95
Empathy	22	.76
Openness to Change	10	.84
Self-enhancement	13	.84
Self-transcendence	10	.89
Conservation	10	.87

Two measures of bullying, verbal ( $\alpha = .73$ ) and defending ( $\alpha = .56$ ) that emerged from the factor analysis had adequate measures of reliability and were used in the study. Moral disengagement had an alpha coefficient of .84, which indicated good internal consistency. The alpha coefficients of .86 for defender self-efficacy and .95 for collective efficacy were indicative of good internal consistency. Empathy had an alpha coefficient of .76. Openness to change ( $\alpha = .84$ ), self-enhancement ( $\alpha = .84$ ), self-transcendence ( $\alpha = .89$ ), and conservation ( $\alpha = .87$ ) had good internal consistency as a measure of reliability.

See Table 8 for descriptive statistics for the included variables. Table 9 presents the intercorrelation matrix for the included variables.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for Bullying, Moral Disengagement, Efficacy, Empathy, and Values*

Measure	N	M	SD	Range	
				Minimum	Maximum
Verbal Bully	281	2.07	.36	2.00	6.00
Defending	278	4.77	1.07	2.00	6.00
Moral Disengagement	282	1.50	.39	1.00	4.00
Defender Efficacy	282	5.08	1.54	1.00	7.00
Collective Efficacy	282	4.66	1.56	1.00	7.00
Empathy	282	6.02	.90	3.86	8.18
Openness to Change	282	4.27	.96	1.00	6.00
Self-enhancement	282	3.78	.93	1.00	6.00
Self-transcendence	282	4.18	1.02	1.00	6.00
Conservation	282	3.81	.95	1.00	6.00

**Research Questions.**

Three research questions and associated hypotheses were developed for this study. Inferential statistics were used to test hypotheses and address the research questions. All decisions regarding statistical significance of the outcomes were determined using a criterion alpha level of .05.

**Research question 1:** Is there a difference in empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement between male and female students?

Table 9

*Correlation Matrix: Verbal Bullying, Defending Moral Disengagement, Efficacy, Empathy, and Values*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Verbal Bullying	1.00									
2 Defending	-.04	1.00								
3 Moral Disengagement	.14*	-.27**	1.00							
4 Defender Self-Efficacy	-.04	.38**	-.14*	1.00						
5 Collective Efficacy	.05	.15*	-.23**	.38**	1.00					
6 Empathy	-.05	.27**	-.44**	.10	.01	1.00				
7 Openness to Change	.01	.15*	-.02	.28**	-.08	.32**	1.00			
8 Self-Enhancement	.01	.01	.21**	.10	-.13*	.04	.62**	1.00		
9 Self-Transcendence	-.01	.27**	-.25**	.30**	.13*	.51**	.62**	.37**	1.00	
10 Conservation	-.01	.22**	-.10	.26**	.11	.25**	.47**	.48**	.68**	1.00

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Female students will have higher levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, values (self-transcendence, and conservation), and collective efficacy than male students.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Male students will have higher levels of values (self-enhancement and openness to change) and moral disengagement than female students.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will differ in their levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** A statistically significant difference will be found for the interaction between gender and grade levels of middle school students on levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement.

A 2 x 3 factorial multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine if differences existed in levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement between male and female students and sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Table 10 presents the results of the MANOVA.

Table 10

*Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Dependent Variables by Grade and Gender*

Source	Pillai's Trace	F Ratio	DF	$\eta^2$
Grade	.16	2.96**	16, 538	.08
Gender	.20	8.17**	8, 268	.20
Gender x Grade	.09	1.66*	16, 538	.05

\*\*p < .05; \*p < .01

The results of the two main effects of grade,  $F(16, 538) = 2.96, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$ , and gender,  $F(8, 268) = 8.17, p < .01, \eta^2 = .20$ , were statistically significant. The effect size for grade was small, while the effect size for gender was moderate. The interaction effect between grade and gender was statistically significant,  $F(16, 538) = 1.66, p = .05, \eta^2 = .05$ . To determine which of the dependent variables were contributing to the statistically significant main and interaction effects, the between subjects analyses were obtained. Table 11 presents results of this analysis.

Table 11

*Between Subjects Analysis: Dependent Variables by Grade and Gender*

Source	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	<i>F</i> -Ratio	$\eta^2$
<b>Grade</b>						
Empathy			2.53	1.27	1.86	.01
Sixth grade	6.14	.87				
Seventh grade	5.91	.92				
Eighth grade	6.04	.91				
Defender self-efficacy			1.07	.54	.23	.01
Sixth grade	5.16	1.64				
Seventh grade	5.08	1.64				
Eighth grade	5.04	1.33				
Collective efficacy			15.00	7.50	3.19*	.02
Sixth grade	4.90	1.68				
Seventh grade	4.72	1.53				
Eighth grade	4.44	1.45				
Moral disengagement			2.60	1.30	10.31**	.07
Sixth grade	1.36 <sub>a,b</sub>	.30				
Seventh grade	1.54 <sub>a</sub>	.43				
Eighth grade	1.54 <sub>b</sub>	.36				
Self-transcendence			4.34	2.17	2.14	.02
Sixth grade	4.12	1.09				
Seventh grade	4.31	.97				
Eighth grade	4.10	1.00				
Conservation			7.93	3.97	4.45**	.03
Sixth grade	3.59 <sub>a</sub>	1.02				
Seventh grade	3.99 <sub>a</sub>	.95				
Eighth grade	3.79	.87				
Self-enhancement			11.70	5.85	6.94**	.05
Sixth grade	3.46 <sub>a,b</sub>	.83				
Seventh grade	3.86 <sub>a</sub>	.96				
Eighth grade	3.92 <sub>b</sub>	.93				
Openness to change			3.52	1.76	1.97	.01
Sixth grade	4.15	1.06				
Seventh grade	4.38	.93				
Eighth grade	3.92	.90				
<b>Gender</b>						
Empathy			33.41	33.41	49.16**	.15
Male	5.46	.81				
Female	6.26	.93				
Defender self-efficacy			5.49	5.49	2.32	.01
Male	5.28	1.68				
Female	5.00	1.46				
Collective efficacy			5.40	5.40	2.29	.01
Male	4.84	1.60				
Female	4.59	1.53				
Moral disengagement			2.14	2.14	17.00**	.06
Male	1.65	.48				
Female	1.42	.31				
Self-transcendence			8.54	8.54	8.40**	.03



Source	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	<i>F</i> -Ratio	$\eta^2$
Male	3.94	1.16				
Female	4.29	.93				
Conservation			.84	.84	.94	.01
Male	3.76	1.04				
Female	3.84	.91				
Self-enhancement			1.06	1.06	1.25	.01
Male	3.70	1.02				
Female	3.81	.90				
Openness to change			8.26	8.26	9.24**	.03
Male	4.03	1.05				
Female	4.38	.90				
Grade x Gender						
Empathy			2.08	1.04	1.53	.01
Defender self-efficacy			1.46	.73	.31	.01
Collective efficacy			12.81	6.41	2.72	.02
Moral disengagement			1.56	.78	6.19**	.04
Self-transcendence			.71	.36	.35	.01
Conservation			.84	.42	.47	.01
Self-enhancement			1.34	.67	.79	.01
Openness to change			2.04	1.02	1.14	.01

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Note: Means with the same subscripts are significantly different from each other.

Grade  $DF = 2, 275$ ; Gender  $DF = 1, 275$ ; Interaction Grade X Gender  $2, 275$

Statistically significant differences were obtained for four of the scales when compared by grade level: Collective efficacy,  $F(2, 275) = 3.19, p = .04, \eta^2 = .02$ ; moral disengagement,  $F(2, 275) = 10.31, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$ ; conservation  $F(2, 275) = 4.45, p = .01, \eta^2 = .03$ ; and self-enhancement  $F(2, 275) = 6.94, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$ , differed among students at the three grade levels. The associated effect sizes for each of these outcomes ranged from .01 to .07. The comparisons of the eight scales by gender yielded four statistically significant differences: empathy  $F(1, 275) = 49.16, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15$ ; moral disengagement,  $F(1, 275) = 17.00, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$ ; self-transcendence,  $F(1, 275) = 8.41, p < .01, \eta^2 = .15$ ; and openness to change  $F(1, 275) = 9.24, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03$ . The effect sizes ranged from .01 to .15.

