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A Comparison of Bullying and Victimization Rates among Gifted and High-Achieving Students

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Megan R. Parker entitled "A Comparison of Bullying and Victimization Rates among Gifted and High-Achieving Students." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in School Psychology.

Sherry K. Bain, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Robert L. Williams, Sherry M. Bell, Joel Diambra

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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A Comparison of Bullying and Victimization Rates among Gifted and
High-Achieving Students

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Megan R. Parker

August 2010

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Abstract

Rates of bullying and victimization among gifted and non-gifted, high-achieving (HA) high school students were assessed by using the Reynolds Bully Victimization Scale (BVS; Reynolds, 2003). Results indicate that both gifted and HA high school students bully others and are victimized by others at unelevated rates based on scores on the BVS. The rates of bullying and victimization found among gifted and HA high school students were not significantly different from each other as well. Rates of bullying and victimization for male and female participants were also compared, and no significant differences were found between males and females for either bullying or victimization. Results from this study do not provide support for across-the-board social skills programs for gifted students as a group but suggest that gifted programs continue to focus on promoting primarily advanced intellectual endeavors (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). However, individual gifted students may need targeted interventions focused on reducing bullying and victimization.

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Chapter I

Bullying in our schools is a hot topic among educators. Though school violence rates are down from rates of the past, the intense media coverage often given to such grave events raise the alarm concerning the effects of exclusion and peer-related abuse. Schools often seek ways to reduce or eliminate violence in the schools, and this sometimes begins with a look at the amount of bullying behaviors that occur and who is performing and receiving the bullying. Recently, over 49% of students in grades 4 to 12 in a current study reported that they were victimized by another student at school at least once during the last month, and over 30% of students reported that they bullied another student during the last month (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). However, concerning children who are gifted, there are shortcomings in the research area regarding bullying and victimization. I intend to investigate bullying and victimization specifically among gifted students and high academic achievers.

Bradshaw et al. (2007) recently reported results of a study of 15,185 students in grades 4 to 12 and teaching staff (e.g. teachers, school psychologists, counselors) from a large Maryland public school system that focused on bullying in the general education environment. The participating school system included 75 elementary ($n=7,083$), 20 middle ($n=7,296$), and 14 high schools ($n=806$). The high school teaching staff estimated that less than 10% of students were bullied in the last month. High school students presented a quite different picture, with Bradshaw et al. noting that 22.7% of high school students reporting that they had been victimized in the past month.

Educators who take the stereotypical route may conclude that poor, minority students, and those of relatively low intelligence are more frequent perpetrators and

recipients of school violence, possibly due to associated variables of dismal home-life conditions, poorly-developed social relationships, or lack of appropriate role models. However, if educators stop their assumptions there, they would be quite mistaken. The aforementioned students are certainly not exempt from bullying behaviors. In fact, race and socioeconomic status were frequently cited as reasons for bullying among high school students and staff in Bradshaw and colleagues' study (2007). However, these students are not the only bullies or victims at school. Students from the upper and middle SES, from intact families, and from high-achievement groups may also be among the victimized or the bullies themselves.

For instance, gifted students, who are not necessarily immune to school problems related to underachievement, family problems, or depression (Peterson, 2002), are the frequent focus of mental health discussions and concerns that may involve bullying or victimization. Moon and Hall (1998) report that gifted students often need counseling to deal with the specialized problems that come with giftedness. Several advocates of gifted children contend that bullying, or more specifically victimization, is a problem that merits special attention for children who are gifted. The Parent Advocates for Gifted Education (PAGE) of the Warrensburg, Missouri, School District write on their webpage that, "many gifted students are ridiculed, bullied, and ostracized by other students, a situation that often leads to low self-esteem, depression, and other psychological trauma" (Fuller & Richner, n.d., para. 6). On an internet blog dedicated to school issues, a former participant in gifted programming and educator of gifted children writes, "I believe that gifted kids, in traditional schools, do often get bullied. . . I saw most all of the gifted kids get bullied. Some weren't bullied only by students, but also by teachers and

administrators” (“How to Climb,” 2007). A national association that advocates for gifted students featured an article on its website about teasing among gifted children that states, “Many gifted children and adolescents are targets of teasing and bullying. . . . Because gifted children and adolescents tend to be highly sensitive to others, their reactions to being teased are extremely intense” (Schuler, 2002, para. 2). However, Terman and Oden (1947) indicated years ago that gifted individuals experience fewer mental health problems than the general population. One may not expect those students with the highest levels of ability and purported lower levels of mental health problems to be bullies or to victimize others. Nonetheless, gifted students cannot be automatically exempt from the tragedy of bullying and victimization within American schools.

In the past, there has been little research to address bullying and victimization rates among students with giftedness. However, there are stated opinions from both sides of the spectrum, that gifted students are victimized by others and that they could actually be the bullies. Some proponents of gifted education may take a somewhat elitist standpoint on the topic of bullying as if to say, “Oh, no. It couldn’t be them. Gifted students may be victims, but never bullies.” Cohen, Duncan, and Cohen (1994) report that identified gifted children chosen to be in a special pull-out program were indeed perceived as less aggressive and were less often victims of aggression compared to peers not in the special program. However, Cross (2001) speculates that students with giftedness are often not aware that they are bullying others. Why would the highest-ranked academic students want to bully others? Perhaps, they were bullied first; they were victims. Maybe other students are jealous of the academic ease displayed by gifted students. Or, students and even adults may tease gifted children for their differences

(Cross). Cross writes that bullying is all about control. Control could include a classmate, the environment, or even a teacher. Alternatively, then, the gifted student may bully others because he or she perceives himself or herself to be the top of the class and can simply get away with it.

Cross (2001) reports that in some schools, adults (e.g. administrators, teachers) become the bullies by repeatedly telling children who are gifted that giftedness does not exist, does not matter, should not receive any special consideration, and children who are gifted should not receive any services. Anecdotally, Cross (2000) reports that the students who are gifted at schools where these attitudes emanate from administrators and teachers often remain bored and spend most of their time waiting for other students to catch up to the information they have already comprehended. Such an unsettling environment for students with giftedness may result in the gifted student actually bullying others.

These various perceptions lead to three conflicting conceptual frameworks concerning actual rates of bullying and victimization rates among children who are gifted. First, gifted students could be experiencing more victimization than non-gifted students, just as the advocates suggest (“How to Climb,” 2007; Schuler, 2002). Gifted students in one study report that giftedness itself was associated with a distinctive predisposition to being bullied by others (Peterson & Ray, 2006b). In addition, the advocates of gifted students project philosophical statements that lead one to believe that gifted students are “different” (“How to Climb;” Schuler). Similarly, at least one author (Cross, 2001) has addressed the conceptual rationale for gifted students’ participation in bullying behavior, and gifted students note that high competition within the circle of

gifted students may spur bullying in this group (Peterson & Ray). Actual data supporting heightened levels of bullying and/or victimization among gifted students would likely create an impetus for the advocacy community.

On the other hand, gifted students could be experiencing less victimization and participating in less bullying. Data suggest that gifted individuals experience less mental health problems than the general population (Terman & Oden, 1947), and more recent studies generally support this view (Bain & Bell, 2004; Cohen, et al., 1994; Colangelo, Kelly, & Schrepfer, 1987). This evidence points to the hypothesis that there is less bullying and victimization among these gifted individuals than the general population. Gifted education literature has also suggested that gifted students are developmentally advanced in comparison to their non-gifted peers (Lando & Schneider, 1997; McCallister, 1984), which might also lead one to hypothesize that gifted students would experience less bullying and victimization than their non-gifted peers.

Finally, gifted students could be experiencing approximately the same amount of bullying and victimization as their non-gifted peers. If this hypothesis were supported, then in actuality, gifted students' advanced cognitive development may have no mediational relationship with their bullying and victimization rates.

In the following sections, I will review the definitions and assessment issues in evaluating bullying and victimization and describe research findings across general education and gifted samples. Finally, I will review the competing conceptual frameworks concerning whether gifted students are victimized more, less, or the same amount as their non-gifted peers as well as whether gifted students bully others more, less, or at the same rates as their non-gifted peers.

Defining and Assessing Bullying and Victimization

Before we can accurately calculate rates of bullying and victimization among the gifted, we must be able to accurately define and assess bullying and victimization rates. The most popular research definition of bullying is Olweus' 1978 definition, which defines *bullying* as peer aggression with repetition over time, intentionality, and an imbalance of power between the bully and the individual being bullied (Olweus, 2003; Greif & Furlong, 2006). Thus, a *victim* could be bullied by the same student repeatedly, or the victim could be bullied by many different students to meet the repetition requirement of Olweus' definition.

In the first case of repetition in which a student could be victimized by the same student on many occasions, the victim would likely avoid that particular student; the victim would at least know who to avoid and feel a small amount of control over the situation. This supports the idea of bullying as a relationship and not just an isolated incident. The relationship in this case is supported by the context in which the bullying occurs, including the environment, culture, and norms of the school. This is in contrast to the latter situation in which the victim has no clue who his or her next bully will be because the victim is bullied by many different students. This situation likely would make one feel out of control (Greif & Furlong, 2006).

Olweus (2003) also defines bullying in terms of intentionality; the bullying must be on purpose. However, what the bully thinks is intentional and what the victim thinks is intentional may be two different things. For example, a victim may view certain actions as mean or cruel when the perpetrator intends for the actions to be friendly. Alternatively,

a victim may view an action as friendly though it is intended to be mean or cruel by the perpetrator (Greif & Furlong, 2006).

Olweus' final part of his definition of bullying is the imbalance of power between bully and victim. This part of the definition is imperative because it is a defining factor of bullying versus other forms of peer aggression in which two students of the same strength or power fight or argue (Olweus, 2003; Greif & Furlong, 2006). The imbalance of power may not be overt, though. Student popularity, attractiveness, and size could all be contributing factors to having more or less power (Greif & Furlong).

