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Bullying in New Jersey: what has been done and what is going on

Sarah Larsen

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**BULLYING IN NEW JERSEY:
WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHAT IS GOING ON**

by
Sarah Larsen

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services, Administration, and Higher Education
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In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
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Thesis Chair: Terri Allen, Ph.D.

Abstract

Sarah Larsen

**BULLYING IN NEW JERSEY:
WHAT HAS BEEN DONE AND WHAT IS GOING ON
2012/13**

Terri Allen, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in School Psychology

The current study investigated the new HIB (Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying) legislation as part of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” for New Jersey public schools in regard to students’ perceptions of severity of cyber, relational, physical and non-bullying scenarios. The study also observed students’ ability to identify non-bullying scenarios from bullying scenarios since the revisions were made in 2011. Gender and size of high school the students graduated from were also accounted for.

Results of the study were obtained via a two-part survey completed by college students (n = 80). The first section asked for background information such as year graduated from high school, gender, and size of high school, while the second portion asked participants to rate 24 cyber, relational, physical and non-bullying scenarios on severity (0 = not bullying, 1 = low severity, 2 = moderate severity, 3 = high severity). The findings suggest there was no difference between students who experienced the revisions of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” and those who did not when comparing perceptions of severity of different forms of bullying. However, the findings did show that females rated physical bullying and non-bullying scenarios higher in severity than males did and students who attended larger high schools rated non-bullying scenarios lower in severity than those students from small and medium sized high school did.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Statement of Needs	1
1.2 Purpose	2
1.3 Hypothesis	2
1.4 Operational Definitions	3
1.5 Assumptions	4
1.6 Limitations	5
1.7 Summary	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review	6
2.1 Bullying	6
2.2 Direct Bullying (Physical/Verbal Attacks)	7
2.3 Relational Bullying	7
2.4 Cyberbullying	8
2.5 Outcomes of Bullying/Importance of Awareness	10
2.6 Gender Differences	11
Chapter 3: Methods	13
3.1 Participants	13
3.2 Materials	13
3.3 Design	14
3.4 Procedure	14

Table of Contents (Continued)

Chapter 4: Results	15
Chapter 5: Discussion	19
5.1 Overview of Study	19
5.2 Integration with Past Literature	20
5.3 Implications	22
5.4 Explanations and Limitations	22
5.5 Future Directions	23
References	25
Appendix	30

List of Figures

Figure	Page
Fig. 1: Severity of Physical Bullying Vs. Gender	16
Fig. 2: Severity of Non-Bullying Vs. Gender	17
Fig. 3: Severity of Non-Bullying and Size of High School	18

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of Needs

As of the beginning of the 2011 school year, the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” was updated to provide a more detailed description of bullying, raise awareness to students and staff members, inform the family when bullying occurs and create a positive friendly environment in the school setting. The “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” stated that it is the responsibility of school faculty or staff members to report any instances of bullying both on and off school property (NJDOE, 2011a). Cyberbullying initiated within school or outside of the school day will result in the same punishment as face-to-face bullying (NJDOE, 2011a). Schools are responsible for outside of school bullying because relationships between bullies and victims form through the school (NJDOE, 2011a). In general, the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” was enacted to take more precaution and add faculty and staff involvement in bullying to prevent all negative outcomes bullying has on students (NJDOE, 2011a). The current study will address possible changes students’ perceptions of bullying since these laws were added to the schools’ responsibilities. This study will also investigate students’ awareness of the severity of different types of bullying such as cyberbullying, relational bullying, and traditional physical bullying. Further, it will also examine if gender and size of school has an effect on the students’ perceptions of severity of the different forms of bullying.

This study will help determine the success or failure of the revised and added section of the New Jersey “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” pertaining to bullying awareness and the extended definition of bullying with the addition of cyberbullying and relational bullying. The revision of this bill was recent with only preliminary data with

regard to impact. The current study can strengthen anti-bullying tactics between students by bringing to mind of which aspects in the bill are working positively towards limiting bullying and bringing awareness. Also, the inclusion of student awareness of severity and perception of bullying will allow for any future additions or revisions to the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.” If students are unaware of the different forms of bullying the bill can add sections to educate more about preventions and inform why all forms of bullying are dangerous.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to look at the impact of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act,” following the 2011 revisions. The study will examine if college students’ understanding of different forms of bullying and its severity varies based on academic year/age since the revisions. This study will also observe if college freshmen are able to identify bullying more accurately than upper classmen and gender differences in severity of bullying ratings.

1.3 Hypothesis

This study will examine understanding of bullying and acknowledgment of its severity compared to gender differences, size of school, and year graduated from high school in relation to the Chapter 122 Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act revisions of 2011 (graduated either before or after). It is expected to find a difference between students’ perception of cyber, relational, and physical bullying severity between the students who went to high school during the 2011-2012 academic year and those who attended high school prior to the implementation of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.” Additionally, it is expected to find a difference between students’ ability to identify non-bullying scenarios between the students who went to high school during the 2011-2012

academic year and those who attended high school prior to the implementation of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.” It is also expected to find significance between gender and bullying definition and severity. It is anticipated there will be no main effect for students’ ability to identify non-bullying scenarios, nor perceptions of severity of bullying and size of high school.