While collective efficacy was found to differ significantly among the three grade levels, the results of the pairwise comparisons using Scheffé a posteriori tests provided no evidence of differences on the comparisons. A statistically significant difference was found for moral

disengagement between the sixth grade students ( $M = 1.36, SD = .30$ ) and the seventh ( $M = 1.54, SD = .43$ ) and eighth ( $M = 1.54, SD = .36$ ) grade students. The difference between seventh and eighth grade students was not statistically significant. Conservation differed between the sixth ( $M = 3.69, SD = .83$ ) and seventh ( $M = 3.86, SD = .96$ ) grade students. Eighth grade students ( $M = 3.79, SD = .87$ ) did not differ from the other two grade levels. The comparisons among the three grade levels for self-enhancement were statistically significant. Sixth grade students ( $M = 3.46, SD = .83$ ) differed from the seventh ( $M = 3.86, SD = .96$ ) and eighth ( $M = 3.92, SD = .93$ ) students. No differences were found between the seventh and eighth grade students. The remaining scales did not differ significantly among students at the three grade levels.

Female students ( $M = 6.26, SD = .93$ ) had significantly higher scores for empathy than male students ( $M = 5.46, SD = .81$ ). The comparison of moral disengagement found that male students ( $M = 1.65, SD = .48$ ) had significantly higher scores than female students ( $M = 1.42, SD = .31$ ). Female students ( $M = 4.29, SD = .93$ ) had significantly higher scores than male students ( $M = 3.94, SD = 1.16$ ) on the scale measuring self-transcendence. The scale, openness to change, differed significantly between male ( $M = 4.03, SD = 1.05$ ) and female ( $M = 4.38, SD = .90$ ). The remaining scales did not differ between male and female students.

The results of the between subjects analysis for the interaction effect produced one statistically significant result for moral disengagement,  $F(2, 275) = 6.19, p = .01, \eta^2 = .04$ . A graph was created to examine the interaction between grade and gender for moral disengagement. While the interaction effect for grade and gender was statistically significant, the effect size was small and the differences were not sufficient to indicate which of the groups were contributing to the difference. Figure 4 presents this analysis.

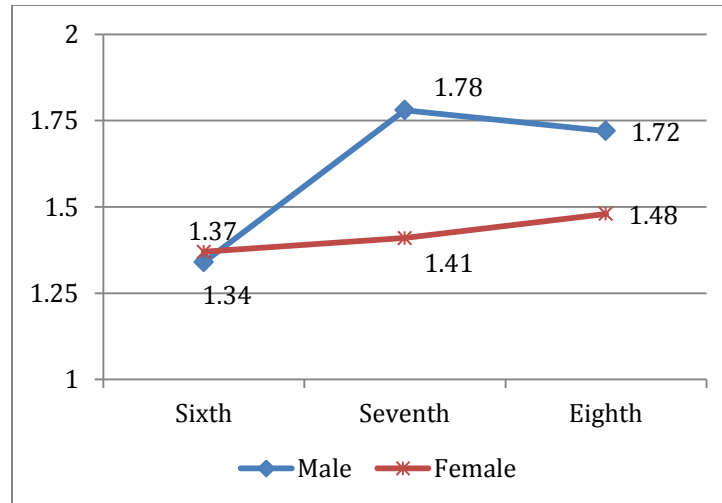


Figure 4. Interaction Effect between Grade and Gender for Moral Disengagement

**Research question 2:** Is there a difference in verbal bullying and defending between male and female students at different grade levels?

**H<sub>5</sub>:** Male students will be more likely to use verbal bullying than female students.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** Female students will be more likely to defend than male students.

**H<sub>7</sub>:** As students advance in grade their level of defending will decrease.

A 3 x 2 factorial MANOVA was used to compare scores on verbal bullying and defending by grade and gender of the participants. As noted in the preliminary analyses section, due to low alpha coefficient, reinforcers, assistants, and outsiders were not included in the analyses. Table 12 presents results of this analysis.

Table 12

*Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Verbal Bullying and Defending by Grade and Gender*

Source	Pillai's Trace	F Ratio	DF	$\eta^2$
Grade	.05	3.53**	4, 540	.03
Gender	.01	.62	2, 269	.01
Gender x Grade	.01	.83	4, 540	.01

\*\* $p < .01$ 

The comparison of verbal bullying and defending was significant for the main effect of grade,  $F(4, 540) = 3.53$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . However, the main effect of gender was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 269) = .62$ ,  $p = .54$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . The interaction effect of grade and gender also was not statistically significant,  $F(4, 540) = .83$ ,  $p = .51$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . To determine which of the three grade levels were contributing to the statistically significant difference on verbal bullying and defending, the between subjects effects analyses were interpreted. Table 13 presents results of this analysis.

Table 13

*Between Subjects Analysis: Verbal Bullying and Defending by Grade and Gender*

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-Ratio	$\eta^2$
Grade					
Verbal Bullying	.26	2, 270	.13	1.74	.01
Defending	12.42	2, 270	6.21	5.58**	.04

\*\* $p < .01$ 

Defending differed among the students at the three grade levels,  $F(2, 270) = 5.58$ ,  $p < .051$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ , whereas the difference in verbal bullying was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 270) = 1.74$ ,  $p = .18$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . This finding indicated that students at the three grade levels had similar use verbal bullying. To determine which of the three grade levels were contributing to the

statistically significant difference for defending, Scheffé a posteriori tests were used to compare all possible pairwise comparisons. Table 14 presents results of this analysis.

Table 14

*Scheffé A Posteriori Tests: Verbal Bullying and Defending by Gender and Grade*

Dependent Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Grade			
Verbal Bullying			
Sixth grade	73	2.03	.16
Seventh grade	104	2.10	.38
Eighth grade	99	2.04	.20
Defender Role			
Sixth grade	73	5.12 <sub>a,b</sub>	.97
Seventh grade	104	4.67 <sub>a</sub>	1.08
Eighth grade	99	4.64 <sub>b</sub>	1.07

*Note:* Means with the same subscripts are significantly different from each other.

The sixth grade students ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SD = .97$ ) had significantly higher scores for defending than either the seventh ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) or eighth ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) grade students. The difference between the seventh and eighth grade students was not statistically significant.

**Research question 3:** Can verbal bullying and defending be predicted from empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement?

**H<sub>8</sub>:** Verbal bullying will be predicted by low levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and values (self-transcendence and conservation), and high levels of moral disengagement and values (self-enhancement and openness to change).

**H<sub>9</sub>:** Defending will be predicted by high levels of empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence and conservation), and low levels of moral disengagement and values (self-enhancement and openness to change).

Separate multiple linear regression analyses were used to determine if the participants' verbal bullying and defending can be predicted from empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement. The first analysis used verbal bullying as the criterion variable and the model was not statistically significant,  $F(8, 273) = 1.17, p = .32$ , accounting for 1% of the variance in verbal bullying. Table 15 presents beta weights.

Table 15

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Verbal Bullying*

Predictor Variable	Constant	<i>b</i> -Weight	$\beta$ -Weight	<i>t</i> -Value
Defender Self-efficacy	1.74	-.02	-.08	-1.15
Collective efficacy		.03	.11	1.61
Empathy		.01	.01	.05
Moral disengagement		.17	.18	2.50**
Openness to change		.02	.05	.48
Self-enhancement		-.02	-.05	-.53
Self-transcendence		.02	.05	.49
Conservation		-.01	-.02	-.18

\*\* $p < .01$

One predictor variable, moral disengagement, was a statistically significant predictor of verbal bullying,  $\beta = .18, t = 2.50, p < .01$ . The positive direction of the relationship between moral disengagement and verbal bullying indicated that students who had higher levels of moral disengagement were more likely to use verbal bullying. The remaining predictor variables were not statistically significant predictors of verbal bullying.

The second regression analysis used defending as the criterion variable. The same set of predictor variables were used in this analysis. Table 16 presents results of this analysis.