Recently, there has been a new subgroup mentioned in the bullying research that needs a definition for the purposes of assessment. This group consists of bully-victims. These students both bully other peers and are victims of bullying as well. It is no longer possible to simply label such a child as a bully or a victim. Students who fall in the bully-victim category may be especially at-risk. Salmivalli and Nieminen (2002) reported that bully-victims scored higher on a measure of aggression than students categorized as bullies. A recent study by Holt, Finkelhor, and Kantor (2007) indicated that bully-victims experience a variety of troubles such as social isolation, academic problems, and behavior problems.

In assessing bullying and victimization rates among children, Greif & Furlong (2006) note that the vocabulary and structure of the surveys used to evaluate children for bullying should merit special consideration. Simple vocabulary and short sentences are recommended in addition to not necessarily using the word "bully" in surveys. Use of the word "bully" may limit students' responses if they define bullying differently and may bias their responses. Therefore, the Reynolds Bully Victimization Scale (Reynolds, 2003)

includes behavioral descriptions of bullying and victimization in sentence form. Reynolds defines bullying as a spectrum of behaviors ranging from calling a peer a name to physically harming a peer with regularity. Students then give a four-point rating to the frequency of the event in each sentence, such as, “I pick on other kids”. Behavioral descriptions of bullying and victimization, rather than using the word “bully,” may allow researchers to learn more specific information about the types of bullying and victimization occurring (Greif & Furlong).

In contrast, the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1996) begins with a written definition of bullying for all participants to read before responding to the questionnaire. Though the definition provides a common understanding of the concept of “bullying,” such a definition may limit student responses, causing an under-representation of bullying. On the other hand, a provided definition of bullying could cause a student to consider a particular act or behavior as bullying that he or she had not thought of as bullying previously. This could cause an over-representation of bullying if compared to the rate of bullying the student would have recorded without the given definition. Thus, vocabulary and sentence structure are important ingredients in accurately assessing bullying and victimization among students.

Bullying and Victimization among General Education Students

In contrast to the sparse research literature concerning bullying and victimization among the gifted population, there are several studies that address bullying and victimization rates among students in general education settings. Seals and Young (2003) investigated the prevalence of bullying and victimization among 454 seventh and eighth grade general education students in the northern delta region of the United States whose

ages ranged from 12 to 17 years. Three surveys, measuring peer relations, self-esteem, and depression, were administered to the students. From the peer relations survey, results indicated that 24% of students reported involvement with either bullying or victimization. Over 40% of participants reported that bullying occurred “often” at school (Seals & Young). There was also a significant difference in regards to gender involvement. Males comprised 43.6% of the victims and 66.7% of the bullies.

Salmivalli and Nieminen (2002) explored bullying rates among 1,062 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in Finnish general education classrooms. These students were between the ages of 10 and 13 years old. Salmivalli and Nieminen administered a peer nomination survey that asked about peer aggression and a survey that concerned bullying and victimization within the classroom. Results from the peer nomination survey indicated that boys received more nominations than girls on all aggression variables. Besides reporting a significant main effect of bullying on children’s overall aggressive behavior, the authors reported a significant effect of sex on aggression, as measured by the peer nomination survey (Salmivalli & Nieminen). Interestingly, students who fell in the bully-victim category according to the bullying and victimization survey scored higher than the other students on aggression measures from the peer nomination survey. These students who were categorized as bully-victims even scored higher on aggression than students categorized as bullies on the bullying and victimization survey. Salmivalli and Nieminen note that this is further evidence that bully-victims should be distinguished from victims and that bully-victims and victims should be treated as two separate groups in further research and intervention planning.

Another set of authors performed naturalistic observations within four elementary schools in the New York City area to learn about the roots of bullying (Gropper & Froschl, 1999). The researchers visited one urban elementary school and three suburban elementary schools to observe students in 25 classrooms, grades kindergarten to three. Each classroom was observed twice for full-day periods in order to document all opportunities and instances of bullying. Additionally, researchers interviewed students regarding whether bullying occurred in the classroom and what they would like teachers to do when bullying is identified in the classroom. As a final measure, the researchers distributed surveys to teachers and parents at the urban school to learn about their perceptions of bullying within the school.

A total of 321 bullying incidents were recorded during observations of the 25 classrooms over two-day periods; there were no significant differences between the number of incidents in the urban versus the suburban schools (Gropper & Froschl, 1999). However, the authors noted a significant difference in the gender of the initiator. Males were the initiators in 78% of the bullying incidents. Conversely, males and females were equally likely to be victims of bullying.

The interview responses obtained by these authors were telling as well. Eighty-two percent of the students responded that bullying did occur in the classroom (Gropper & Froschl, 1999). Students additionally overwhelmingly responded that they wanted teacher intervention when bullying did occur, and 62% of females and 81% of males reported that teachers acknowledged when bullying was occurring. Sixty percent of teachers, but only 31% of parents, reported that bullying was a serious issue. Clearly,

perceptions of bullying rates vary according to the role of the person surveyed; teachers were more aware of school bullying than parents

Finally, Carlyle and Steinman (2007) surveyed all students (N = 78,068) in an Ohio school system in grades 6 to 12 to measure bullying rates, and results indicated that 18.8% of students reported that they had bullied another in the past year. Bullying was most common among students in grades 7 to 9 and again among males.

Additionally, Scholte, Engels, Overbeek, deKemp, and Haselager (2007) used a peer nomination sociometric questionnaire to assess 517 students aged 10 to 16 from the Netherlands for rates of bullying. Results of this questionnaire indicated that 19% of students assessed had bullied others. Table 1 in Appendix A provides a summary of the results of the studies among general education populations.

Much research concerning bullying and victimization rates has occurred in American and Western European classrooms (Seals & Young, 2003; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Gropper & Froschl, 1999; Scholte et al., 2007). From this research, we have learned that bullying does occur in the general education classroom with rates ranging from 18% (Carlyle & Steinman) to 82% (Gropper & Froschl).

Bullying Among Gifted Students

Unlike studies involving general education populations, the current research concerning bullying and victimization specifically by and among gifted students is limited to only a few studies, and these studies have often been conducted outside of the United States, posing problems of generalization to our country.

Noticing this, Peterson and Ray (2006a) recently conducted research to better understand both the bullies and victims across schools in the U. S. The authors decided to use a sample of eighth-grade students identified as gifted as the study's participants because eighth grade is often the final grade in school that implements formal gifted education programs. The participants were 432 gifted students from 16 school districts in 11 states. The majority (54%) of the participants came from large cities, defined as a city with a population greater than 75,000. The rest of the participants were divided between medium cities (population 25,000-75,000), small cities (15,000-25,000), and rural areas (less than 15,000). The researchers decided to use surveys that asked for both quantitative and qualitative information regarding both physical and nonphysical methods of bullying. The questions were retrospective, assessing participants' experiences with bullying and victimization from the time of entrance to school in kindergarten to the present, eighth grade.

It is notable, however, that the nonstandardized survey used in Peterson and Ray's study actually did use the word *bullying* in their survey items. Variations of the word *bully* (e.g. bullying, bullied) were used in 10 of the 19 statements in Peterson and Ray's instrument. In contrast, the word *victim* was not used in the survey. The use of the word *bully* in Peterson and Ray's questionnaire may have caused bias or limitations in how the students responded to the survey items.

From the surveys, the authors concluded that bullying existed at every grade level among the participants. However, bullying began in kindergarten at its lowest prevalence (27%) and then peaked in sixth grade (54%) before declining afterwards (Peterson & Ray, 2006a). Sixth grade was also noted as the grade in which more participants were

both victims and bullies. These findings provide a signal to educators concerning the best grade levels for intervention activities. Regarding the types of bullying that were exhibited, name-calling was the most common form of bullying across all grades, followed by taunting about appearance, mocking about intelligence and grades, pushing, knocking books down, and punching. Taunting about appearance seemed to be the common theme of bullying from grade five to eight.

Another portion of the authors' survey assessed the emotional impact of bullying. Students who did report that they had been bullied were asked to rate how the bullying had impacted them, ranging from "not at all" to "a lot." It is surprising to note that fifth grade was found to be the climax year as far as emotional impact from bullying; after the fifth grade, participants tended to report less emotional impact from bullying (Peterson & Ray, 2006a). Even though sixth grade was noted as the grade with the highest prevalence of bullying, there was an actual decline in reported emotional impact from the bullying for the sixth grade year. This change could be due to developmental aspects of emotional maturity or social desirability. Due to emotional maturity, experience with other children, and increased verbal skills, students may be able to better handle their emotions at this age as opposed to younger years. Alternatively, due to social desirability, students may not want to show or admit their emotions as readily as in the past. Displaying hurt feelings may bring the additional fear of being bullied because of emotional vulnerability.

A final section of the researchers' survey assessed the prevalence of bullying carried out by gifted students. Based on survey responses, almost 20% of males and 10% of females who participated in the study admitted to bullying others during at least one grade in school (Peterson & Ray, 2006a). The percentages of participants who bullied

others increased each year from kindergarten up to sixth grade, where it leveled off until eighth grade.

In comparison, Carlyle and Steinman (2007) found that among all students ($N = 78,068$) in an Ohio school system in grades 6 to 12, 18.8% of students reported that they had bullied another in the past year. Bullying was most common among students in grades 7 to 9 and males. Scholte, Engels, Overbeek, deKemp, and Haselager (2007) used a peer nomination sociometric questionnaire to assess 517 students from a general education population aged 10 to 16 for rates of bullying. Results of this questionnaire indicated that 19% of students assessed had bullied others.

There are no striking differences in the rates of bullying found in the three studies mentioned here. The latter two studies included primarily general education classes (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Scholte et al., 2007). However, the rates of bullying indicated in these studies is not much different from the rate found by Peterson and Ray when they assessed only gifted students.

Similarly, when McEwin and Cross (1982) used a measure to assess victimization in gifted and non-gifted students, few differences were found. Both groups scored (gifted $\bar{x} = 12.88$; non-gifted $\bar{x} = 12.66$) below average ($\bar{x} = 15.5$) on the victimization scale, meaning that neither group reported feeling greatly victimized. However, this difference between the gifted students and non-gifted students is not significant. When comparing between the sexes across both groups, though, there was a significant difference in reported victimization. Females ($\bar{x} = 13.34$) reported significantly higher rates of victimization than males ($\bar{x} = 12.15$).