1.4 Operational Definitions

Cyberbullying: “An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009; Menesini & Nocentini, 2009; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008).

Relational aggression: Can harm or manipulate a person’s social standing or reputation (Crick, Ostrov, & Kawabata, 2007; Leff, Waasdorp, & Crick, 2010). Furthermore, it includes social exclusion, withholding friendship and indirectly by spreading rumors behind one’s back (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Leff et al., 2010).

Direct bullying: Includes physical aggression, verbal threats, swearing mocking, and observable confrontations between people (Marini, Dane & Bosacki, 2006; Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006).

Small high school: Total enrollment 600 students or less, or fewer than 150 students per grade (Lee & Smith, 1997).

Medium high school: Between 601 and 900 students total, or 150-225 students per grade (Lee & Smith, 1997).

Large high school: Total enrollment of 900 students or more, or greater than 225 students per grade (Lee & Smith, 1997).

Harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) in accordance to the Anti-

Bullying Bill of Rights Act:

Harassment, intimidation or bullying' means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory [handicap] disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function [or] , on a school bus, or off school grounds ... that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students and that:

- a. a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property; [or]
- b. has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students [in such a way as to cause [substantial] disruption in, or [substantial] interference with, the orderly operation of the school] or
- c. creates a hostile educational environment [at school] for the student or
- d. infringes on the rights of the student at school] by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student (NJDOE, 2011a, p. 7).

1. 5 Assumptions

According to Froeschle, Mayorga, Castillo, and Hargrave, (2008) teachers and parents are “relatively unaware” of incidents of cyberbullying. Additionally, the study made suggestions regarding how to prevent and heal mental distress caused by cyberbullying (Froeschle et al, 2008). The nine main points were as follows: adult supervision and control over web surfing, adult knowledge of the use of social media websites, classroom readings that allow for students to empathize with characters, offer emotional support to victims, create a student body that does not tolerate bullying, provide mentors for bullies, involve school counselors, and assign group projects that encourage the class to work together opposed to competing with other groups (Froeschle

et al, 2008). The most recent revision of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” includes most of these suggestions in some form (NJDOE, 2011a). The bill had been modified to help New Jersey schools prevent, take proper precautions, and react appropriately towards bullying incidents (NJDOE, 2011a). In addition, revisions were made for both students and teachers to become more aware of more discrete bullying, such as cyberbullying and relational bullying (NJDOE, 2011a).

1.6 Limitations

This study will not include all of the New Jersey schools; it will be limited to college students from a public southern New Jersey institution. The study will be limited to a sample size of 80 students. Since the study will compare the knowledge of bullying between incoming freshmen who were in high school when the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act revisions took place to the upper classmen who attended high school before the revisions, this study is aware that students’ memories may skew the results. Also, it is mindful that some students may not answer honestly.

1.7 Summary

The New Jersey “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” has been revised in 2011 to raise bullying awareness for students, parents, and school faculty. Student perceptions of severity of bullying and ability to differentiate between bullying and non-bullying scenarios have yet to be measured since the revisions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Bullying

Over the past two decades the definition for bullying has expanded (Crick, Ostrov, & Kawabata, 2007). In the N.J. DOE's "Guidance for Schools on Implementing the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (P.L.2010, c.122)" harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) is defined as any "gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents," that:

Is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by an actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic; takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus; or off school grounds, as provided for in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15.3; substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students; and that a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property; or has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student (NJDOE, 2011b, p. 2).

New focuses of bullying have been brought to attention. There is overt bullying and indirect bullying, also referred to as relational bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Overt bullying can be physical or verbal. Of these, physical bullying receives most attention due to concerns about violence (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Bullying such as name calling and teasing would also fall under overt bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). In relational bullying, there is "purposeful manipulation or damage to peer relationships" that is recurring and intended for a victim with not as much power (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Crick, 1996, p. 2317). Bullying can be performed as cyberbullying, face-to-face or as relational aggression (Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009).

2.2 Direct Bullying (Physical/Verbal Attacks)

Direct bullying includes physical aggression, verbal threats, swearing and mocking (Marini, Dane & Bosacki, 2006; Scheithauer et al., 2006). Direct bullying includes observable confrontations between people (Marini et al., 2006), with physical bullying receiving more attention than other forms of bullying because it is most noticeable (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Marini et al., 2006).

Furthermore, a UK study conducted by Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt, and Lemme (2006), gave a questionnaire to teachers and pupils asking participants to “Say what you think bullying is.” The study found that students were less likely to include indirect bullying in their definition when compared to teachers. The pupils geared their answers toward physical bullying and/or verbal abuse. The study also found that students were less likely to include the bully’s intent to hurt and harm victims and power imbalance (Naylor et al., 2006). In short, students are better at identifying direct, physical and verbal bullying than indirect bullying.