Table 16

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Defending*

Predictor Variable	Constant	<i>b</i> -Weight	$\beta$ -Weight	<i>t</i> -Value
Defender Self-efficacy	3.04	.22	.32	5.23**
Collective efficacy		-.02	-.03	-.44
Empathy		.17	.14	2.05*
Moral disengagement		-.37	-.14	-2.13*
Openness to change		-.03	-.03	-.34
Self-enhancement		-.06	-.05	-.63
Self-transcendence		.04	.04	.41
Conservation		.11	.10	1.27

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

The predictor variables as a group explained 20% of the variance in defending,  $F(8, 273) = 9.50$ ,  $p < .01$ . Three of the predictor variables, defender self-efficacy, empathy, and moral disengagement, were statistically significant predictors of defending. Defender self-efficacy was positively related to defending,  $\beta = .32$ ,  $t = 5.23$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that students with higher levels of defender self-efficacy were likely to defend. Empathy was significantly related to defending in a positive direction,  $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 2.05$ ,  $p < .05$ . The relationship between moral disengagement and defending was statistically significant,  $\beta = -.14$ ,  $t = -2.13$ ,  $p < .01$ . The remaining predictor variables, collective efficacy, openness to change, self-enhancement, self-transcendence, and conservation, were not statistically significant predictors of the defending. Chapter 5 continues the discussion of the results and provides a summation of the research study. Limitations of the study are identified, as are recommendations for additional research.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine the association of social cognitive variables, including empathy, values, moral disengagement, and efficacy with verbal bullying and defending. Particular attention also was paid to the influence of grade and gender. Results of the statistical analyses used to test the research questions and hypotheses were mixed. Results pertaining to the research questions are discussed in the following section.

#### **Gender and Grade Differences in Social Cognition**

The first set of hypotheses examined social cognitive variables including: empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, moral disengagement, and values (self-transcendence, conservation, and self-enhancement and openness to change) by grade and gender. Several social cognitive variables differed by gender. Empathy, self-transcendence values, and openness to change values were found to be higher among females, whereas moral disengagement was found to be higher among males. Significant gender differences were not found with respect to verbal bullying and defending.

These findings have been documented in previous research (Almeida et al., 2010; Barchia & Bussey, 2011) and may be attributable to the socialization of males and females including different rearing patterns. The social cognitive theory of gender role development and functioning posits that the construct of gender and its affiliated roles result from a wide array of social influences that function within multiple societal systems (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Social cognitive theory adopts a life-course perspective. According to this theory, gender development evolves in response to triadic reciprocity among personal (i.e., cognitive, affective, and biological events), behavioral, and environmental factors that have a bidirectional influence on each other. Social cognitive theory suggests that gender development is influenced by



modeling, enactive experience, and direct tuition (i.e., providing information about various styles of conduct related to gender; Bandura, 1986). The continual modeling of gender-typed conduct at home, in the educational setting, and in the media transmits gender role expectations (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Social consequences including acceptance, praise, and reward for traditional gender-typed behavior and disapproval or penalization for nontraditional gender typed behavior influence the gender-typed roles that youth adopt. Females are encouraged to understand and share the feelings and emotions of others, which are considered to be associated more with the feminine role (Garaigordobil, 2009). Such values and compassion are likely to direct females to be more sensitive to the plight of others and inhibit them from justifying immoral behavior. Self-sanctions also are influential as youth mature. Gender differences generally are influenced by expected consequences. For example, males are more likely to participate in bullying and disengage from moral self-sanctions that are aligned with gender expectations of power and prestige, while women are rewarded for being empathic.

Previous research has found significant correlations between empathy and self-transcendence values (Myry & Helkama, 2001). Similar to empathy, female students also reported significantly higher scores on self-transcendence than male students. Self-transcendence involves putting aside selfish concerns in an effort to encourage the welfare of others, while emphasizing social justice, equality, and helpfulness. Among adult samples, women have reported greater importance for self-transcendence than their male counterparts (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). Knafo and Schwartz (2004) found similar results among adolescents, and argued that self-transcendence and self-enhancement values have been described as gender-typed. Both values are believed to be influenced by socialization processes in which parents' values expectations are based in part on their child's sex (e.g., parents encourage higher power values

for their sons). Additionally, with respect to gender-typed values, children tend to adopt values more similar to their same-sex parent than their opposite sex parent (Knafo & Schwartz, 2004).

A significant gender difference for openness to change was also statistically significant with females having higher scores. Openness to change values incorporate self-direction, stimulation and hedonism. Some researchers view this higher-order value as gender neutral (Knafo & Spinath, 2011). It was predicted that males, rather than females, would score higher on this value construct due to gender role socialization. It is possible that the current cohort of parents (generation Xers) may want to instill more autonomy and independence in their adolescent females as research supports that generation Xers identify self-direction as the most important value (Lyons, 2004).

Contrary to expectations, female students did not report higher defender self-efficacy, conservation, or collective-efficacy. Females had higher scores on the openness to change values and because these values contrast with conservation, it is not surprising that conservation values were not high. Consistent with previous research (Almeida et al., 2010; Bandura et al., 1996; Obermann, 2011), male students had significantly higher moral disengagement than female students. These results likely are due to gender differences in moral reasoning. Previous research suggested that females tend to take a more caring and relationship focused orientation, while males tend to focus more on justice and individual rights (Gilligan, 1982; Skoe, Cumberland, Eisenberg, Hansen, & Perry, 2002). Additionally, researchers (McAlister, Bandura & Owen, 2006) proposed that gender differences in moral disengagement could be related to gender-stereotyped socialization of aggression. They argued that aggressive behavior is modeled and more acceptable for males, often resulting in greater moral disengagement among males.

Significant grade differences emerged for four of the study variables: collective efficacy, moral disengagement, conservation, and self-enhancement. Sixth grade students had significantly

lower scores than the seventh grade and eighth grade students for moral disengagement and self-enhancement.

Finding from the current study indicated that student scores for moral disengagement increased from sixth to seventh grade and then stabilized. These findings are consistent with Bandura's opinion that moral disengagement evolves over time in response to behaviors that conflict with internal moral values. Barchia and Bussey (2011) also found that older students evidence higher mean levels of moral disengagement. On the contrary, Paciello et al. (2008) found that moral disengagement decreases with age, given that an individual's capacity for self-regulation, perspective taking, and social adjustment typically improved with age, resulting in enhanced moral reasoning. Other researchers have found no significant age differences (Bandura et al., 1996; Barchia & Bussey, 2010; Pornari & Wood, 2010). A meta-analysis was conducted by Gini, Pozzoli, and Hymel (2014) to determine whether the association between moral disengagement and aggression was influenced by age when comparing child and adolescent studies. The analysis of 27 independent studies indicated that studies using adolescents had higher effect sizes than studies with younger children, providing additional support that moral disengagement increased over time.

Conservation values promote conformity, tradition and security. A statistically significant difference was found for conservation values between sixth and seventh grade students, with seventh grade students having higher conservation values. Lower scores among younger students seem counter-intuitive as Schwartz et al. (2001) suggested that children typically adopt and follow the rules and values of others (i.e., parents), while adolescents tend to reassess and define their own morals and values. It is possible that these differences could be attributed to changes in peer group. Sixth graders are new to middle school and try out different social roles to find out where they belong. In comparison, seventh graders may have solidified their peer networks and

defined their social groupings. With this definition comes adherence to the status quo of their social groupings, resulting in an increase in conservation values.

The comparisons among the three grade levels for self-enhancement values (achievement, power, and hedonism) were statistically significant. Grade level trends have not been reported in previous literature. However, it is possible that the pattern of sixth grade students having lower scores than the seventh and eighth grade students is likely to be a reflection of their low social status, their young age, and lack of experience. Sixth graders might feel that they lack power and therefore place less worth on this value constellation. As these students advance in age and grade they may reassess these qualities as more achievable and more profitable.

Collective efficacy was highest among sixth graders and lowest among eighth graders. This decline, as students advance in grade and age, may indicate that sixth graders perceived they are more capable of mobilizing members of the school community in conjoint efforts to intervene in bullying situations on behalf of the victim. Or perhaps the decline in collective efficacy as students advance in grade is in response to repeated exposure to the limited awareness and lack of initiative of the school community to respond to bullying.

As predicted, the interaction between grade and gender for moral disengagement was statistically significant. However, the differences were not sufficient to indicate which groups were contributing to the difference.