Victimization among Gifted Students

Using the same population of 432 gifted eighth graders from 16 school districts in 11 states, Peterson and Ray (2006b) took a different analytical approach to assess the subjective experiences of victimization among gifted children. The authors used both survey and interview techniques to evaluate personal accounts of victimization among the gifted students. All 432 participants who participated in Peterson and Ray's earlier study completed the survey associated with this analysis. However, only 57 of the 432 volunteered to participate in the interview portion of the study. The 57 participants who were interviewed were predominantly female (74%) as opposed to the total survey participants, which were approximately evenly divided between males and females (48% male, 52% female).

The researchers identified several qualitative themes in the students' interview responses. Victims of bullying assumed that external factors caused the bullying though they put the responsibility for resolving the bullying on themselves. For example, one participant noted the context and social structure as causative factors and said, "our classes are different, so it's almost because they [bullies] don't know us" (Peterson & Ray, 2006b, p. 258). Victims of bullying were miserable even from nonphysical forms of bullying, but coping strategies improved with age. Finally, the gifted students reported that giftedness itself was associated with a distinctive predisposition to being bullied by others, and they perceived that gifted students who bullied others could amend their behaviors.

Specifically, many participants perceived that when gifted students were bullied because of their giftedness by peers who were not identified as gifted, it was more about the difference between them rather than the giftedness itself. One student remarked,

“Anything that was different, they’d make fun of. The gifted are different.” Also, much of the bullying among gifted students seemed to be within the gifted population; participants noted that there was high competition within the circle of gifted students, which they thought often caused bullying within that circle (Peterson & Ray, 2006b).

In another study that looked at the perceptions of students’ social relations, Cohen et al. (1994) reported on a pull-out intervention program, in which all fourth ($n = 74$), fifth ($n = 59$), and sixth ($n = 69$) graders at a university-affiliated public school in Memphis participated. Identified gifted students ($n = 53$) had been chosen to participate in a pull-out program called Creative Learning in a Unique Environment (CLUE).

To evaluate the social relations of all participating students, three measures were used. First, each gifted and non-gifted student rated his or her same-sex classmates on a sociometric scale from 1 to 6 based on liking the peer. Research indicates that elementary school children typically rate same-sex peers much higher than opposite-sex peers (Kovacs, Parker, & Heffman, 1996). Next, students were asked to circle the names of their friends from a class roster and then put a mark next to their best friend’s name. Last, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing victimization and aggression. As a part of this final measure, participants were asked to place a check next to the names of same-sex classmates who fit descriptions of aggressors and victims (Cohen et al., 1994).

Gifted students received higher mean sociometric ratings (4.25) than the non-gifted students (3.86), indicating that the gifted students are generally socially accepted among peers (Cohen et al., 1994). No significant differences were found in the friendship assessment. On average, gifted students reported 12.53 friends, and non-gifted

participants reported 12.78 friends. On the aggression and victimization questionnaire, gifted students were rated as less aggressive and less likely to be victims of aggression as compared to the non-gifted students. These results indicate that the gifted students reported and were perceived to be better off in terms of social relations.

Table 1 in Appendix A provides a summary of the results of the studies among gifted populations. Notably, Peterson and Ray (2006b) report that gifted students often blame themselves for the bullying that is inflicted on them. However, Cohen et al. (1994) found more positive results, reporting that gifted students received higher ratings than non-gifted students on a sociometric scale. Cohen et al. also reported that gifted students were found to be less aggressive than non-gifted students. These contrasting findings highlight the two theoretical viewpoints posed in the literature on the needs of children who are gifted. I will elaborate on these frameworks in the following sections.

Three Theoretical Frameworks

More Victimization and Bullying among Gifted Students. Advocates of gifted students often voice philosophical statements or concepts that lead one to believe that gifted students are different, leading to more frequent experiences of victimization for gifted students (“How to Climb,” 2007; Schuler, 2002). Advocates who believe that gifted students are victimized more than their non-gifted peers may cite statistics such as those from Peterson and Ray (2006a) that indicate that gifted students of every grade level are victimized. Advocates may speculate that the reported victimization rates of gifted students are lower than the actual rates of victimization. Social desirability may cause the numbers to be lower than they really are. Gifted students may not want to

report or admit to their true emotional experiences, which could cause them to be more emotionally vulnerable and susceptible to victimization by bullies (Peterson & Ray).

In support of this view, Neihart (2006) reported that in a study of 142 school districts, 10th grade students often cited peer pressure as a reason for leaving gifted programs. In Neihart's survey of more than 8,000 California and Wisconsin students, participants reported that students dropped out of honors courses, computer clubs, and debate teams to avoid victimization in the forms of teasing names and negative social consequences. Social pressures from non-gifted students could be fueling gifted students to not achieve their high potentials. Advocates may also claim that this leads to the conclusion that gifted students were victimized for involvement in these activities, citing such evidence as Swearer and Cary's (2003) study which reports that victims of school bullying claim they were bullied for reasons including receiving good grades and just being different.

Those who believe that gifted students are bullied more than their non-gifted peers may also lean to the gifted students themselves for evidence of this opinion. In Peterson and Ray's (2006b) second study, the gifted students report that giftedness is associated with a disposition to being bullied. The gifted students in Peterson & Ray's study also recognized that there was much bullying occurring within the gifted population. A competitive environment is often a part of gifted programming, potentially causing bullying within the gifted population, another point of argument for advocates holding the belief that gifted students are victimized more than non-gifted students.

Less Victimization and Bullying among Gifted Students. However, gifted students could theoretically experience less bullying and victimization than their non-gifted peers.

Data suggest that gifted individuals experience fewer mental health problems than the general population (Terman & Oden, 1947), and more recent studies generally support this view (Bain & Bell, 2004; Cohen et al., 1994; Colangelo, Kelly, & Schrepfer, 1987). In Cohen et al.'s (1994) aggression and victimization study, gifted students were rated as less aggressive and less likely to be victims of aggression as compared to the non-gifted students. These results indicate that the gifted students reported and were perceived to be better off in terms of social relations. This evidence points to the hypothesis that there is less bullying and victimization among gifted individuals than in the general population.

Gifted education literature has also suggested that gifted students are developmentally advanced in comparison to their non-gifted peers (Lando & Schneider, 1997; McCallister, 1984), which might also lead one to hypothesize that gifted students would experience less victimization and be less likely to bully than their non-gifted peers.

Null Hypothesis: No Difference in Victimization and Bullying between Gifted and Non-gifted Students. Finally, gifted students could be experiencing the same amount of victimization and be inflicting bullying behavior at the same rates as their non-gifted peers. Gifted students' advanced cognitive development may have no relation to bullying and victimization. There currently are no studies that directly compare rates of bullying among gifted and non-gifted students. However, if one examines reported rates of bullying in studies involving either general education or gifted students, one will see that the reported rates are similar (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Peterson & Ray, 2006a; Scholte et al., 2007).

Similarly, when McEwin and Cross (1982) used a measure to assess victimization in gifted and non-gifted students, few differences were found. One-hundred fifteen gifted

students in grades five to eight were chosen for the gifted sample in the study based on their nomination to a summer camp for exceptional students in North Carolina that requires an IQ of 120 or higher and a teacher recommendation based on talent and leadership. Two-hundred sixty non-gifted students in grades five to eight were chosen at random from a North Carolina school district sample of 1,575 non-gifted students in grades five to eight. Both groups scored below average on the victimization scale, meaning that neither group reported feeling greatly victimized. The difference between the gifted students and non-gifted students on this measure was not significant, meaning that gifted students do not experience more or less bullying than their non-gifted peers.

Conclusion

Bullying is not a phenomenon limited to students in general education settings. It does, apparently, affect our brightest students. Students with giftedness are clearly capable of both engaging in bullying and of being victims of bullying behavior, as indicated by Peterson and Ray (2006a, 2006b). However, there are shortcomings in the research area of bullying and victimization among the gifted. The current research on the subject is limited to only a few studies, limiting generalizability (Peterson & Ray; Cohen et al., 1994; McEwin & Cross, 1982). Most recently, Peterson and Ray have completed valuable studies concerning bullying and victimization among gifted students. However, even these studies only cover a small subset of the gifted student population, eighth-grade students, and lack direct comparison to students in the same school environment who are not identified as gifted.

Confusing the subject more, there are conflicting poles of conceptual frameworks in this area. One pole claims that because gifted students are different, they experience

more victimization than non-gifted students (“How to Climb,” 2007; Schuler, 2002) and possibly bully at high rates (Cross, 2001). The opposite pole claims that because gifted students are developmentally advanced, therefore, they experience less victimization and perform less bullying than non-gifted peers (Lando & Schneider, 1997; McCallister, 1984). Another possibility is the null hypothesis, that gifted students experience a similar amount of bullying and victimization compared to non-gifted students.

The Current Study: Statement of the Problem

At the present time, there are no studies that directly compare bullying and victimization rates of high school age students who are gifted with general education students in the same setting. In fact, there are no studies evaluating rates of bullying and victimization specifically in high-school students who are gifted. In the current study, I seek to determine if rates of bullying and victimization among gifted high school students differ from those of high achieving, but not gifted, peers in advanced placement (AP) classes. Thus, gifted students can be compared to a control group of peers who generally share their academic environment but have not been identified and served based on the special needs of a child with giftedness.

If gifted students are found to have higher rates of bullying and victimization as compared to their non-gifted peers, then special, socially-based interventions may be recommended for the group of gifted students. If gifted students are found to have lower rates of bullying and victimization compared to their non-gifted peers, results will indicate that social interventions specific to groups of gifted students are probably not merited. If both gifted and non-gifted students have high rates of bullying and victimization, then there may be a rationale for socialization interventions for both groups.