2.3 Relational Bullying

Overall, less attention has been brought to relational bullying because it has traditionally been viewed as being less harmful (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Harachi, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1999). Relational aggression is not physical aggression, but it can manipulate or harm a person’s social standing or reputation (Crick et al., 2007; Leff et al., 2010). The term was coined by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) (Leff et al., 2010). Relational bullying includes social exclusion, withholding friendship or indirectly by spreading rumors behind one’s back; For examples, “You can’t play with us,” “I wont be your friend if you ...” or “Did you hear ...?”(Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Leff et al., 2010). Furthermore, relational aggression is a serious concern for students, in that it has been

associated with an array of deficits such as “social problem-solving and emotion regulation deficits, peer relationship difficulties, internalizing problems such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness, and is predictive of future psychosocial maladjustment” (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008; Crick et al., 2007; Leff et al., 2010). Although relational bullying is viewed as being less harmful, it has a stronger relationship to emotional distress than physical bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). It is also linked to current and future predictions of social and psychological maladjustments along with adulthood depression (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001; Crick, 1996; Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Espelage, Mebane, & Swearer, 2004; Olweus, 1993). It has been noted by victims that social exclusion, a form of relational bullying, is perceived as the worst type of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Sharp, 1995). However, teachers often view this type of bullying as less serious and although often unnoticed, while relational bullying causes “the greatest amount of suffering (Van der Wal, De Wit, & Hirasing, 2003, p. 1312)” (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).

2.4 Cyberbullying

Another indirect form of bullying is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can have a greater impact than traditional bullying because it can occur at anytime (Spears, Slee, Owens, & Johnson, 2009). Cyberbullying is defined by Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, and Tippett (2008) as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Dooley et al., 2009; Menesini, E. & Nocentini, A., 2009; Smith et al., 2008). The term has also been defined by Belsey (2004) as “the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others”

(Belsey, 2004; Dooley et al., 2009). Since electronic communication and technology have become heavily popular and important to adolescents, cyberbullying can be performed through a number of ways through technology at any given time; electronic communication includes instant messaging, e-mail, text messaging, chat rooms, bulletin boards, blogs, social networking, video sharing, photo sharing, multiplayer online games and virtual worlds and could be used through computers, cellphones, personal digital assistants, cameras with wireless and videogame systems with Internet (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). In a 2010 study performed by Hinduja and Patchin, teens most commonly use technology such as cell phones, text messages, Facebook, console games and e-mail multiple times per week (Patchin and Hinduja, 2011). These common forms of technology could be used as a means of communication and potentially cyberbullying and harassment. Cyberbullying is most common during adolescent years (Ševčíková & Šmahel, 2009).

Cyberbullying and traditional bullying have some differences in terms of the relationship between the bully and the victim. Typically, with traditional bullying the aggressor is physically more powerful than the victim (Barlett & Gentile, 2012; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003; Veenstra, Lindenberg, Zijlstra, De Winter, Verhulst, & Ormel, 2007); while cyberbullying, the aggressor could be a weaker or “lower status” than the victim since the bullying is not face-to-face (Barlett & Gentile, 2012; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Imbalance could be removed from cyberbullying because it is not physical. Traditional bullying allows the aggressor to witness the pain inflicted towards the victim while cyberbullying does not always allow the visibility (Barlett & Gentile, 2012).

2.5 Outcomes of Bullying/Importance of Awareness

All types of bullying usually have negative consequences and outcomes. Traditional bullying, such as direct and physical, victims often experience fear and may show symptoms of depression (Boulton, Trueman, & Murray, 2008; Kaltiala-Heino, Fröjd, & Marttunen, 2010). Victims of cyberbullying are most often reported as experiencing anger, fear, and sadness (Barlett & Gentile, 2012; Beran, 2005; Dehue, Bolman, & Völlink, 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008), with relational bullying victims described as particularly vulnerable to depression (Barlett & Gentile, 2012; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Card et al., 2008; Crick et al., 2007; Leff et al., 2010). Given the negative psychological outcomes, students should have an understanding of bullying and the consequences in order to bring awareness and possibly prevent future occurrences.

As noted above, the strongest relationship to victimization from any form of bullying is depression (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). In a meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies ranging from 1978 to 1997, Hawker and Boulton, (2000) found a positive association between victimization and depression compared to nonvictims. In addition, Hawker and Boulton (2000) found a positive correlation between victimization and loneliness when observing studies that evaluated the variables together. It was also found that victims of bullying experienced more anxiety than nonvictims (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). The study also included previous studies that explored victimization and general self-esteem along with victimization and social self-concept. The studies described by Hawker and Boulton (2000) in which included relationships among victimization and general self-esteem and victimization and social self-concept found positive correlations that were not as strongly supported as the other positive relationships found by the researchers.

2.6 Gender Differences

There are differences between males and females throughout development. Males and females sometimes have different values and tend to express themselves differently. For instance, females perceive peer social relationships as stronger and more valuable than males (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2008). Also, aggressive behavior seems to have different meaning for males and females (Scheithauer et al., 2006). Overt-aggressive behavior displayed by males can be to show dominance, or move up in social status (Crick et al., 1996; Galen & Underwood, 1997; Scheithauer et al., 2006). Males and females express aggression differently, research suggests that girls are more relationally aggressive than boys, and boys are more physically aggressive and experience physical aggression more than girls (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Leff et al., 2010; Scheithauer et al., 2006).