### **Gender and Grade Differences in Verbal Bullying and Defending Behaviors**

The second set of hypotheses examined gender and grade differences in verbal bullying and defending behaviors. Contrary to expectations, gender differences were not found with respect to verbal bullying and defending. No grade differences were found for verbal bullying, indicating that students in sixth, seventh and eighth grade had similar levels of verbal bullying.

A significant grade level difference was found in defending behaviors among the students at the three grade levels, with sixth grade students scoring higher for defending than either seventh or eighth graders. This finding aligned with previous research that reported younger students were more frequently identified as defenders (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). Researchers (Menesini et al., 2003; O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 1999) also have documented that defending victims becomes less common with age. This trend may indicate that students become sensitized to bullying over time and become less likely to notice the bullying. Consequently, they are less apt to defend the victims. This decrease in defending also may suggest that as students' mature, they may become more egocentric, caring more about how intervening may negatively influence the growing emphasis of peers on their social status than about helping a peer in distress.

In this sample, the sixth grade students had the lowest scores for moral disengagement, which may have made them more likely to defend a peer who was being bullied. They also had the highest levels of collective efficacy, providing support that they felt that with support from the school community they were capable of stopping a bullying situation. As the students matured, their moral disengagement increased and their collective efficacy decreased, providing support that they may have thought they were not responsible for helping other students who were being bullied and felt that the school community did not work together to defend victims of bullying.

Defending was reported to be less common with age, while student endorsement of self-enhancement values (achievement, power and hedonism) increased with age. A relationship between these two constructs may exist whereby older students may value their own self-image and gratification over the plight of others. It is also possible that due to the sixth graders' low

social status in the middle school and lack experience and power among peers that they place less worth on self-enhancement values.

Overall, findings from this study found grade differences with respect to collective efficacy, moral disengagement, and conservation and self-enhancement values. Specifically, sixth graders evidenced the lowest levels of levels of moral disengagement, conservation values and self-enhancement values and the highest levels of collective efficacy. Grade differences were also found for defending behavior, with sixth graders reporting to be the highest defenders and eighth graders the lowest defenders.

Students in this study were enrolled in three different grade levels. Differences were noted in students in the sixth grade who typically were in late childhood, while those in seventh and eighth grade generally were in early adolescence. These are two distinctly different developmental periods. The transition between the two is marked by changes in parental and peer relationships. Peers become increasingly important and influential in the socialization process as youth enter adolescence and parental influence typically lessens (Marsh, Ho, Porter & McFarland, 2006). The differences in socializing agents can influence cognitions and moral disengagement (Caravita, Sijtsema, Rambaran & Gini, 2014). In an effort to obtain independence from adults, some adolescents might engage in behavior, such as delinquency and aggression, which oppose adult norms. Such behavior may warrant moral self-justification because of the disconnect with moral values instilled in childhood.

### **Predicting Verbal Bullying and Defending Behaviors**

The third set of hypotheses used separate multiple linear regression analyses to determine if verbal bullying and defending could be predicted from empathy, defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy, values (self-transcendence, conservation, self-enhancement, and openness to change), and moral disengagement. Moral disengagement was the only statistically significant

predictor of verbal bullying. Results indicated that students with higher levels of moral disengagement were more likely to participate in verbal bullying. This finding makes intuitive sense; if one is able to justify the bullying, then they are more likely to follow through with it. Moral disengagement has been found to be higher among aggressive children (Gini, 2006), so it also makes sense that it would be higher among verbal bullies. Almeida et al. (2010) found that Portuguese adolescents with positive attitudes towards bullying had higher levels of moral disengagement. They also found that low levels of moral disengagement were related to negative attitudes toward the bully. Additionally, Obermann (2011) found that both active and passive involvement in bullying was related to moral disengagement.

Regression analyses revealed three statistically significant predictor variables for defending: defender self-efficacy, empathy and moral disengagement, explaining 20% of variance. Defender self-efficacy was positively related to defending, indicating that students with higher levels of defender self-efficacy were likely to engage in defending. Individuals with higher defender self-efficacy view themselves as able to intervene in bullying situations on behalf of the victim. These participants had positive perceptions of their ability to defend. Gini et al. (2008) supported this notion. They found that individuals with high social self-efficacy were more likely to intervene in bullying situations. Defender self-efficacy and social self-efficacy are similar constructs, with the former measuring an individual's perceived ability to intervene on behalf of the victim in bullying situations and the latter assessing an individual's conceptualization of their capability in social situations to act assertively in interpersonal relationships (Bandura, 1992).

Empathy also was significantly related to defending in a positive direction, indicating that students with higher levels of empathy were more likely to engage in defending. Empathy is related to compassion and concern when witnessing a victim in distress. Empathy has been

identified as a contributing factor that can motivate prosocial helping behavior (Caravita et al., 2009). Previous studies have found that the prosocial behaviors of defenders in bullying situations have been positively associated with high levels of empathy (Caravita et al., 2009; Gini et al., 2007; Poyhonen et al., 2012). Research has additionally suggested that individuals presenting with heightened awareness and understanding of their peers' emotions could act in ways to ease their distress (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006).

The current study also found that students with lower moral disengagement scores were likely to engage in defending. Individuals who act in ways that violate moral standards (i.e. bullying) often develop cognitive strategies to avoid self-condemnation, a process known as moral disengagement. In contrast, individuals who act in ways that uphold their moral standards are less likely to become morally disengaged. These individuals more likely would find that defending victims of bullying was aligned with their moral values. This finding has been supported by previous research. Gini (2006) found that defenders had the lowest levels of moral disengagement.

Bullies tend to morally disengage as a cognitive safeguard to permit themselves to commit egregious behavior towards others. Given this finding, and Gini's (2006) finding that defenders have the lowest levels of moral disengagement, it appears that moral disengagement could be a valuable construct that also relates to defending and bystanding behaviors. Individuals who are morally engaged tend to defend victims of bullying. When students understand that bullying is wrong and try to eliminate the harmful outcomes that can occur from these aggressive incidents, they are more apt to assist victims, instead of joining in, ignoring, or standing by. Consequently, moral engagement may function as a central motivation for prosocial behavior (Bandura et al., 1996; Gini, 2006), while morally disengaging from one's internal values have



been associated with aggression, bullying (Ando et al., 2005; Gini, 2006; Menesini et al., 2003), and bystanding (Obermann, 2011; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013).

Collective efficacy, openness to change, self-enhancement, self-transcendence and conservation values were not statistically significant predictors of defending. The intercorrelation matrix showed that collective efficacy was related to defending, moral disengagement, and defender self-efficacy. Perhaps collective efficacy was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of defending because of possible mediation by empathy, moral disengagement, or defender self-efficacy. Collective efficacy in and of itself is not sufficient to influence defending behavior; however, when coupled with empathy, moral disengagement, and/or defender self-efficacy, collective efficacy may be more predictive of defending. Alternately, the nonsignificant relationship between collective efficacy and defending may have resulted from the measure used to assess collective efficacy. Perhaps the 10-item scale was not sensitive enough to assess the collaborative efforts required for collective efficacy. The measure may have been too general in nature. Some researchers suggest that collective efficacy may operate at different levels in the school, classroom, and school grounds (Williams & Guerra, 2011).

### **Implications**

Findings from this study have implications for researchers, teachers, school administrators, mental health professionals and school policy makers. Current findings expand previous research by confirming grade and gender differences among social cognitive variables. Females are found to have higher levels of empathy consistently (Almeida et al., 2010; Barchia & Bussey, 2011) and self-transcendence values (Knafo & Schwartz, 2004; Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). Efforts should seek to maintain these traits among females and to enhance them among male students. Gender differences in moral reasoning likely led to males demonstrating higher moral disengagement. Previous research found a strong link between moral disengagement and

the propensity to engage in bullying behavior (Gini, 2006; Obermann, 2011). Intervention efforts must respond to this trend by starting early to address moral engagement and continuing the intervention to ensure that moral disengagement does not continue to increase with age. This is particularly important given the finding that moral disengagement is a statistically significant predictor of verbal bullying and defending.