The following are my research questions:

1. Do the bullying and victimization rates for high school students who are gifted differ from the normative group?
2. Is there a difference in rates of bullying between gifted and non-gifted, high-achieving high school students?
3. Is there a difference in rates of victimization between gifted and non-gifted, high-achieving high school students?
4. Is there a difference in rates of bullying between male and female students for the whole sample population and within gifted and non-gifted high school groups?
5. Is there a difference in rates of victimization between male and female students for the whole sample population and within gifted and non-gifted high school groups?
6. Are more gifted students than high-achieving students identified as bully-victims?
7. Is there a gender difference in the rate of bully-victims?

Based on past findings (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; McEwin & Cross, 1982; Peterson & Ray, 2006a; Scholte et al., 2007), I hypothesize that rates of bullying, victimization, and bully-victimization among gifted students will not differ significantly from those of their non-gifted, high-achieving peers. This will allow me a two-tailed examination of comparisons between the two groups. If differences are found, I will evaluate the findings in terms of the two polar conceptual frameworks discussed in the literature concerning

the needs and predispositions of children who are gifted (Fuller & Richner, (n.d.); Schuler, 2002; “How to Climb,” 2007).

Chapter II

Methods

Participants

Participants were 90 students at two high schools located in the Rutherford County, TN, school system. Schools were selected based on their number of identified gifted students available and similarity of gifted services across the schools. Approximately 100 identified gifted students and 100 high achieving non-gifted students (HA) were sought at each school for a total of 400 participants. However, only 90 [9th ($n = 5$), 10th ($n = 18$), 11th ($n = 49$), and 12th ($n = 18$)] students returned signed parental consent forms and completed the surveys. Forty-three (47.77%) of these participants were HA students. Forty-seven (52.22%) participants were identified as gifted.

Demographic features of the participants can be viewed in Table 2 and Table 3 in Appendix A. Ninety-one percent ($n = 82$) of participants were Caucasian; five percent ($n = 4$) were African-American; three percent ($n = 3$) were Asian, and one percent ($n = 1$) were Syrian. Also, forty-one percent ($n = 37$) of participants were males, and fifty-nine percent ($n = 53$) of participants were females. The ages of the participants ranged from 14 to 18 years. Two percent ($n = 2$) were 14; 11% ($n = 10$) were 15; 28% ($n = 25$) were 16; 46% ($n = 41$) were 17; and, 13% ($n = 12$) were 18 years-old. Gifted participants reported a mean of 1.54 leadership activities, and HA participants reported a mean of 1.21 leadership activities.

In the state of Tennessee, students are identified as gifted based on educational performance, creativity, and cognition (Tennessee Department of Education, 2007). For

example, this means that a student who is identified as gifted might have demonstrated superior educational performance as demonstrated by a standardized achievement test, creativity as demonstrated by a normed creativity assessment, and/or cognition as measured by an individually administered test of intelligence. The Rutherford County, TN, school system uses the Tennessee state Department of Education criteria to identify students who are gifted. The identification process begins with a screening of all students in the second grade. The giftedness evaluation involves the use of standardized achievement test scores, input from teachers and parents, and a nationally-normed characteristics checklist. At this time, if a student appears to need a full evaluation, the school psychologist administers an individual intelligence examination as the final step in determining eligibility for gifted programs (J. McCamish, personal communication, March 4, 2008). Thus, this evaluation differentiates between the gifted and HA students in this study. While the gifted students were flagged and identified after the screening and testing, the HA students would not have scored high enough on either the screener or evaluative assessment for giftedness to be identified as gifted.

When screening and identifying gifted students, there will obviously be different levels of giftedness (i.e. a student with IQ of 130 and a student with an IQ of 160 could both potentially be identified as gifted). There were likely such different levels of giftedness in the sample. However, permission to obtain this information was not granted. It may be conjectured that most extremely gifted students would not be in the sample; they might seek alternative programs (e.g. magnet schools, colleges) to meet their unique intellectual needs. If extremely gifted students are in the sample, it might be hypothesized that they are the younger students in the sample, who may have accelerated through

school or have not yet sought alternative programs. Of the 12 participants who were either 14 or 15 years-old, 42% ($n = 5$) were gifted students.

High achieving, non-gifted students were selected based on their enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Any student who has had prerequisite level courses can enroll in AP courses. Group achievement scores are most often the determinant for enrollment in such prerequisite courses. In most cases, it is recommended that students score in the 90th percentile for a particular subject area before enrolling in an AP course in that subject (P. Harrell, personal communication, March 11, 2008). Thus, students identified as gifted may also be enrolled in AP classes. However, HA students would not be involved in gifted programs. HA students may take AP courses to nurture their need for a challenging academic course. Gifted students might also take the same AP course for the academic challenge. The Rutherford County school system additionally offers specialized programming to its gifted high school students. Beyond AP courses, gifted high school students are involved in smaller, specialized class meetings where they participate in activities that involve more creativity and critical thinking than in traditional AP courses (P. Harrell, personal communication, March 11, 2008). Because gifted students are involved in the specialized programming, it can be conjectured that both gifted and HA students are aware of who is a gifted student and who is a HA student. Two teachers of AP classes and two teachers of gifted classes agreed to participation in the study after communicating with the primary researcher.

For participants who were under 18 years old, parental permission was sought for the students to participate. The parental consent form can be viewed in Figure 1 of Appendix B. Students whose parents returned signed permission slips were given the

opportunity to participate in the study, and were presented with assent forms asking for their voluntary participation. The assent form is found in Figure 2 of Appendix B. Students who were already 18 years of age completed the informed consent form without parental permission. Permission to conduct this research was obtained from the principal of the participating schools (see Figure 3 of Appendix B). These officials have authority within their respective school systems to approve research projects within their schools following approval by the school system administrators.

The three doctoral-level school psychology graduate students from The University of Tennessee who helped with the data collection, entry, and scoring were asked to sign a confidentiality form before participating in the research project. Individuals involved in data collection, entry, and scoring had no known relationship with participants, outside of the researcher/participant relationship. There were no incentives to students for participation in this study.

Instruments

The Reynolds Bully Victimization Scale for Schools. The Reynolds Bully Victimization Scale for Schools (BVS; Reynolds, 2003) is designed to assess bullying behavior and victimization experiences in students in or near their school that have occurred in the past month. The BVS includes 46 items and gives scores on two scales, Bullying and Victimization, which are each made up of 23 items. The items from each of the two scales are intermittent throughout the BVS. Individuals who are administered the BVS receive a score for the Bullying Scale and another score for the Victimization Scale, not a total score. Each of the 46 items is scored on a four-point scale with point

increments of “Never” (0 points), “Once or Twice” (1 point), “Three or Four Times” (2 points), and “Five or More Times” (3 points).

The BVS can be appropriately administered to individuals or groups in both school and clinical settings. When used in a group setting in schools, the BVS can be an early-screening measure for identifying bullying and victimization problems. When administered individually in a school setting, the BVS can be used to evaluate students at-risk for behavioral, emotional, and learning problems. In clinical environments, the BVS can be used to help understand the origins of internalizing problems in addition to targeting behavior problems of children and adolescents. Sample items of the BVS are located in Figure 1 of Appendix A.

The Bullying Scale of the BVS measures a variety of bullying behaviors that include both overt and relational aggression. Reynolds did not use the Olweus (2003) definitions of bullying and victimization on this scale to allow for the measurement of a wider variety of bullying behaviors. If definitions of bullying or victimization had been provided, examinees may have limited their interpretation of bullying and victimization to the singular, provided definition. Examination of responses to individual items on the Bullying Scale allows the examiner to learn more about the type of bullying in which the particular student emits, including overt peer aggression, relational aggression, and harassment.

The Victimization Scale of the BVS measures a number of victimization behaviors including overt and relational peer aggression directed towards the individual. The total Victimization Scale score indicates the severity of victimization the individual may be experiencing. Individual-item responses can provide useful clinical information

regarding the type and severity of victimization the student is experiencing (Reynolds, 2003).

In addition to identifying bullies and victims, the BVS can be used to also identify bully-victims, those students who both bully others and are victims of bullying. Bully-victims are identified by scoring in at least the Clinically Significant range on both the Bullying and Victimization scales of the BVS.

Scores in the Clinically Significant range on BVS scales suggest a functional problem in the domain area measured by the particular scale. Among Reynolds' sample, 6% of students were considered bully-victims.

Among a national sample of 2,405 students in grades 3 to 12, the BVS had an internal consistency reliability coefficient of .93 for both the Bullying Scale and Victimization Scale (Reynolds, 2003). The sample included students from the South (35.8%), West (23.5%), North Central (21.9%), and Northeast (18.9%) regions of the United States. The sample was also ethnically diverse including Asian (4.2%), African-American (18.3%), Hispanic (17.2%), Native American/Other (2.5%), and White (57%) students. Internal consistency reliability of the BVS, based on Cronbach's Alpha, was uniformly high across gender and grade level. For grades 9-12, the internal consistency reliability coefficient ranged from .92 to .94 for the Bullying Scale and .87 to .92 for the Victimization Scale.

Test-retest reliability of the BVS was examined with a sample of 207 students in grades 3-12 who came from schools of varying geographic locations (Reynolds, 2003). For the total sample, the test-retest reliability was .81 for the Bullying Scale and .80 for the Victimization Scale. Males and females differed little in terms of test-retest reliability.

The items of the BVS have relatively high item-with-total scale correlations, with the coefficients ranging from .50 to .68 on the Bullying Scale and .44 to .69 on the Victimization Scale (Reynolds, 2003). Over 90% of the items on the BVS had item-with-total scale correlation coefficients of .50 or higher. Because students are only given the response options of 0 to 3 on the BVS, very high correlation coefficients between items and the total scale are not expected (Reynolds).