Additionally, there are gender differences when it comes to perception of bullying. It is believed that girls perceive cyberbullying to be more distressful than boys (Bauman & Newman, 2013). A study conducted by Galen and Underwood (1997) found that boys in elementary, middle and high school viewed physical aggression more cruel than social/relational aggression. On the contrary, girls viewed social/relational aggression to be more upsetting than physical aggression. It could be inferred that females are more emotional while males are more physical, but this does not mean that relational aggression does not occur between males (Card et al., 2008; Leff et al., 2010; Swearer, 2008). In fact, as mentioned in Craig's study, both males and females experience equal exposure and reports of relational bullying (as cited in Scheithauer et al., 2006). Furthermore, for both boys and girls "relational bullying has a stronger link to depression than does direct bullying" (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).

A 2011 study by Escartín, Salin, and Rodríguez-Carballeira displayed gender difference in the workplace, as men associated the term bullying to be mostly physical, and women associated the term to be more relational (Escartín, Salin & Rodríguez-Carballeira, 2011). Escartín, Salin, and Rodríguez-Carballeira (2011) conducted two studies, the first observed gender and definitions of bullying in the workplace and the second study compared gender and perceived severity of bullying behaviors among employees. Both studies were performed among a Spanish population (Escartín, Salin & Rodríguez-Carballeira, 2011). The first study asked participants to think about bullying and to write their own definition of bullying women (Escartín et al., 2011). Study one found that women were more likely to mention emotional abuse more often than men, and men were more likely to include abusive work conditions more often than women (Escartín et al., 2011). The second study examined if women rated bullying scenarios more severe than men (Escartín et al., 2011). The researchers did this by sending a 35-item survey to employees in four organizations throughout Spain (Escartín et al., 2011). Participants had to rate each item from 0 (no harassment) to 10 (maximum severity) (Escartín et al., 2011). This study supported their hypothesis and found significance between gender and emotional abuse, isolation and profession discredit severity; this supported the researchers' other hypothesis of gender differences in perceptions of severity vary across the different forms of bullying (Escartín et al., 2011).

Chapter 3

Methods

3.1 Participants

The researcher selected 80 students from a university located in southern New Jersey. Of the participants, 41 were female and 39 were male. There were a total of 28 freshmen that graduated high school in 2012 and 52 upperclassmen. The number of students who graduated from a small high school was 20, while 20 graduated from a medium high school, and 40 from a large high school.

3.2 Materials

This study included a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The survey was based on the bully survey conducted by Sue Swearer. The survey consisted of two parts. The first section was a 7-item questionnaire asking participants about demographics such as gender, size of high school and year graduated from high school. The second part of the survey consisted of 24-items. The second portion asked participants to identify if certain situations were bullying or not. If the participant thought the situation was not bullying they would circle 0 on the likert scale. If the participants believed the situation was a form of bullying they were then asked to rate the situation on severity, 1 for low severity, 2 for moderate severity and 3 for high severity. The scenarios included physical bullying, relational aggressive bullying, cyberbullying, and non-bullying. Some examples that were used in the second section are as follows: "Tells other people to hit him/her because others will listen and he/she is less popular."; "Makes death stares at him/her until he/she feels sick."; "Sends him/her a computer virus on purpose because he/she cannot fix it."; and "Hits him/her because he/she shoved first."

3.3 Design

The experiment used a 3 x 2 x 3 ANOVA. The variables were if the participant was in high school during the revisions of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (determined by year graduated from high school), gender, and size of high school. The study used the variables to measure significance between each and the participants' understanding of the different types of bullying, cyberbullying, physical bullying, relational bullying and non-bullying scenarios and the severity of each. It is predicted that there will be a difference between perceptions of bullying and gender across cyberbullying, physical bullying, and relational bullying. It is also predicted that the students who graduated high school in 2012 will have a better understanding of what bullying is and rate the non-bullying situations lower. Size of high school was also looked at in relation to perception of bullying; it is expected to find no significance.

3.4 Procedure

The researcher entered the classrooms in the university, after receiving approval from the professors and the Institutional review Board. The examiner explained the research and handed out the consent form to all eligible participants. The questionnaires were then handed out to each participant to fill out individually. The survey lasted 8 minutes on average. When participants were finished with the packets were collected for data analysis. See Appendix A for copy of survey.

Chapter 4

Results

The researcher expected significance between perception of cyberbullying and year graduated from high school, and gender. There were no interactions found for perceptions of cyberbullying. It was also expected that there would be significance between perception of relational bullying with gender and year graduated from high school, and no significance with size of high school. Again, no interactions were found for perceptions of relational bullying.