These findings suggest that schools should foster moral engagement, particularly as it relates to bullying and defending behaviors. Researchers suggested one potentially effective method involves teaching youth to increase their awareness of bullying, including the consequences and group process involved (O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 1999). The rationale behind this method is that, if youth become aware of behaviors that contribute to bullying, they may be less apt to displace or downplay their duty to intervene in stopping bullying behaviors. Additionally, explicit instruction used to help students recognize bullying behaviors and resultant negative outcomes may inhibit youth from distorting the consequences or engaging in euphemistic labeling. Schools also should teach youth ways to preserve moral reasoning skills in response to peer victimization. Furthermore, improving school climate to encourage positive peer relationships could decrease the negative influence that older youth may have on younger students (Siu et al., 2006).

Ophinas and Horne (2006) proposed that supporting and encouraging social problem solving and emotion identification and regulation could improve interpersonal peer relations. These researchers also suggested that using activities to encourage teamwork could help youth to practice cooperative interpersonal skills. Classroom discussions regarding social problem solving is a method that could promote positive decision-making (Orpinas & Horne, 2006). Salmivalli (1999) further asserted that role-playing is an effective intervention effort that could promote increased self-efficacy in defending.

Orpinas and Horne (2006) cautioned that successful interventions also require a positive school climate. Victim blaming and dehumanization can be prevented by instituting clear behavioral expectations that are reviewed regularly, and supported through the use of whole school team-building activities. Fostering affiliation among students and staff can reduce acceptance of interpersonal misconduct and may lead to increased defending behaviors.

Schools are an ideal environment for implementing programs designed to discourage bullying and peer victimization. School-based intervention programs should be implemented proactively as problem behavior may be more amenable to prevention efforts and promote prosocial behavior and social and emotional wellness. Bullying prevention and intervention efforts should include a multi-tiered behavioral model that includes academic and behavioral expectations for all students and uses evidenced-based interventions to address the needs of all students. This framework should be based on policies and procedures that are systematically and consistently implemented school wide. Data driven programs could be used to recognize needs, determine problem situations, plan evidence-based practices to be used teaching and implementing interventions, and examine progress toward positive academic and behavioral outcomes as part of an ongoing, continuous improvement model.

Previous research indicated that defending victims of bullying was more common among younger students (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). This study supported previous research findings that defending differed among students at all three grade levels with sixth graders demonstrating the highest level of defending. Bystanders are present in 85% of all bullying episodes (Craig et al., 2000). Because of their presence, they should be encouraged to speak up and not tolerate bullying. Being a defender is important because in more than half the instances, when bystanders intervene they are able to stop bullying within 10 seconds of intervening (Craig & Pepler, 1997). The current study found that defender self-efficacy, empathy, and low levels of moral

disengagement were predictors of defending. Intervention efforts should address these traits to facilitate defending among students. Students require tools and support from parents, teachers, and school officials to take such a stance. They would benefit from intervention efforts designed with explicit teaching of ways to intervene.

Defender self-efficacy and empathy were positively related to defending. Efforts should be made to enhance defender self-efficacy in all students to increase their awareness of defending as a prosocial behavior. Students are more likely to feel confident in their efforts to intervene in bullying if they have been taught how to do so and are supported by school personnel and peers for their efforts. Early intervention addressing socioemotional learning can help foster empathy. Students also could benefit from adult modeling by their teachers and parents.

Michigan law mandates that school districts are required to adopt and implement a policy to prohibit bullying. Taking the findings from this study into account, these policies and procedures need to be refined to increase prevention and intervention efforts. Professional development for school personnel is necessary to assist in identifying bullying and implementing intervention efforts.

Educators should receive professional development so that they feel empowered and are able to identify and cope with victims, bullies, and defenders. Comprehensive inservices could improve their self-efficacy. Given results from the current study, professional development should focus on learning to help students develop empathy and moral reasoning (Ang & Goh, 2010). The programs should emphasize perspective taking to understand the emotions and grievances of victims as a way to reduce bullying occurrences and prevent youth from becoming morally disengaged. All school support staff (e.g., transportation staff, aides, lunchroom personnel, custodians, and afterschool program supervisors) need to participate in professional

development to learn how to identify and respond to bullying, become role models, and reinforce positive problem solving. All adults working in a school must be aware of symptoms of victimization and the procedures for alerting staff (Ang & Goh, 2010).

### **Limitations**

This study has limitations that must be considered when interpreting the findings. The convenience sampling used in the current study limits the generalizability of the findings. This study was conducted at three middle schools in the suburban school district in Michigan. The sample size (n=282) was good, but represented only 14 to 17% of each school's total population. The majority of students sampled were Caucasian (70.59%) and female (67.0%). Because of the homogeneity of the sample, the findings may not be generalizable to other same-aged students living in urban or rural settings or students of differing ethnicities. The participants were from a relatively affluent, Midwest suburb. While research with this demographic is important, most bullying researchers have used similar samples (Holt & Espelage, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001).

An additional limitation of this study was the measure used to assess participant role behavior. The PRQ-self report (Schaber, 2007) was not reliable with the sample used in the present study and did not control for socially desirable responding. This measure relied on vignettes, but each vignette did not measure all possible participant roles. It is likely that people engaged in multiple behaviors across environments or at different points in time, therefore categorization of these participant roles in different contexts may be arbitrary, leading to the lack of reliability among participant roles. Additionally, differing measures and operationalization of independent variables in studies of bullying behavior may vary making comparability among studies difficult.

The current study relied exclusively on self-report data. Students responded to closed-answer questions, which did not permit further qualitative exploration. Due to this format of data

collection, it is possible that responses could have been influenced by social desirability. Using several methods of assessment to measure complex behavior such as bullying has been suggested (Wolke et al., 2000). The absence of multiple independent sources of data (i.e. observation, teacher report, peer report, school discipline records) may underestimate prevalence of bullying in these schools. Data were collected in a group format using SurveyMonkey in a computer lab. While this method of data collection is common among survey research, particularly with students, it may have affected the results. Students were instructed to complete the assessment independently however the computers were in close proximity and the students may have been aware of peer responding or tailored responses reflecting social desirability.

The timing of data collection may have influenced responding. Students were surveyed in the spring, less than a month before the end of the school year. Principals shared concerns that the eighth graders may have been particularly less invested as they were close to leaving the middle school.

### **Future Research**

The limitations of this study provide several suggestions for future research involving verbal bullying, defending and social cognitive factors. First, a representative and more diverse sample should be sought for future studies. Sampling students from across the state may yield more generalizable findings by using a more heterogeneous sample. A larger, more representative sample size including comparable numbers of males and females would also be an asset to future research. Longitudinal data can also provide more insight into developmental trends and stability of individual traits.

Future studies should examine individual characteristics associated with bullies, reinforcers, assistants, outsiders, defenders, and victims to aid in determining why some youth are more susceptible to the influence of moral disengagement. Furthermore, because the sample

of this study was limited to adolescents, future research needs to investigate moral disengagement and defending among younger and older age groups. A longitudinal study following students from late childhood through adolescence could provide insight into shifts of moral disengagement, values, and prosocial behaviors. Despite nonsignificant findings for collective efficacy as a predictor of defending, previous research indicated that cohesion and trust among staff and students could result in reduced bullying incidents (Williams & Guerra, 2011). Therefore, this construct deserves further investigation, perhaps with the use of a different measure.

Additionally, research is needed to create a psychometrically sound, more consistent, reliable and effective instrument to assess self-reported bullying participant roles. Use of such a measure could have taken this study in another direction by providing information regarding the influence of social cognitive variables in relation to all of the different participant roles. Future studies would benefit from using multiple methods of assessment including multiple informant sources (i.e. observations, teacher report, peer report, and/or school discipline records).

Additional research is needed to further the understanding of the influence of social cognitive variables on defending and bullying behavior. It is important that this research explore the influence of gender and grade effects.

**APPENDIX A**  
**INSTRUMENTS**

**Survey**

- |   |                                 |  |
|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Age   | Gender                          | What grade are you in?                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 13 | <input type="checkbox"/> Male   | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <sup>th</sup> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <sup>th</sup> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 15 |                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <sup>th</sup> |

Ethnicity

- |   |   |                                       |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American               | <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian      | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-racial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaskan Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander         | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern |                                       |

Who do you live with most of the time?