Reynolds correlated the *Beck Youth Inventories of Emotional & Social Impairment* (BYI; Beck, Beck, & Jolly, 2001) with the BVS scales to again demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity. The BVS Bullying Scale had a moderately strong correlation ($r = .54$) with the BYI Disruptive Behavior Scale and a moderate correlation ($r = .38$) with the BYI Anger Scale. Evidence of discriminant validity was demonstrated by low correlations between the BVS Bullying Scale and the BYI Anxiety scale ($r = .11$) and the BYI Depression scale ($r = .12$). The BVS Victimization Scale had moderately strong correlations with the BYI Anger scale ($r = .61$), Anxiety scale ($r = .58$), and Depression scale ($r = .50$). The BVS Victimization Scale had a much lower correlation ($r = .32$) with the BYI Disruptive Behavior scale, again showing evidence for convergent and discriminant validity.

As a final indication of discriminant and convergent validity, Reynolds compared correlations between the BVS Scales and his other measures, an Internalizing Distress Scale and Externalizing Distress Scale from Reynolds Bully-Victimization Distress Scale (BVDS; Reynolds, 2003). Discriminant validity is evidenced in the low correlation ($r = .17$) between the BVS Bullying Scale and the Internalizing Distress Scale. Convergent validity for the BVS Bullying Scale is evidenced by a moderate correlation ($r = .48$)

between it and the Externalizing Distress Scale. The BVS Victimization Scale is highly correlated ($r = .77$) with both the Internalizing Distress Scale and Externalizing Distress Scale ($r = .65$), demonstrating convergent validity. Items from the Internalizing and Externalizing Scales of the BVDS were not included in the current study. The BVS Bullying and Victimization Scales had a correlation of .36 with each other, and the Internalizing and Externalizing Distress Scales had a correlation of .61 with each other.

Reynolds conducted factor analysis of the BVS using the maximum likelihood factor analysis (Cliff, 1987), which expects the factor structure to match the basic domain design of each scale. For the BVS, it was anticipated that the two factors would be bullying behavior and victimization (Reynolds) with meaningful factor loadings for the items. The total standardization sample of 2,000 students was used in the factor analysis. The first factor, bullying, included 23 items that had rotated item factor loadings from .52 to .70 for items that were designated to fall on the bullying scale. The second factor, victimization, also included 23 items and had rotated item factor loadings that ranged from .41 to .71 with victimization and low factor loadings with bullying.

The Children's Social Desirability Questionnaire. *The Children's Social Desirability Questionnaire* (CSD; Crandall, Crandall, & Katkovsky, 1965) is designed to measure individuals' tendencies to respond in a socially desirable way. Since the BVS could potentially result in students responding in a socially desirable manner, the CSD is included in an attempt to reveal such participants who respond in a socially desirable way. The inclusion of the CSD is a validity check for the responses on the BVS. The results of the CSD indicate whether the results of the BVS should be questioned for individuals or across the groups of participants.

The CSD consists of 48 true-false items written in a way that the individual can only respond in a socially desirable way by concealing his or her true feelings or behaviors. Some items ask if the individual always or never thinks or behaves in a certain way, which is prescribed by middle-class American norms. For example, one item reads, "I have never felt like saying unkind things to a person." Other items are not asking about polar behaviors and instead ask if the individual sometimes engages in particular thoughts or actions (e.g. Do you sometimes feel angry when you don't get your way?). Items from the CSD are in Figure 2 of Appendix A.

To determine the amount of social desirability the individual is exhibiting, the examiner counts the number of items in which the individual responds that he or she has consistent, socially-desirable thoughts or actions (Crandall et al., 1965). In order to appear socially desirable, individuals would respond true to 26 items and false to the other 22 items on the CSD.

To obtain reliability information, the CSD was given to 166 sixth, 162 eighth, 183 tenth, and 109 twelfth grade students in group settings (Crandall et al.). These students were assured that their responses would not be shown to or discussed with anyone associated with their schools. Split-half reliability for the CSD ranged from .69 to .90 for subsamples of males and females. When corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula, the correlations were .82 to .95. Test-retest reliability was found by retesting 98 of the tenth graders from the original sample after a one-month interval. Test-retest reliability was .85 for this group. Crandall indicates that females had higher CSD scores at all grade levels and that there was a pattern of decreasing socially desirable responses with increasing age among males and females. Additionally, when the sample's IQ scores were compared

with CSD results, it was found that lower IQ scores were correlated with higher CSD scores (Crandall et al.).

Validity of the CSD was examined by comparing the 10th grade sample's scores to scores on subscales of social presence, self-acceptance, good impression, and self-control on the California Personality Inventory. The 10th graders' scores were correlated with the California Personality Inventory subscales in the predicted directions (Baxter, Smith, Litaker, Baglio, Guinn, & Shaffer, 2004). CSD scores for sampled students in grades 4 to 12 were also compared to achievement scores, where it was found that CSD scores were negatively correlated with achievement score performance (Baxter et al.).

Procedures

This study involved a comparison of the scores of bullying and victimization for two groups of students: (a) students identified as gifted, and (b) students who are high achievers but not identified as gifted. Participants were asked to fill out demographic information and two self-report questionnaires, the BVS and the CSD. The demographic information portion consisted of a cover page asking for the students' grade in school (e.g. 9th, 10th), race, date of birth, and any leadership activities (e.g. secretary of class, basketball captain). This page did not ask the students for their names. A code number was on the cover page, serving as the only identifier of that particular set of surveys.

Before the data collection day, teachers distributed informed consent forms to their students, who were asked to give them to their parent or guardian. Students returned signed consent forms to their teachers. If a student was over the age of 18, the teacher gave the Informed Consent form directly to the student, who signed the form upon agreement to participate. The teachers then supplied the researchers with the signed

Informed Consent forms and arranged an appropriate time and place for the researcher to administer the surveys.

Sample items from the BVS are located in Figure 1 of Appendix A, and CSD items are located in Figure 2 of Appendix A. Questionnaires were administered to groups of participants in the school library at a time deemed convenient by school staff. Upon arrival at the library, teachers identified students as either gifted or HA and directed them to respective tables for gifted or HA participants. Prior to administration, students under 18 years of age were presented with an assent form. At this time, students were able to ask questions and were told that they could stop completing the survey at any time and be given an alternative activity from their teacher. The students completed the surveys in the schools' libraries. The gifted and HA students completed the questionnaires together in the same setting at each of the schools.

Students were asked not to write their actual names on the demographic forms or the questionnaires. If they did inadvertently supply their names, this information was immediately blacked out after the forms were turned in. Forms were identified with a code number to match demographic forms with corresponding questionnaires. Results of individual participants were not shared with teachers, parents, or participants.

In order to counterbalance forms, I reversed the order of the two questionnaires, the BVS and the CSD, for half of the classes that participated in the study. For example, if the first class was administered the BVS before the CSD, then the second class would receive the CSD first before the BVS. This alternating order was maintained throughout the study.

Data Analysis

I completed a correlation matrix for the CSD and BVS Bullying and Victimization scale scores to evaluate whether the strength of the correlations might indicate that student responses are biased in the direction of social desirability. To determine the rates of bullying and victimization for gifted students and the normative group, I carried out a descriptive analysis. I completed an analysis of variance to determine if there were significant differences in the rates of bullying and victimization between gifted and high-achieving high school students and used the same analysis of variance to determine if the rates of bullying and victimization differed for males and females for the whole population and for gifted students. To determine if the rates of bully-victims for gifted students differs from high-achieving students, students' scores were identified if they reflected the bully-victim classification, a report of moderate to severe levels of both participation in bullying and experienced victimization (Reynolds, 2003). I then compared the gifted and HA groups to determine if there was a difference in the amount of bully-victims identified in each group and the male and female groups.

Chapter III

Results

I generated a correlation matrix for the CSD raw scores and BVS Bullying and Victimization scale scores to evaluate whether the strength of the correlations might indicate that student responses are biased in the direction of social desirability. The correlation between the CSD and BVS Bullying scores was not statistically significant, $r = -0.131$, $p = 0.219$. The correlation between the CSD and BVS Victimization scores was also not significant, $r = 0.056$, $p = 0.601$. Because the correlations were very low, there was no need to use the CSD as a partial correlation covariate. Table 4 in Appendix A shows the correlations and the frequency of CSD scores for both gifted and HA students. Gifted students' scores were relatively normally distributed (see Figure 3 of Appendix A), whereas HA students' scores were skewed, with more students receiving low CSD scores, not reflecting the need for high social desirability.

As a recap, the following were my research questions:

1. Do the bullying and victimization rates for high school students who are gifted differ from the normative group?
2. Is there a difference in rates of bullying between gifted and non-gifted, high-achieving high school students?
3. Is there a difference in rates of victimization between gifted and non-gifted, high-achieving high school students?
4. Is there a difference in rates of bullying between male and female students for the whole sample population and within gifted and non-gifted high school groups?

5. Is there a difference in rates of victimization between male and female students for the whole sample population and within gifted and non-gifted high school groups?
6. Are more gifted students than high-achieving students identified as bully-victims?
7. Is there a gender difference in the rate of bully-victims?

Descriptives

To answer Research Question 1, I converted the raw scores from the BVS surveys to standard scores using the appropriate norms table, and a descriptive analysis was generated via SPSS. BVS scores are reported as T-scores with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. Gifted students scored a mean of 47.45 ($SD = 7.46$) on the BVS Bullying scale, while HA students scored a mean of 49.42 ($SD = 9.62$), which can be seen in Table 5 of Appendix A. It is also important to note that both groups' (gifted and high-achieving) mean Bullying scores fall in the Normal range. Reynolds reports that BVS Bullying scores that are below 57 are in the Normal range (Reynolds, 2003). There were, however, two (4.3%) gifted students and two (4.7%) HA students who scored in either the Moderately Severe or Severe ranges of the BVS Bullying scale, which includes scores of 66 and above.

Gifted students scored a mean of 50.57 ($SD = 11.93$), while HA students scored a mean of 51.16 ($SD = 11.31$) on the BVS Victimization scale. Reynolds considers scores of 55 and below to be in the Normal range; this is a slightly lower threshold than that of the Bullying scale. Reynolds says that this lower threshold results in a slightly greater

amount of students identified as victims compared to bullies, which he says is consistent with the majority of bullying and victimization research. Information on the results of the BVS administration including means and standard deviations can be found in Table 5 of Appendix A. However, there were six (12.8%) gifted participants and seven (16%) HA participants who scored in either the Moderately Severe or Severe ranges of the BVS Victimization scale, which includes scores of 64 and above. This is further evidence of the approximate similarity between the two groups.