Severity of Physical Bullying Vs. Gender

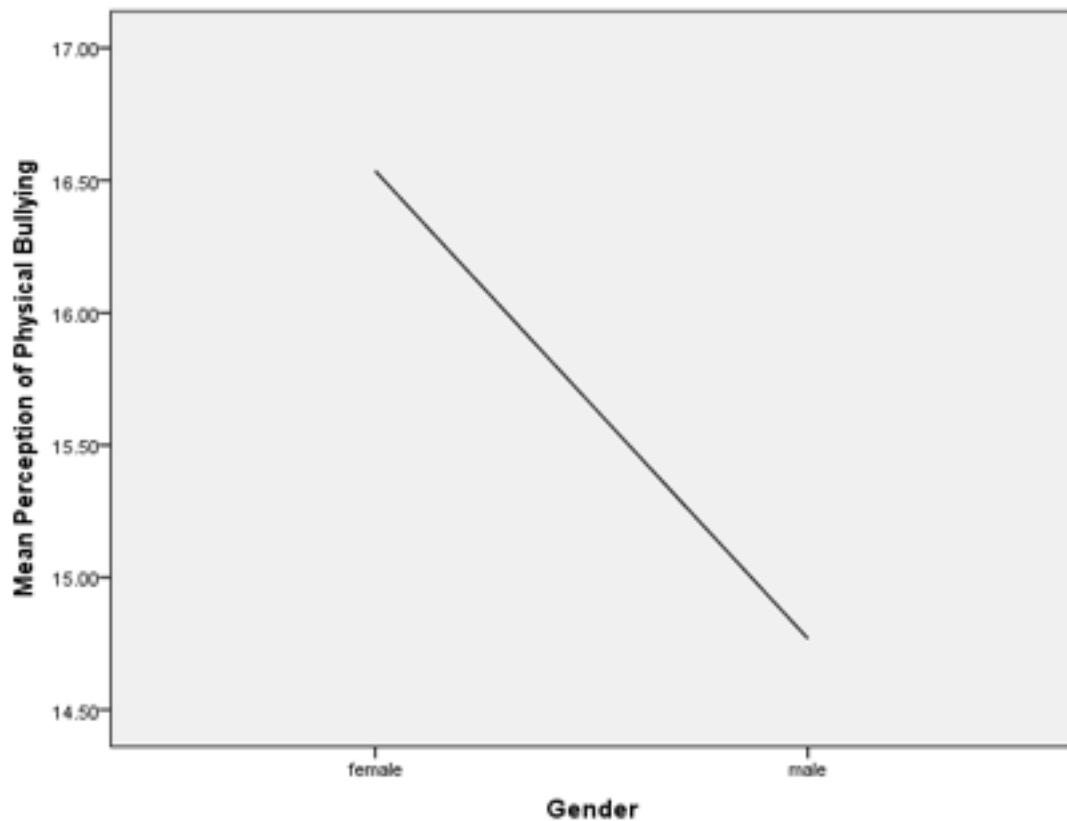


Figure 1. Male and female perceptions of the severity of physical bullying scenarios.

It was expected by the researcher to find interactions between perceptions of physical bullying with gender and year, and no significance with size of high school. There was a main effect between perception of severity for physical bullying and gender. Specifically, females rated physical bullying more severe than males $F(1,68) = 7.791$, $p = (.007)$. The figure above shows females had a higher mean than males for perceptions of physical bullying severity. No main effects were found for perceptions of physical bullying and size of high school graduated from, or year graduated from high school.