- |  |  |                                       |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mother & Father     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mother only         | <input type="checkbox"/> Father Only  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mother & Stepfather | <input type="checkbox"/> Father & Stepmother | <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Relatives     | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonrelatives        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |

**Moral Disengagement for Peer Aggression**

Please use the following scale to rate each of the following statements:

1	2	3	4
Don't agree at all	Don't agree	Agree	Totally Agree

Circle the number that matches your agreement with each statement

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. If kids fight and misbehave in school it is their teacher's fault.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. It's alright to beat someone who bad mouths your family.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. To hit an annoying classmate is just teaching them "a lesson."                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Stealing a little bit of money is not too serious compared to those who steal a lot of money. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. It's okay to treat badly somebody who is annoying.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. It's alright to fight when your group's honor is threatened.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Teasing someone does not really hurt them.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Taking someone's bicycle without their permission is just                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |



1	2	3	4
Don't agree at all	Don't agree	Agree	Totally Agree

Circle the number that matches your agreement with each statement

“borrowing it.”

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Saying bad things about others doesn't hurt anyone.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Bullying has to be a part of growing up.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. It's okay for a kid to hit someone who is bullying them.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. Kids who are bullied usually do something to deserve it.              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. It's okay to leave someone out if they are annoying.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. It's okay not to help someone being bullied if others aren't helping. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

#### Self-Efficacy for Defending

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not well	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Ok	Well	Very well

Circle the number that matches how well you can:

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Tell a student who slaps, punches, or pushes another student to stop?  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. Tell a student who leaves others out, spreads rumors, or says mean things about another student behind their back to stop? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Tell a student who calls someone mean names, teases, or says mean things to another student to stop?                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

#### Collective Efficacy for Defending

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Well	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Ok	Well	Very Well

Circle the number that matches how well the students and teachers at your school can:

- |                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Work together to stop bullying. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not Well	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Ok	Well	Very Well

Circle the number that matches how well the students and teachers at your school can:

2. Work together to stop students slapping each other. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. Work together to stop students punching each other. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. Work together to stop students pushing each other. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. Work together to stop students spreading rumors about each other. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. Work together to stop students leaving each other out. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. Work together to stop students saying mean things behind each other's backs. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. Work together to stop students calling each other mean names. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. Work together to stop students saying mean things to each other. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. Work together to stop students teasing each other. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

### Empathy Scale for Children and Adolescents

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

Circle the number that most closely matches your agreement with each of the following items (*Remember to rate each item based on how you feel*)

1. It makes me sad to see a girl who can't find anyone to play with. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2. People who kiss and hug in public are silly. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
3. Boys who cry because they are happy are silly. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
4. I really like to watch people open presents, even when I don't get a present myself. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
5. Seeing a boy who is crying makes me feel like crying. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
6. I get upset when I see a girl being hurt. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree

Circle the number that most closely matches your agreement with each of the following items (*Remember to rate each item based on how you feel*)

7. Even when I don't know why someone is laughing, I laugh too. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8. Sometimes I cry when I watch TV. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
9. Girls who cry because they are happy are silly. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10. It's hard for me to see why someone else gets upset. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
11. I get upset when I see an animal being hurt. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
12. It makes me sad to see a boy who can't find anyone to play with. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
13. Some songs make me so sad I feel like crying. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
14. I get upset when I see a boy being hurt. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
15. Grown-ups sometimes cry even when they have nothing to be sad about. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
16. It's silly to treat dogs and cats as though they have feelings like people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
17. I get mad when I see a classmate pretending to need help from the teacher all the time. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
18. Kids who have no friends probably don't want any. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
19. Seeing a girl who is crying makes me feel like crying. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
20. I think it is funny that some people cry during a sad movie or while reading a sad book. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
21. I am able to eat all my cookies even when I see someone looking at me wanting one. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
22. I don't feel upset when I see a classmate being punished by a teacher for not obeying school rules. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

### Portrait Values Questionnaire (Male Version)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all Like Me	A Little Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Like Me	A Lot Like Me	Very Much Like Me

Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you

1. Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things his own original way. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. It is important to him to be rich. He wants to have a lot of money and expensive things. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. He thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. He believes everyone should have equal opportunities to live. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. It's important to him to show his abilities. He wants people to admire what he does. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. It is important to him to live in secure surroundings. He avoids anything that might endanger his safety. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. He thinks it is important to do lots of different things in life. He always looks for new things to try. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. He believes that people should do what they are told. He thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no one is watching. 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. It is important to him to listen to people who are different from him. Even when he disagrees with them, he still wants to understand them. 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. He thinks it's important not to ask for more than what you have. He believes that people should be satisfied with what they have. 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. He seeks every chance he can to have fun. It is important to him to do things that give him pleasure. 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. It is important to him to make his own decisions about what he does. He likes to be free and not dependent on others. 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. It's very important to him to help the people around him. He wants to care for their well-being. 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. Being very successful is important to him. He hopes people will recognize his achievements. 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. It is very important to him that his country be safe. He thinks the state must be on watch against threats from within and without. 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. He likes to take risks. He is always looking for adventures. 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. It is important to him to always behave properly. He wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong. 1 2 3 4 5 6

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all Like Me	A Little Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Like Me	A Lot Like Me	Very Much Like Me

Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you

17. It is important to him to be in charge and tell others that to do. He wants people to do what he says. 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. It is important to him to be loyal to his friends. He wants to devote himself to people close to him. 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. He strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him. 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. Religious belief is important to him. He tries hard to do what his religion requires. 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. It is important to him that things be organized and clean. He really does not like things to be a mess. 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. He thinks it's important to be interested in things. He likes to be curious and to try to understand all sorts of things. 1 2 3 4 5 6
23. He believes all the worlds' people should live in harmony. Promoting peace among all groups in the world is important to him. 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. He thinks it is important to be ambitious. He wants to show how capable he is. 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. He thinks it is best to do things in traditional ways. It is important to him to keep up the customs he has learned. 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. Enjoying life's pleasures is important to him. He likes to "spoil" himself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
27. It is important to him to respond to the needs of others. He tries to support those he knows. 1 2 3 4 5 6
28. He believes he should always show respect to his parents and to older people. It is important to him to be obedient. 1 2 3 4 5 6
29. He wants everyone to be treated justly, even people he doesn't know. It is important to him to protect the weak in society. 1 2 3 4 5 6
30. He likes surprises. It is important to him to have an exciting life. 1 2 3 4 5 6
31. He tries hard to avoid getting sick. Staying healthy is very important to him. 1 2 3 4 5 6
32. Getting ahead in life is important to him. He strives to do better than others. 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. Forgiving people who have hurt him is important to him. He tries to see what is good in them and not to hold a grudge. 1 2 3 4 5 6
34. It is important to him to be independent. He likes to rely on himself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
35. Having a stable government is important to him. He is concerned that the 1 2 3 4 5 6

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all Like Me	A Little Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Like Me	A Lot Like Me	Very Much Like Me

Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you

social order be protected.

36. It is important to him to be polite and to other people all the time. He tries never to disturb or irritate others. 1 2 3 4 5 6
37. He really wants to enjoy life. Having a good time is very important to him. 1 2 3 4 5 6
38. It is important to him to be humble and modest. He tries not to draw attention to himself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
39. He always wants to be the one who makes the decisions. He likes to be the leader. 1 2 3 4 5 6
40. It is important to him to adapt to nature and to fit into it. He believes that people should not change nature. 1 2 3 4 5 6

### Portrait Values Questionnaire (Female Version)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all Like Me	A Little Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Like Me	A Lot Like Me	Very Much Like Me

Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you

1. Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to her. She likes to do things her own original way. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. It is important to her to be rich. She wants to have a lot of money and expensive things. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. She thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. She believes everyone should have equal opportunities to live. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. It's important to her to show her abilities. She wants people to admire what she does. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. It is important to her to live in secure surroundings. She avoids anything that might endanger her safety. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. She thinks it is important to do lots of different things in life. She always looks for new things to try. 1 2 3 4 5 6

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all Like Me	A Little Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Like Me	A Lot Like Me	Very Much Like Me

Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. She believes that people should do what they are told. She thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no one is watching.      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. It is important to her to listen to people who are different from her. Even when she disagrees with them, she still wants to understand them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. She thinks it's important not to ask for more than what you have. She believes that people should be satisfied with what they have.           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. She seeks every chance she can to have fun. It is important to her to do things that give her pleasure.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. It is important to her to make her own decisions about what she does. She likes to be free to plan and to choose her activities for herself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. It's very important to her to help the people around her. She wants to care for their well-being.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13. Being very successful is important to her. She hopes people will recognize her achievements.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14. It is very important to her that her country be safe. She thinks the state must be on watch against threats from within and without.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15. She likes to take risks. She is always looking for adventures.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16. It is important for her always to behave properly. She wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. It is important to her to be in charge and tell others what to do. She wants people to do what she says.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. It is important to her to be loyal to her friends. She wants to devote herself to people close to her.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19. She strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to her.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 20. Religious belief is important to her. She tries hard to do what her religion requires.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 21. It is important to her that things be organized and clean. She really does not like things to be a mess.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 22. She thinks it's important to be interested in things. She likes to be curious and to try to understand all sorts of things.                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 23. She believes all the world's people should live in harmony. Promoting peace among all groups in the world is important to her.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all Like Me	A Little Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Like Me	A Lot Like Me	Very Much Like Me

Please read each description and think about how much each person is or is not like you

24. She thinks it is important to be ambitious. She wants to show how capable she is 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. She thinks it is best to do things in traditional ways. It is important to her to keep up the customs she has learned. 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. Enjoying life's pleasure is important to her. She likes to "spoil" herself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
27. It is important to her to respond to the needs of others. She tries to support those she knows. 1 2 3 4 5 6
28. She believes she should always show respect to her parents and to older people. It is important to her to be obedient. 1 2 3 4 5 6
29. She wants everyone to be treated justly, even people she doesn't know. It is important to her to protect the weak in society. 1 2 3 4 5 6
30. She likes surprises. It is important to her to have an exciting life. 1 2 3 4 5 6
31. She tries hard to avoid getting sick. Staying healthy is very important to her. 1 2 3 4 5 6
32. Getting ahead in life is important to her. She strives to do better than others. 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. Forgiving people who have hurt her is important to her. She tries to see what is good in them and not to hold a grudge. 1 2 3 4 5 6
34. It is important to her to be independent. She likes to rely on herself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
35. Having a stable government is important to her. She is concerned that the social order be protected. 1 2 3 4 5 6
36. It is important to her to be polite to other people all the time. She tries never to disturb or irritate others. 1 2 3 4 5 6
37. She really wants to enjoy life. Having a good time is very important to her. 1 2 3 4 5 6
38. It is important to her to be humble and modest. She tries not to draw attention to herself. 1 2 3 4 5 6
39. She always wants to be the one who makes the decisions. She likes to be the leader. 1 2 3 4 5 6
40. It is important to her to adapt to nature and to fit into it. She believes that people should not change nature. 1 2 3 4 5 6



### Participant Roles Questionnaire – Self-Report (Male Version)

Read the following stories and then answer the questions that follow each story.

A. There is a boy in your class named Victor. He acts weird sometimes and no one plays with him very much. One day he sits on the bus and drops all his books. Some of the kids on the bus laugh at him. Other kids ignore what is going on and try to stay out of it. One boy, Keith, starts calling Victor names like “freak” and “weirdo.” Soon other kids join in and start calling Victor names too. Then John gets up and tells everyone to stop calling Victor names.

In this situation, how often would you be:

1. One of the kids that laughed.	Never	Sometimes	Often
2. One of the kids who ignored what was going on and tried to stay outside the situation.	Never	Sometimes	Often
3. Like John and try to make the others stop calling Victor names.	Never	Sometimes	Often
4. One of the kids who joined in and started calling Victor names too.	Never	Sometimes	Often
5. Like Keith and start calling Victor names.	Never	Sometimes	Often

B. A really popular boy in class, Jeff, is having a party and everyone wants to go. Jeff is mad at another boy in class, Luke, and decides that Luke will be the only boy not invited to the party. Luke is understandably upset and talks to his friends, Patrick and Brady, begging them not to go either. Brady doesn't want to get involved so he tells Luke that he really feels bad for him, but is going to the party. Patrick tells Luke that he thinks Jeff is being mean and he will stay home with Luke and hang out with him on the night of the party.

In this situation, how often would you be:

6. Like Jeff, you don't want someone at your party that you are mad at.	Never	Sometimes	Often
7. Like Brady, and try not to take sides with anyone.	Never	Sometimes	Often
8. Like Patrick you try to comfort Luke by staying with him.	Never	Sometimes	Often

C. Lamar comes into the boys' school bathroom where a bunch of boys are standing and joking around with each other. One of the boys, Stan, says “Hey look it's that geek Lamar. Let's leave.” Logan joins in and says, “Yeah, let's get out of here where we won't be bothered.” Jeremy, another boy in the bathroom tells the group of guys, “Stop being such jerks.”

In this situation, how often would you be:

9. Like Stan and tell others to leave when someone comes up you don't like.	Never	Sometimes	Often
---	-------	-----------	-------

10. Like Logan and support Stan.	Never	Sometimes	Often
11. Like Jeremy and tell the others to stop being mean.	Never	Sometimes	Often
12. How often does something like that happen around you.	Never	Sometimes	Often
D. It is recess time and Seth, Joe and Craig are hanging out on the playground. They see Mark sitting by himself on the jungle gym. Mark acts kind of strange sometimes and no one really plays with him. Seth and Joe walk up to him and Seth says, "Hey, weirdo. I see your not play with anyone again today." Joe encourages Seth and says "Yeah! No one will play with you because you're a freak." Craig comes over and starts laughing, " You guys are so funny!" David hears what is going on and rushes over to see what is happening.			
In this situation, how often would you be:			
13. Like Joe and encourage Seth.	Never	Sometimes	Often
14. Like Craig and just laugh with your friends.	Never	Sometimes	Often
15. Like David and come around to watch the Situation	Never	Sometimes	Often

### Participant Roles Questionnaire – Self-Report (Female Version)

Read the following stories and then answer the questions that follow each story.

A. There is a girl in your class named Vicky. She acts weird sometimes and no one plays with her very much. One day she sits on the bus and drops all her books. Some of the kids on the bus laugh at her. Other kids ignore what is going on and try to stay out of it. One girl, Kelly, starts calling Vicky names like "freak" and "weirdo." Soon other kids join in and start calling Vicky names too. Then Julie gets up and tells everyone to stop calling Vicky names.			
In this situation, how often would you be:			
1. One of the kids that laughed.	Never	Sometimes	Often
2. One of the kids who ignored what was going on and tried to stay outside the situation.	Never	Sometimes	Often
3. Like Julie and try to make the others stop calling Vicky names.	Never	Sometimes	Often
4. One of the kids who joined in and started calling Vicky names too.	Never	Sometimes	Often
5. Like Kelly and start calling Vicky names.	Never	Sometimes	Often

B. One of the really pretty girls in class, Jenny, is having a party and everyone wants to go. Jenny is mad at another girl in class, Lisa, and decides that Lisa will be the only girl not invited to the party. Lisa is understandably upset and talks to her friends, Padma and Becky, begging them not to go either. Becky doesn't want to get involved so she tells Lisa that she really feels bad for her, but is going to the party. Padma tells Lisa that she thinks Jenny is being mean and she will stay home with Lisa and hang out with her on the night of the party.

In this situation, how often would you be:

6. Like Jenny, you don't want someone at your party that you are mad at.	Never	Sometimes	Often
7. Like Becky, and try not to take sides with anyone.	Never	Sometimes	Often
8. Like Padma you try to comfort Lisa by staying with her.	Never	Sometimes	Often

C. Lacy walks over to where a bunch of girls are standing and talking. One of the girls, Samantha rolls her eyes and turns her back to Lacy. Then Lacy's friend, Lindsay, rolls her eyes and turns her back too. Then they both start to walk away. Johanna sees the other girls rolling their eyes and leaving says, "Stop being so mean."

In this situation, how often would you be:

9. Like Samantha and tell others to leave when someone comes up to you that you don't like.	Never	Sometimes	Often
10. Like Lindsay and support Samantha.	Never	Sometimes	Often
11. Like Johanna and tell the others to stop being mean.	Never	Sometimes	Often
12. How often does something like that happen around you.	Never	Sometimes	Often

D. It is recess time and Sally, Jessica and Kayla and hanging out on the playground. They see Leslie sitting by herself on the swings. Leslie acts kind of strange sometimes and no one really plays with her. Sally and Jessica walk up to her and Sally says, "Hey, weirdo. I see your not playing with anyone again today." Jessica encourages Sally and says "Yeah! No one will play with you because you're a freak." Kayla comes over and starts laughing, " You guys are so funny!" Christy hears what is going on and rushes over to see what is happening.