As far as gender groups, males had a mean BVS Bullying score of 50.16 ($SD = 11.35$), and females had a mean score of 47.15 ($SD = 5.71$). For the BVS Victimization scale, males had a mean score of 52.19 ($SD = 13.38$), and females had a mean score of 49.92 ($SD = 10.16$).

For research Questions 2 and 3, I analyzed the data via two univariate analyses comparing the gifted and HA students on, first, their bullying scores and, second, their victimization scores. Gifted and HA participants did not score significantly different on the BVS Bullying scale, answering Research Question 2, ($F [1, 88] = .278, ns$). Figure 4 in Appendix A shows the distribution of Bullying T-scores on the BVS for gifted and HA students. Additionally, gifted and HA students did not score significantly different on the BVS Victimization scale, $F (1, 88) = .811, ns$. These results are shown in Table 5 in Appendix A. Figure 5, also in the Appendix A, shows the frequency of BVS Victimization T-scores for gifted and HA students.

Among gifted students, males' mean BVS Bullying score was 49.06 ($SD = 9.18$) and, females' mean score was 46.45 ($SD = 7.46$). Among HA students, males' mean BVS Bullying score was 51.21 ($SD = 13.26$), and HA females' was 48.00 ($SD = 5.15$). On the

BVS Victimization scale, gifted males had a mean score of 52.39 ($SD = 12.65$), and gifted females had a mean score of 49.45 ($SD = 11.54$). HA males had a mean BVS Victimization score of 52.19 ($SD = 14.38$), and HA females had a mean score of 50.50 ($SD = 8.42$). These results are shown in Table 5 of Appendix A.

To answer questions 4 and 5, I analyzed the data via the same univariate analysis to determine differences and interaction effects for gender and academic placement (gifted or HA). There were no significant differences found between genders or academic placement in terms of rates of bullying ($F [1, 88] = 0.027, ns$) and victimization ($F [1, 88] = 0.082, ns$). See Table 5 in Appendix A for these results.

To answer questions 6 and 7, students were identified by their BVS Bullying and Victimization scores as bully-victims. Bully-victim is a classification given to participants who score highly on both measures of bullying and victimization. Thus, in this study, bully-victims were identified as those participants that had scores significantly above the average range on both the BVS Bullying and Victimization scales. Scores above the average range of the BVS scales fall into the clinically significant, moderately severe, and severe qualitative categories. Scores are considered significantly above the average range when they are above 57 on the BVS Bullying scale and above 55 on the BVS Victimization scale (Reynolds, 2003). Eight participants (8.89%) were identified as bully-victims. Five (62.5%) of the eight bully-victims were HA students, and three (37.5%) were gifted students. Because of the small group of subjects identified as bully-victims, it might be misleading to complete statistical tests with this group. However, quantitatively, gifted students do not and were not identified at a higher rate for becoming

bully-victims. Of the eight identified bully-victims, six (75%) were males, and two (25%) were females. Results from the BVS can be found in Table 5 of Appendix A.

Post-Hoc Analysis

Bradshaw et al. (2007) found that verbal aggression was the most commonly reported type of bullying for high school students and that physical aggression was experienced much less by high school students compared to younger students. Therefore, in a post-hoc analysis, I divided the individual items on the BVS into items addressing physical aggression and items addressing verbal aggression. I categorized BVS items as verbally aggressive if they included verbal content, such as, “I teased or called other kids names.” I categorized items as physically aggressive if they included physical bullying content, such as, “I pushed around other kids in school.” Of the 46 BVS items, 36 (78.3%) asked about physical aggression whereas only 10 (21.7%) asked about verbal aggression. This breakdown was consistent for both the individual Bullying and Victimization scales, each scale having 18 items about physical aggression and 5 items about verbal aggression.

I calculated total scores for item responses for items involving physical aggression and verbal aggression separately for each participant. I made these calculations by performing a frequency count of the number of item responses that were greater than zero for items that involved physical aggression. Item responses greater than zero are considered elevated (Reynolds, 2003). I completed the same frequency count for each student for items that involved verbal aggression. I then converted the scores to ratios of potential totals (e.g. student responded to 20% of potential verbal aggression items would be 20 for verbal aggression), which allowed both the verbal and physical

aggression totals for each student to be based on the percent of items to which each student responded, and therefore, be comparable. I then completed a t-test comparing means from physical and verbal aggression item totals. Based on these ratios, I found that participants reported involvement with significantly more verbal aggression ($M = 19.00$, $SD = 22.74$) than physical aggression ($M = 14.35$, $SD = 17.69$), $t(89) = 7.695$, $p < .01$. I also used t-tests to discover if there were differences between gifted and HA students in terms of the number of physical verbal aggression item totals. However, there were no significant differences. Based on an ANOVA analysis, there were also no significant differences found among the grades (i.e. 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th) in terms of the number of verbal and physical aggression items marked (See Table 6 in Appendix A).

Also, as a post-hoc analysis, I investigated whether there were significant differences in the mean BVS Bullying and Victimization scores between the two participating schools. On the BVS Bullying scale, School A had a mean score of 52.21 ($SD = 10.82$), and School B had a mean score of 45.45 ($SD = 4.84$) among their participants. However, School A's mean Bullying score was significantly higher than that of School B, $t(37) = 3.297$, $p < .01$ (See Table 7 in Appendix A). Despite this difference, both schools' mean scores fall in the Normal range of scores for this scale (< 57). Figures 6 and 7 in Appendix A show the distribution of BVS Bullying scores for students at both of the participating schools. Nine (23.7%) students from School A and three (5.7%) students from School B had elevated Bullying scores.

On the BVS Victimization scale, School A had a mean score of 55.76 ($SD = 14.88$), and School B had a mean score of 47.68 ($SD = 7.19$). As in the Bullying comparison, the mean Victimization scale scores from the two schools were significantly

different, $t(37) = 2.824, p < .01$. (See Table 8 in Appendix A.) School B's mean Victimization score clearly falls in the Normal range of the Victimization scale, which includes scores of 55 and below (Reynolds, 2003). However, School A's mean score on the Victimization scale is on the cusp of the Clinically Significant range of scores, which includes scores ranging from 56 to 63. Thirteen (34.2%) students from School A and five (9.6%) students from School B had elevated scores on the BVS Victimization scale. Reynolds notes that students who have scores in the Clinically Significant range of the Victimization scale usually experience more than just victimization in the form of teasing; instead, these students are oftentimes experiencing overt aggression and other forms of relational victimization. As a whole, gifted and HA students from School A reported victimization levels that approach a Clinically Significant level. Figures 8 and 9 in Appendix A show distributions of the BVS Victimization scores for both schools.

Because of the significant differences in the two schools' BVS Bullying and Victimization scale scores, I also completed an ANOVA looking at BVS Bullying and Victimization score differences between gifted and HA students within each of the schools (See Table 8 in Appendix A). At School A, gifted and HA students' scores did not significantly differ from each other on either the BVS Bullying ($F[1, 37] = 3.187, ns$) or Victimization ($F[1, 37] = 1.766, ns$) scales. Likewise, at School B, gifted and HA students' scores did not differ significantly on either the Bullying ($F[1, 50] = 3.376, ns$) or Victimization ($F[1, 50] = 0.336, ns$) scales.

Chapter IV

Discussion

In the research area of bullying and victimization among gifted students, the conceptual frameworks tend to fall at opposing ends of the pole in terms of predicting rates of each variable. At one end of the pole, proponents of gifted programs claim that because gifted students are different from non-gifted students, they will be victimized more than non-gifted students (“How to Climb,” 2007; Schuler, 2002) and may bully at high rates (Cross, 2001). On the opposite end, other advocates of gifted programming claim that because gifted students are developmentally advanced, they experience less victimization and perform less bullying than non-gifted peers (Lando & Schneider, 1997; McCallister, 1984). Another possibility is the null hypothesis, that gifted students experience no more or less bullying and/or victimization than non-gifted students and are, therefore, not at heightened risk as a group.

Findings from this study cause me to fail to reject the null hypothesis, that there are no differences in the rates of bullying and victimization among gifted and HA high school students. Gifted and HA high school students appear to bully others and experience victimization from others at similar rates, and according to group means, both groups of students bully others and are victimized at rates similar to those represented in the normative group for the BVS. Similarly, among male and female high school students, mean rates of bullying and victimization fell within the normal limits and were not significantly different from each other.

The hypothesis that gifted students are at a higher risk for bullying and victimization is not supported based on current group findings. Gifted students’ advanced

cognitive development, creativity, and achievement apparently do not relate in a significant manner relative to non-gifted high-achievers in the amount of bullying and victimization they experience. Likewise, the hypothesis that gifted students may be at lower risk for bullying and victimization is not supported. The findings of this study mirror Bradshaw et al.'s (2007) results in method and findings. Bradshaw et al. asked general education high school students if they had been victimized *in the past month*, the same time frame used on the BVS used in my study. Bradshaw et al. found that 22.7% of high school students reported that they had been victimized in the past month, similar to my study in which 20% of gifted and HA students had elevated BVS Victimization scores.

Furthermore, past researchers (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Peterson & Ray, 2006a; Scholte et al., 2007) have also found similar rates of the amount of bullying inflicted on others by gifted and non-gifted students as in the current study. McEwin and Cross (1982) found similar rates of victimization for gifted and non-gifted students in grades five to eight. The current study reflected similar results to the McEwin and Cross study; however, the current study included gifted and non-gifted high-achievers in grades nine to twelve, an age and a comparison group that had not yet been studied in this area.

The age group participating in the current study remains a group that needs further study in the area of bullying and victimization research as it relates to emotional states and maturity. Peterson and Ray (2006a) reported that at 6th grade, emotional maturity kicked in, reflected in gifted students of this age reporting less emotional impact from being victimized. The Peterson and Ray study's participants were only in the eighth grade, so their findings cannot generalize to the high school age (grades 9-12)

participants in the current study. However, further research involving high school students' (grades 9-12) emotional impact from being victimized would be beneficial.