Severity of Non-Bullying Vs. Gender

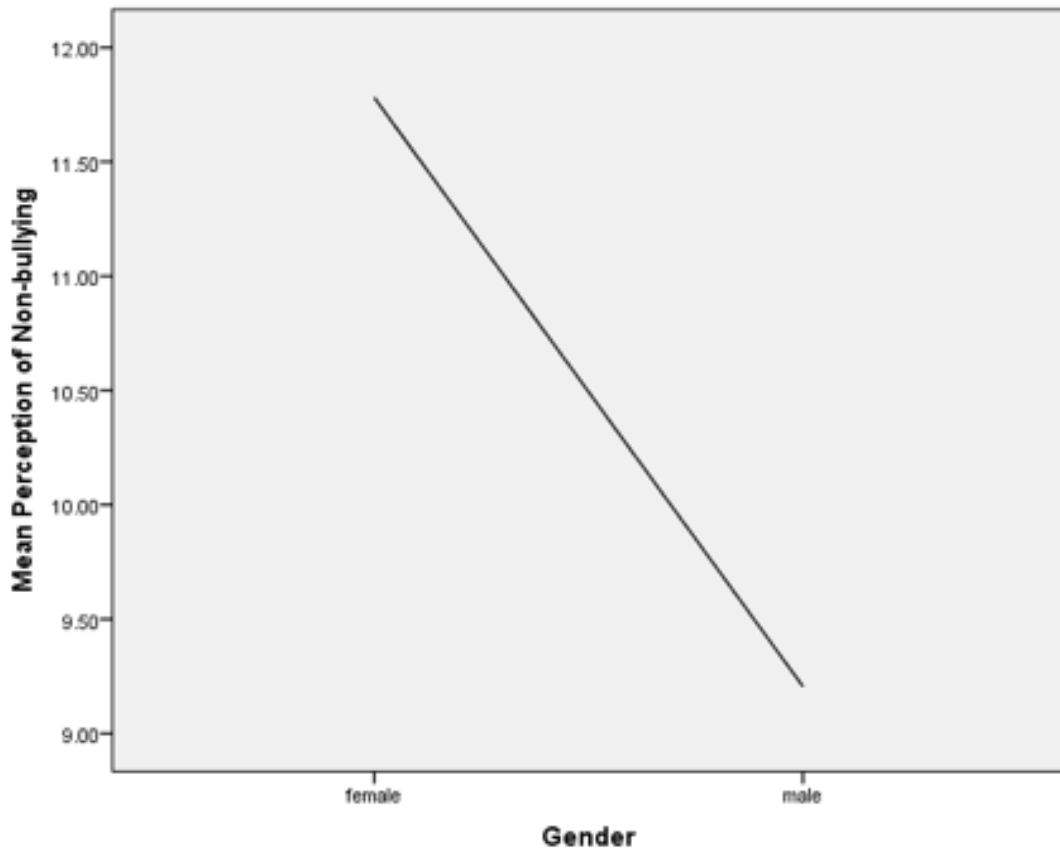


Figure 2. Male and female perceptions of the severity of non-bullying scenarios.

The researcher also expected there to be main effects between non-bullying scenario severity and year graduated from high school. No significance was expected in gender and size of high school. The results found no main effect for non-bullying and year graduated from high school. There was an interaction between non-bullying and gender. As seen in the graph above, females rated the non-bullying situations higher than males $F(1,68) = 9.0, p = (.004)$.

Severity of Non-Bullying and Size of High School

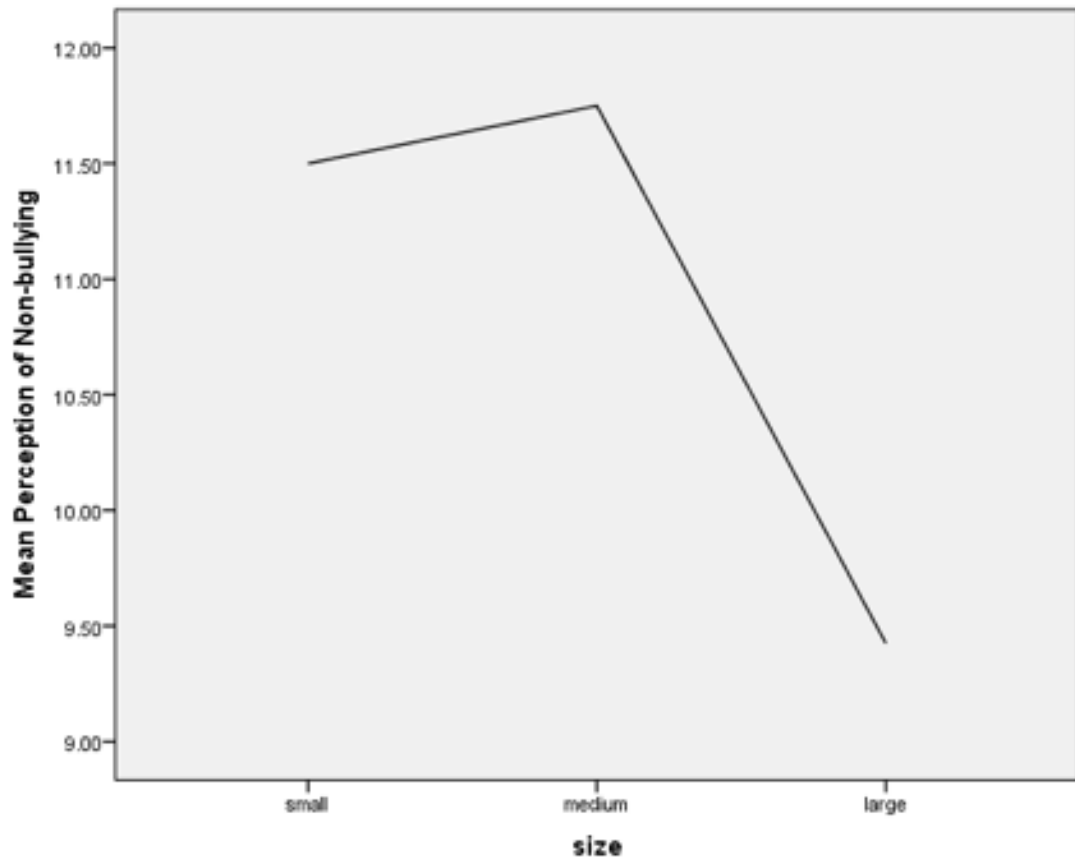


Figure 3. Perceptions of the severity of non-bullying scenarios by size of high school.

There was also a significance found between non-bullying perception of severity scores and size of high school graduated from. As seen in the graph above, students who graduated from large high school rated non-bullying situations lower in severity compared to students who graduated from small and medium high schools $F(2,68) = 3.104, p = (.05)$.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Overview of the Study

Since the recent enactment of the New Jersey “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” revisions little is known about the impact it had on student perception of bullying severity, or the impact it had for students to better identify bullying scenarios. Results were obtained from current college students through a two part self-report survey to distinguish perceptions of physical, relational, cyber, and non-bullying severity between students who attended high school during the implementation of the revised New Jersey “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” and those who attended high school prior to the revisions of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act,” gender, and school size.