In this situation, how often would you be:

13. Like Jessica and encourage Sally.	Never	Sometimes	Often
14. Like Kayla and just laugh with your friends.	Never	Sometimes	Often
15. Like Christie and come around to watch the situation.	Never	Sometimes	Often

## APPENDIX B

### PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

#### School Shorter Parental Permission/Research Informed Consent/Information Sheet Template

An Investigation of Bystanders' Responses in Bullying Situations:  
Factors Associated with Intervention

#### **Purpose:**

You are being asked to allow your child to be in a research study at their school that is being conducted by Heather Carroll, College of Education, Educational Psychology from Wayne State University to investigate the responses of bystanders in bullying situations and factors that are associated with intervention. Your child has been selected because he/she is a student in Middle School in Grosse Pointe Schools.

#### **Study Procedures:**

If you decide to allow your child to take part in the study, your child will be asked to *complete surveys on bullying behavior, empathy, moral disengagement, defender self-efficacy, values, and collective efficacy. Their participation should take no more than 50 to 60 minutes.*

Samples of questions on each of the surveys include:

- Participant role questionnaire  
Read a vignette and answer questions regarding the vignette using 3 responses: never, sometimes, and often.
- Bryant's Empathy Scale  
Boys who cry because they are happy are silly.  
It makes me sad to see a girl who can't find anyone to play with.  
I get upset when I see an animal being hurt.
- Moral Disengagement Scale for Peer Aggression  
If kids fight and misbehave in school it is their teacher's fault.  
Teasing someone does not really hurt them.  
It's okay to treat badly somebody who is annoying.
- Defender self-efficacy  
Tell a student who slaps, punches, or pushes another student to stop.  
Tell a student who leaves others out, spreads rumors, or says mean things about another student behind their back to stop.

Tell a student who call someone mean names, tease, or says mean things to another student to stop.

- Portrait Values Questionnaire  
Two sentence verbal portraits will be provided indicating an individual's goals, wishes, and aspirations. (e.g., It's very important to me to help the people around me. I want to care for other people.)
- Collective Efficacy  
How well can students and teachers at your school:  
Work together to stop bullying?  
Work together to stop students from slapping each other?  
Work together to stop students pushing each other?

Copies of the instruments will be available for review in the office of your child's middle school.

**Benefits:**

- There may be no direct benefits for your child; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

**Risks:**

- There are no known risks at this time to your child for participation in this study.

The following information must be released/reported to the appropriate authorities if at any time during the study there is concern that:

- child abuse or elder abuse has possibly occurred,

There may also be risks involved from taking part in this study that are not known to researchers at this time.

**Costs**

There are no costs to you or your child to participate in this study.

**Compensation:**

- For taking part in this research study, your child will be entered into a drawing for a \$50.00 gift card. One will be given at each middle school. In addition, your child will receive a candy bar at the time of the study as a token of appreciation for participating in the study.

**Confidentiality:**

All information collected about your child during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. All information collected about your child during the course of this study will be kept without any identifiers.

**Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:**

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision about enrolling your child in the study will not change any present or future relationships with Wayne State University or its affiliates, your child's school, your child's teacher, your child's grades or other services you or your child are entitled to receive.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Heather Carroll at the following phone number 1-519-567-2934. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

**Participation:**

If you do not contact the principal investigator (PI) within a 2-week period, to state that you do not give permission for your child to be enrolled in the research trial, your child will be enrolled into the research. You may contact the PI by telephone at 1-519-567-2934, email Heather.Carroll@wayne.edu, or by mailing the attached tear-off sheet in the enclosed postage paid, self-addressed envelope.

**Optional Tear Off**

If you do not wish to have your child participant in the study, you may fill out the form and return it to your child's teacher.

I do not allow my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this research study.  
Name of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C

**BEHAVIORAL DOCUMENTATION OF ADOLESCENT ASSENT FORM**  
(ages 13-17)

Title: An Investigation of Bystanders' Responses in Bullying Situations:  
Factors Associated with Intervention

**Study Investigator: Heather Carroll**

**Why am I here?**

This is a research study. Only people who choose to take part are included in research studies. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a student at your middle school. Please take time to make your decision. Talk to your family about it and be sure to ask questions about anything you don't understand.

**Why are they doing this study?**

This study is being done to find out about bullying behavior and bystander's responses in bullying situations.

**What will happen to me?**

You will be asked to complete surveys using the computer.

**How long will I be in the study?**

You will be in the study for 50 to 60 minutes.

**Will the study help me?**

You will not benefit from being in this study; however information from this study may help other people in the future

**Will anything bad happen to me?**

There are no risks for your participation.

**Will I get paid to be in the study?**

You will be entered into a drawing for a \$50.00 gift card. In addition, you will receive a candy bar after you submit your survey.

**Do my parents or guardians know about this? (If applicable)**

This study information has been given to your parents/guardian.



**What about confidentiality?**

We will keep your records private unless we are required by law to share any information. The law says we have to tell someone if you might hurt yourself or someone else. Ms. Carroll can use the study results as long as you cannot be identified.

The following information must be released/reported to the appropriate authorities if at any time during the study there is concern that:

- child abuse or elder abuse has possibly occurred,

**What if I have any questions?**

For questions about the study please call Heather Carroll at 1-519-567-2934. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board can be contacted at (313) 577-1628.

**Do I have to be in the study?**

You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to or you can stop being in the study at any time. Please discuss your decision with the researcher. No one will be angry if you decide to stop being in the study.

## APPENDIX D

## WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

**WAYNE STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

IRB Administration Office  
87 East Canfield, Second Floor  
Detroit, Michigan 48201  
Phone: (313) 577-1628  
FAX: (313) 993-7122  
<http://irb.wayne.edu>

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**NOTICE OF EXPEDITED AMENDMENT APPROVAL**

**To:** Heather Carroll  
Theoretical & Behavior Foundations

**From:** Dr. Deborah Ellis or designee C. Zolondek / P.B.  
for Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3)

**Date:** February 10, 2014

**RE:** IRB #: 114113B3E  
Protocol Title: An Investigation of Bystanders' Responses in Bullying Situations: Factors Associated with Interventions  
Funding Source:  
Protocol #: 1311012546  
**Expiration Date:** January 08, 2015  
**Risk Level / Category:** 45 CFR 46.404 - Research not involving greater than minimal risk

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The above-referenced protocol amendment, as itemized below, was reviewed by the Chairperson/designee of the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board (B3) and is APPROVED effective immediately.

- Protocol - Data collection method revised to reflect the addition of twelve survey items.

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**ABSTRACT****SOCIAL COGNITIVE FACTORS ASSOCIATED  
WITH VERBAL BULLYING AND DEFENDING**

by

**HEATHER L. CARROLL****December 2014****Advisor:** Dr. Jina Yoon, Ph.D.**Major:** Educational Psychology**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

The purpose of the study was to examine defending and verbal bullying and the role of social cognitive variables, including empathy, values, moral disengagement, and efficacy among middle school students. Middle school students (n=282) in grades 6 through 8 in an urban public school district in Michigan participated in the study. Data were collected using a self-report survey format during the 2013-2014 school year.

Social cognitive variables were analyzed by grade and gender. Results indicated a statistically significant main effect for gender. Female students reported significantly higher scores for empathy, self-transcendence values and openness to change values, in comparison to male students. Male students had significantly higher moral disengagement than female students.

Collective efficacy, moral disengagement, conservation, and self-enhancement, differed significantly among the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. A statistically significant difference was found for conservation values between sixth and seventh grade students, with seventh grade students having higher conservation values. Comparisons among the three grade levels for self-enhancement were statistically significant.



Gender differences were not found with respect to verbal bullying and defending, but there were significant grade differences. Sixth grade students had significantly higher scores for defending than either seventh or eighth graders.

Moral disengagement was the only statistically significant predictor of verbal bullying; students with higher levels of moral disengagement were more likely to participate in verbal bullying. In predicting defending, three statistically significant predictor variables emerged: high defender self-efficacy, high empathy, and low moral disengagement.

Implications for researchers, teachers, school administrators, mental health professionals and school policy makers. Additional research is needed to further the understanding of the influence of social cognitive variables on defending and bullying behavior.

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