Beyond the singular concepts of bullying and victimization, I examined a new category, bully-victims. Bully-victims are those individuals who have elevated scores on both bullying and victimization scales. As very few of the participants met the qualifications to be classified as a bully-victim, this may be too small a sample of bully-victims from which to draw meaningful conclusions, other than to state that students in high school who have high rates of both bullying and victimization make up less than 10% of our sample. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have identified the proportion of bully-victims in middle and high school student populations ranging from 1% to 10% (Brockenbrough, Cornell, & Loper, 2002; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). It is important to note that of the eight identified bully-victims, six (75%) were males. Therefore, we have limited evidence of males being three times more vulnerable in terms of the dual problems of bullying and victimization, which is similar to other studies that have found a significant difference in rates of bullying among the genders favoring higher rates for male students (Carlyle & Steinman, 1999; Peterson & Ray, 2006a). It may be very important to identify the bully-victims as Salmivalli and Nieminen (2002) report that bully-victims score higher on aggression than students categorized as bullies. In addition, Holt et al. (2007) indicated that bully-victims experience a variety of troubles such as social isolation, academic problems, and behavior problems.

In addition, my post-hoc analysis revealed that the two participating schools' had mean BVS Bullying and Victimization scores that were significantly different from each

other. For the Victimization scale, one school had a mean score that approached a clinical level. Since the participants came from similar gifted and HA programs and were in schools from the same school district, these school differences were not anticipated. The Tennessee State Department of Education's website contained school profiles for each of the schools as well, and these school profiles revealed that the two schools had similar amounts of minority and economically disadvantaged students in addition to having similar amounts of suspensions for the past school year (Tennessee Department of Education, 2009). These school similarities make the differences on the Bullying and Victimization scales even less expected. These differences point up the need to investigate school culture to examine why such variations exist across schools.

Previous research by Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006) found that school culture and peers have two notable effects on academic motivation. First, the effects are complex and differ across students, depending on culture, ethnicity, and the values of the students and their peers. Second, the relationship between social and academic goals can be influenced by teacher policies in the classroom. Chen (2008) reported that school location and student socioeconomic status have moderate effects on school violence with much of the contextual effects mediated by school climate. Larger schools and schools with higher student misbehavior predicted higher levels of school violence. A positive school climate combined with necessary security is recommended to reduce school violence. Finally, Stewart (2008) found that school climate, especially the sense of school unity felt by students, teachers, and administrators, is important to student success. Additional research involving school culture and its effects on student motivation, violence, and academic achievement would be informative.

Limitations

A primary limitation of the current study relates to the generalizability of the results. The current study was conducted in just two schools in one school district in Tennessee. Therefore, in order to generalize the results to other schools and regions of the country, a larger, more geographically-diverse sample is warranted in future studies. Also, there are limitations in generalizing across the schools in this study. The potential effect of environmental differences and aspects of cultural context in the schools limit the generalizability of the study (See Cross, 2000; Cross, 2001; Limbos & Casteel, 2008; Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008). Measuring such variables across schools would be a difficult undertaking; however, results of such a study would be beneficial. More research including a larger, more diverse sample is needed.

This study could be improved by including a higher number of students from each of the grades represented in the study, particularly ninth grade students, whose representation consisted of only five students. However, a study focusing on the comparison of gifted and HA students may make this difficult in terms of locating participants. The vehicle for including HA students in my study was their enrollment in AP classes, which are often not offered to ninth-grade students due to prerequisite classes needed to enter AP courses.

A viable limitation of my study that may be corrected by researchers is to gather data on specific IQ levels of participants, for descriptive and evaluative purposes. I was unable to ascertain the exact IQ scores of the participants in the present sample. Highly gifted students are likely rare both in my sample and in the general population (probably less than 1%), and these individuals may leave traditional schools early on to better meet

their educational needs at alternative schools, colleges, or home school settings. The potential rareness of highly gifted students in my sample raises the question whether such students (e.g. 3 standard deviations above mean) have relatively more problems with bullying or victimization. Further research in this area is recommended.

Another issue I did not address was the possibility of dual diagnoses among my sample of gifted students. Gifted students are not immune to other conditions, such as learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and obsessive compulsive disorder among others. Bullying or victimization, by or toward gifted students could be caused by a separate, concurrent diagnosis, or an interaction of two diagnoses. Further research in this area should examine the possibility of dual diagnoses among gifted students.

The current study contributes to the gifted education literature by providing evidence that there was no difference in the amount of bullying and victimization between gifted high school students and high-achieving, non-gifted high school students across two high schools. These results contribute to the research in a positive way by informing educators about an additional social-emotional variable that has been of some concern to educators in the gifted realm (Peterson, 2002; Schuler, 2002; Fuller & Richner, n. d., para. 6). Based on these results, it does not rationally follow that gifted students' self-concepts should be lower due to victimization any more than non-gifted peers (See Bain & Bell, 2004; Cohen, et al., 1994).

Implications

Results of this study do not offer support for specialized programs targeted at improving the bullying and victimization rates of gifted students across the board. Gifted

and HA students experienced bullying and victimization at similar rates, and these rates were not elevated for either group. Thus, I recommend that proponents of specialized programs targeting groups of gifted students should focus on activities that are beneficial based on evidential needs, such as academic acceleration (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). Some gifted students may need individual interventions directed at bullying and victimization, and these needs should be addressed in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). In a recent article by Card and Hodges (2008), the authors recommend that if a comprehensive intervention is not possible, then an empirically-validated intervention should be implemented with the individual student or group of students. Some of the empirically-validated interventions mentioned by the authors include increasing assertiveness in victims, social skills groups, and increasing students' awareness of victimization risk factors and consequences, such as depression. The authors also recommend across-the-board interventions to prevent victimization (Card & Hodges). The current study does not show that gifted students need such interventions more than others; however, it does show that both gifted students and general education students are vulnerable to victimization. Thus, a school-wide intervention to prevent victimization would be more appropriate than an intervention targeted at reducing victimization among gifted students only.

In the future, a school-wide bullying and victimization screening would be helpful to determine which groups, if any, are especially in need of a preventative intervention against school bullying and victimization. This would also allow for a comparison of vulnerability to bullying and victimization among general education students and gifted students from the same school culture. Perhaps, since students are likely aware of who is

and is not a gifted student based on participation in different courses, a school-wide bullying screening would also reveal if there is any social disadvantage for the gifted students in the particular school. This might be particularly informative in schools that have a climate favoring sports rather than academics. Additionally, an assessment specifically tailored to gifted students or the inclusion of a few items tailored to gifted students may be more informative than the BVS scales alone. Such an instrument might include items addressing gifted students' physical characteristics, vocabulary, interests, and academic ease.

In particular, future research in this area should focus on gifted and HA males. This study provided limited evidence that males are more vulnerable in terms of the dual problems of bullying and victimization, and further research investigating males' vulnerability to these social problems would be helpful to these male students who are functioning well academically yet still need additional social programs (See Shaywitz, Holahan, & Freudenheim, 2001; Heydt, 2004).

Also, future studies may look at school climate in relation to rates of bullying and victimization. The two participating schools in the current study had significantly different mean scores for both the BVS Bullying and Victimization scales. In addition, one participating school had a mean Victimization score that approached a Clinically Significant level. The two participating high schools were from the same school district in Tennessee, had similar demographics, and offered similar programs to their gifted and HA students. However, the students of each school reported significantly different amounts of bullying and victimization. Thus, the effects of school climate on bullying and victimization among high achievers and students who are gifted would be a valuable

area to study. Limbos and Casteel (2008) recently looked at how factors in the school culture including organization, social and educational climate, and physical environment impact aggressive school behavior, including bullying, in high schools in California. An archival study by Meyer-Adams and Conner (2008) examined schools' psychosocial environment and its relation to students' perceptions of bullying. A similar study at the schools in the present study might reveal cultural differences leading to intervention benefiting both students and educators wishing to create a safe, open climate that discourages bullies from victimizing others.

In addition, cyber-bullying has been introduced as a new potential form of bullying (Li, 2007; Shariff & Johnny, 2007). High-school students spend much time on the internet and are potentially at-risk to those who internet-based bullying and victimization. Items on the BVS do not address cyber-bullying. There is very little data published concerning cyber-bullying, and the data that are available are primarily from Canada and Great Britain (Li, 2007; Shariff & Johnny, 2007). At the present time, there are no published instruments addressing cyber-bullying. As the internet continues to grow in popularity among all students, cyber-bullying should be studied to learn how students are being treated and how they are treating others while online. Clearly, these are additional research outlets that need to be addressed concerning bullying and victimization among gifted students. Further research in the area of bullying and victimization among high school students of all academic levels would be improved by including cyber-bullying as a form of aggression on a bullying questionnaire. Or, the development of a separate questionnaire addressing cyber-bullying would be helpful for researchers and educators alike to address the needs of students.

Another avenue to be addressed in the future is an evaluation of parent and teacher perceptions of school bullying among gifted students. In a past study, almost twice as many teachers (60%) compared to parents (31%) reported that bullying was a serious issue in the participating school (Gropper & Froschl, 1999). Based on this discrepancy between teacher and parent perceptions, it would be enlightening to learn how teachers and parents of gifted students differ in terms of their perceptions of bullying and victimization occurring in the school.