The current study predicted significance between perception of cyberbullying and year graduated from high school, and gender. The study found there were no interactions for perceptions of severity for cyberbullying between year graduated from high school, gender or size of high school. Interactions were also expected between perception of relational bullying with gender and year graduated from high school, and no significance with size of high school. Again, no interactions were found for perceptions of severity for relational bullying between year graduated from high school, gender or size of high school.

Additionally, interactions were predicted between perceptions of severity in regards to physical bullying with year and gender, and no significance was predicted for size of high school. The study found no main effects for perceptions of severity for

physical bullying in relationship with year graduated from high school and size of high school. However, the study found that females viewed physical bullying as more severe than males perceived it to be. In addition, interactions were predicted between non-bullying scenario severity and year graduated from high school, with no significance was expected in gender and size of high school. The study did not find interactions for non-bullying scenarios and year graduated from high school. However, the study did find that females viewed non-bullying scenarios as bullying and perceived the non-bullying scenarios to be more severe than males perceived them to be. Additionally, it was found that students who attended small and medium sized high schools perceived non-bullying scenarios as more severe than students who attended large high schools.

5.2 Integration with Past Literature

The findings of the current study were divergent with previous literature in regards to observing gender difference in response rating to cyberbullying severity; the current study found no difference. Previous research has supported females being more upset by cyberbullying than males (Bauman & Newman, 2013). Participants for both studies were 2013 college students. However, the current study expands the previous work using students attending college in Arizona by contributing students' perceptions of cyberbullying from New Jersey.

Although this study found no significance between gender and perception of severity of relational bullying, previous research has found that girls viewed relational aggression to be crueler than boys perceived it to be (Galen & Underwood, 1997)

The results of this study seemed to be divergent with past literature in relation to perceptions of physical bullying and gender. Although, this study found females rated the severity of physical bullying higher than boys, previous research found that boys perceived physical aggression to be crueler than females (Galen & Underwood, 1997). The past study by Galen and Underwood (1997) used a sample size of 113 girls and 121 boys from 4th, 7th, and 10th grade with about half of the participants being from the 4th grade. In comparison, the current study used a sample size of 80 participants total, all of which were college students. The current study extended earlier research through the addition of higher education students' perceptions of bullying severity in addition to the previous study containing only elementary, middle and high school students.

Although the study did not expect to find gender difference when identifying non-bullying scenarios and response to the severity of non-bullying scenarios, it was found that females perceived the given non-bullying scenarios to be bullying, and viewed the scenarios more severe than males. The findings of this study seem to be convergent with previous research in that females perceive peer social relationships as stronger and more valuable than males (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2008). Therefore, when reading the scenarios females could have felt that a social relationship was being jeopardized by the given situation, rating the scenario higher in severity.

The current study also infers that after the revisions of the "Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act" students did not gain a better sense of what bullying is and is not. It is possible that no difference was portrayed between year graduated from high school and

ratings of non-bullying situations because participants may have gained more knowledge about bullying through college experience and education.

It was found that smaller and medium sized high school graduates rated non-bullying scenarios higher in severity than students who graduated from a larger high school; perhaps this is because larger high school provided more resources to identify bullying. Results could have been skewed from number of participants who graduated from a small and medium size school and the male female ratio.

5.3 Implications

The implications of this study suggests that females are more sensitive to physical bullying scenarios and non-bullying scenarios, the revisions of the New Jersey “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act” did not help students better identify between bullying and non-bullying scenarios, and students who attended larger high school have gained more knowledge when differentiating between bullying and non-bullying scenarios. This study was amongst the first to experiment the influence of the new revisions of the “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act,” but being that the revisions are so recent, more research should be conducted in the future after students have a longer exposure period.

5.4 Explanations and Limitations

The current study utilized self-reported data, which needs to be interpreted with caution given the risk of systematic error (Crockett, Schulenberg, & Petersen, 1987). The researcher based the questionnaire on a published survey (Swearer, 2001) but the current questionnaire’s reliability and validity was not established.

It is aware that this study had limitations. Considerable limitations include that it was a self-report survey generated by the researcher. Other substantial limitations include students rushed through the survey, students gained knowledge of bullying through

college experience, and students may not have answered honestly. Additionally, mistakes could have been made by the researcher when computing the survey's results and transferring data. Sample size could also be a limitation in that it is possible that there were not enough males or females who graduated from a small, medium or large high school, and may have skewed the results for perceptions of bullying severity when focusing on and comparing the size of high school participants graduated from. The participants who represented the high school perceptions of bullying severity who experienced the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act revisions were only present for one year of high school under the revisions. Therefore, it is feasible that one year under the new act was not long enough to impact their perceptions of bullying and severity. Another limitation regarding year graduated from high school and perceptions of bullying is that all of the participants are college student and no high school graduates who were not currently enrolled in a higher education program were recruited for the study. Further, high school graduates without higher education may be a more accurate measure for perceptions of bullying severity based on high school education and rules.

5.5 Future Directions

There are a number of suggestions for future research. As previously mentioned, all participants were students from a Southern New Jersey university, so future studies should incorporate students from various regions of New Jersey. Also, future research could expand perceptions through the inclusion of those who did not receive higher education post high school. Perhaps, future studies could compare college students to non-college students and their perceptions of bullying, and subdivide into those who underwent the revisions of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act in 2011 and those who graduated prior to the change. The involvement of students who are enrolled in higher

education and those who are not will allow for comparison of the impact of further education post high school on perceptions of bullying and severity. In addition, future studies will have the opportunity to include students who experienced all four years of high school under the revisions of the act opposed to the current study, in which only included college students who experienced one year of high school under the revisions. The inclusion of participants who experienced a longer period of time under the 2011 revisions of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act could possibly be more influenced than those who experienced one year under the revisions because they would have more exposure to it.

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Appendix

I agree to participate in a study entitled "Bullying in New Jersey: What Has Been Done and What is Going On," which is being conducted by Sarah Larsen, a Psychology student at Rowan University.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the understanding of bullying and the gender differences since the Chapter 122 Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act was passed in 2011. The study will be conducted using a questionnaire that will be distributed to Rowan University undergraduate students. The students will be asked if certain scenarios are bullying and to rate them from 0 to 3, with 0 meaning not bullying, 1 representing low severity, 2 as moderate severity and 3 representing high severity bullying. The results will compare college freshmen, over the age of 18 who graduated from high school in 2012 to upperclassmen. The undergraduate students who graduated high school in 2012 will represent the students who experienced the revision of the Chapter 122 Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. Gender differences and bully definitions will also be examined.

I understand that participants must be 18 years or older to take this survey.

I understand that I will be required to rate scenarios on whether they are severe bullying or not. My participation in the study should not exceed 20 minutes.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study, I may contact Sarah Larsen at larsen85@students.rowan.edu, or her faculty advisor Roberta Dihoff at dihoff@rowan.edu.

Rowan University provides counseling and psychological services at (856) 256-4222 located on the top floor in Savitz hall. Walk-in appointments are available daily 11am-4pm.

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Circle the year you are currently enrolled in at Rowan University:
 Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior
3. Year graduated from high school: _____
4. State graduated high school from: _____
5. Major: _____
6. Size of high school (check one):
- Small (600 students or less total, or fewer than 150 students per grade)
- Medium (Between 601 and 900 students total, or 150-225 students per grade)
- Large (900 students or more total, or greater than 225 students per grade)
7. What did your high school do to encourage antibullying? (Check all that apply)
- Role playing practice
- In-class discussions
- Videos
- Small group meetings with special speakers such as principal, vice principal, counselor, etc.
- Posters
- Large group meetings such as rallies/assemblies
- Acknowledgement of "Week of Respect" in October
- Announcements on loudspeaker
- Time is set aside each week for lessons/discussions on harassment, intimidation and bullying prevention
- Establish class level rules that promote good social skills and reduce bullying
- (e.g., Respect other students. Try and help students who are bullied. Include students who are left out. Provide help. Get help.)
- Full class lecture
- Detention/suspension
- Referral to counselor for victim
- Referral to counselor for bully
- Teacher send bully to principal or vice principal

Read each scenario and determine whether or not you believe it is bullying. If you believe it is bullying rate the scenario on severity based on your opinion. Circle 0 for not bullying, 1 for low severity, 2 for moderate severity and 3 for high severity.

1. Sends him/her a computer virus on purpose because he/she cannot fix it.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
2. Tells other people to hit him/her because others will listen and he/she is less popular.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
3. Makes fun of his/her friends because they are weird.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
4. Hits him/her because he/she shoved first.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
5. Makes a prank calls to him/her to make him/her feel bad.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
6. Wrecks his/her things because she/she is poor.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
7. Makes death stares at him/her until he/she feels sick.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
8. Calls him/her names because he/she stole his/her girlfriend/boyfriend.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
9. Takes pictures of him/her without permission and posted it online, making him/her not want to go to school.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
10. Plays practical jokes on him/her because he/she is scared.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
11. Calls him/her names behind his/her back because he/she looks funny.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
12. Argues with him/her over a girl/boy.
Not Bullying 0 1 2 3 Very Severe
13. Calls him/her names via SMS because he/she has no friends.

Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
14. Hits him/her because he/she is smaller.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
15. Turns his/her friends against him/her because he/she will not confront it.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
16. Posts something mean about him/her on Facebook and he/she says something mean back.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
17. Says he/she will do bad things to him/her over the phone because he/she is fat.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
18. Punches him/her because he/she cries a lot.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
19. Tells peers not to talk to him/her because he/she is in special education.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
20. Throws something at him/her after being tripped by him/her.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
21. Writes bad things about him/her on Facebook because he/she is the only person in the school who acts too much like the opposite sex.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
22. Shoves him/her because he/she is bad at P.E.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
23. Ignores him/her on purpose because he/she talks different.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe
24. Prank calls him/her because he/she sent a rude text.					
Not Bullying	0	1	2	3	Very Severe