Further research investigating the rates of bullying and victimization among gifted students is encouraged. At present, there is still limited research concerning this matter (Peterson & Ray, 2006a; Peterson & Ray, 2006b; Cohen et al., 1994), and this research should be expanded as school-based violence and aggression continues to be a problem (Brown & Munn, 2008; Staff & Kreager, 2008). Future research possibilities include examining bullying and victimization rates among dually-diagnosed students; this is an untouched area of research, particularly among gifted students. Determining if certain combinations of diagnoses (i.e. gifted and ADHD) correlate with higher rates of bullying or victimization would be informative to educators and beneficial when constructing such students' IEPs. Future studies should also consider the rates of bullying and victimization for gifted students in alternative settings, such as special schools or home school settings. Research including gifted students from alternative settings may reflect different rates of bullying and victimization than those demonstrated here, based on public school samples. Future studies might include the Reynolds' Internalizing Distress Scale and Externalizing Distress Scale from his Bully-Victimization Distress Scale (BVDS; 2003). The BVS is highly correlated with these scales, and the administration of these scales in addition to

the BVS may yield more specific information for educators and practitioners as they identify students at risk for bullying and victimization and design appropriate interventions.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1. *Rates of Bullying & Victimization across Studies*

| General Education | Year | Grades/Ages | Results |
|--|-------------|--------------------|--|
| Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan | 2007 | grades 4-12 | 49% victims in past month; 30% bullied others in past month; for HS students 22.7% victims in past month |
| Carlyle & Steinman | 2007 | grades 6-12 | 18.8% reported bullying another in past year; bullying most common in grades 7-9 & among males |
| Gropper & Froschl | 1999 | grades K-3 | Males initiated 78% of bullying; males & females equally likely to be victims; 82% report bullying occurs in classroom |
| Salmivalli & Nieminen (Finnish) | 2002 | ages 10-13 | Males rated more aggressive |
| Scholte, Engels, Overbeek, deKemp, & Haselager (Netherlands) | 2007 | ages 10-16 | 19% had bullied others 24% report involvement with bullying or victimization; 40% report bullying occurs often at school; males 66% of bullies & 43% of victims |
| Seals & Young | 2003 | ages 12-17 | |
| Gifted Education | Year | Grades/Ages | Results |
| Cohen, Duncan, & Cohen | 1994 | grades 4-6 | Gifted students received higher ratings than non-gifted students on sociometric measure; no significant differences on friendship assessment; gifted students rated as less aggressive than non-gifted |
| Peterson & Ray (a) | 2006 | grade 8 | Bullying existed at every grade level; almost 20% males & 10% females reported bullying another |

Table 2. *Demographics of Participants: Ethnic Group, Gender, Grade, Age, Leadership**Activities*

| <i>Ethnic Group</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Caucasian | 91 |
| African-American | 5 |
| Asian | 3 |
| Latino | 0 |
| Syrian | 1 |
| | |
| <i>Gender</i> | |
| Male | 41 |
| Female | 59 |
| | |
| <i>Grade in School</i> | |
| 9 th | 5 |
| 10 th | 20 |
| 11 th | 54 |
| 12 th | 20 |

Table 2, cont

| <i>Age</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 14 | 2 |
| 15 | 11 |
| 16 | 28 |
| 17 | 46 |
| 18 | 13 |
| | |
| <i>Leadership Activities</i> | <i>Mean number activities</i> |
| Gifted | 1.54 |
| High-Achieving | 1.21 |

Table 3. *Age Demographics of Participants by Grade and Grade x Group: Mean, standard deviation, minimum age, maximum age*

| | Mean Age(<i>SD</i>) | Minimum Age | Maximum Age |
|---|--|-------------|-------------|
| 9 th grade | 15 (<i>0</i>) | 15 | 15 |
| 10 th grade | 15.56 (<i>0.70</i>) | 14 | 16 |
| 11 th grade | 16.71 (<i>0.54</i>) | 15 | 18 |
| 12 th grade | 17.61 (<i>0.50</i>) | 17 | 18 |
| Gifted- 9 th grade | 15 (<i>0</i>) | 15 | 15 |
| Gifted- 10 th grade | 16 (<i>0</i>) | 16 | 16 |
| Gifted- 11 th grade | 16.88 (<i>0.50</i>) | 16 | 18 |
| Gifted- 12 th grade | 17.56 (<i>0.51</i>) | 17 | 18 |
| High-Achieving (HA) 9 th grade | N/A (no HA 9 th grade students) | n/a | n/a |
| HA- 10 th grade | 15 (<i>0.76</i>) | 14 | 15 |
| HA- 11 th grade | 16.64 (<i>0.55</i>) | 15 | 17 |
| HA- 12 th grade | 18 (<i>0</i>) | 18 | 18 |

Table 4. *CSD: BVS Correlations with (Bullying & Victimization Scales)*

| | BVS Bullying Scores | BVS Victimization Scores |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| CSD Scores | -0.131 ($p = 0.22$) | 0.056 ($p = 0.60$) |

p-level < 0.05

Table 5. *BVS Results: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on Bullying and Victimization Scales: Groups, genders, and groups x gender*

| | Bullying Scale Mean (SD) | Bullying Scale F (df) | Victimization Scale Mean (SD) | Victimization Scale F (df) |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Gifted students | 47.45 (7.46) | .278 (88), <i>ns</i> | 50.57 (11.93) | .811 (88), <i>ns</i> |
| High-Achieving (HA) students | 49.42 (9.62) | .278 (88), <i>ns</i> | 51.16 (11.31) | .811 (88), <i>ns</i> |
| Males (Gifted & HA) | 50.16 (11.35) | .027 (88), <i>ns</i> | 52.19 (13.38) | .082 (88), <i>ns</i> |
| Females (Gifted & HA) | 47.15 (5.71) | .027(88), <i>ns</i> | 49.92 (10.16) | .082 (88), <i>ns</i> |
| Gifted males | 49.06 (9.18) | 1.37 (45), <i>ns</i> | 52.39 (12.65) | .671 (45), <i>ns</i> |
| Gifted females | 46.45 (6.13) | 1.37 (45), <i>ns</i> | 49.45 (11.54) | .671 (45), <i>ns</i> |
| HA males | 51.21 (13.26) | 1.19 (41), <i>ns</i> | 52.00 (14.38) | .183 (41), <i>ns</i> |
| HA females | 48.00 (5.15) | 1.19 (41), <i>ns</i> | 50.50 (8.42) | .183 (41), <i>ns</i> |

Table 6. *Post-hoc Data: Mean Responses to BVS Items involving Physical and Verbal Aggression*

| Total Sample | Mean (%) | SD | Sig. (2-tailed) | t-score |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Physical Aggression | 14.35 | 17.69 | $p < .01$ | 7.695 |
| Verbal Aggression | 19.00 | 22.74 | | |
| | | | | |
| Physical Aggression | | | | |
| Gifted | 13.23 | 16.98 | 0.536 | -0.62 |
| High-Achieving | 15.56 | 18.57 | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | Sig. Between Groups | |
| Grade 9 | 12.78 | 14.64 | 0.34 | 1.135 |
| Grade 10 | 13.27 | 11.73 | | |
| Grade 11 | 17.12 | 20.65 | | |
| Grade 12 | 8.33 | 13.58 | | |
| | | | | |
| Verbal Aggression | | | | |
| Gifted | 18.51 | 24.23 | 0.832 | -0.21 |
| High-Achieving | 19.53 | 21.26 | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | Sig. Between Groups | |
| Grade 9 | 28.00 | 31.14 | 0.333 | 1.151 |
| Grade 10 | 18.33 | 17.57 | | |
| Grade 11 | 21.22 | 24.46 | | |
| Grade 12 | 11.11 | 19.37 | | |

Table 7. *Post-hoc Data: Comparison of BVS Bullying and Victimization Scale Scores from Participating Schools*

| | Mean Score (SD) | <i>t</i> -score | Sig. |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| School A: BVS Bullying | 52.21 (10.82) | 3.297 | $p < .01$ |
| School B: BVS Bullying | 45.45 (4.842) | | |
| | | | |
| School A: BVS Victimization | 55.76 (14.88) | 2.824 | $p < .01$ |
| School B: BVS Victimization | 47.68 (7.19) | | |

Table 8. *Post-hoc Results: Comparison of BVS Scale Scores of Gifted and HA Students within School A & School B*

| | Bullying Scale <i>F (df)</i> | Victimization Scale <i>F (df)</i> |
|------------------------|--|---|
| School A (gifted & HA) | 3.187 (1), <i>ns</i> | 1.766 (1), <i>ns</i> |
| School B (gifted & HA) | 3.376 (1), <i>ns</i> | 0.366 (1), <i>ns</i> |

Rate each of the following items 0 to 3:

0= never; 1= once or twice; 2 = three or four times; 3= five or more times

In the past month:

1. Other kids pushed me around
2. Other kids teased me or called me names in school
3. I picked on younger kids
4. One or more kids hit me for no reason
5. Some kids broke something of mine
6. I pushed around other kids in school
7. Some kids said they would hurt me
8. I was afraid that other kids would hurt me
9. Some kids said they would hurt my family
10. Other kids tried to pick a fight with me

Figure 1. *Sample BVS items*

CSD SCALE

Please Circle (Yes) or (No) in front of the number for each question:

| | | | |
|-----|----|------------|---|
| Yes | No | 1. | Does it ever bother you to share your things with your friends? |
| Yes | No | 2. | Do you sometimes tell a lie? |
| Yes | No | 3. | Have you ever hit a boy or girl who is smaller than you? |
| Yes | No | 4. | Do you always do as you are told? |
| Yes | No | 5. | Do you ever act “fresh” or “talk back” to your mother or father? |
| Yes | No | 6. | Do you ever let someone else get blamed for what you do wrong? |
| Yes | No | 7. | Do you sometimes brag to your friends about what you can do? |
| Yes | No | 8. | Do you always keep your clothing neat and your room picked up? |
| Yes | No | 9. | Do you always help people who need help? |
| Yes | No | 10. | Do you ever say anything that makes someone else feel bad? |
| Yes | No | 11. | Do you sometimes argue with your parents? |
| Yes | No | 12. | Are you always polite, even to people who are not very nice? |
| Yes | No | 13. | Do you ever get angry? |
| Yes | No | 14. | Do you always listen to your parents? |
| Yes | No | 15. | Do you ever forget to say “please” and “thank you”? |
| Yes | No | 16. | Do you sometimes wish you could just play around instead of having to go to school? |
| Yes | No | 17. | Do you always wash your hands before every meal? |
| Yes | No | 18. | Have you ever broken any rules at school? |
| Yes | No | 19. | Do you ever try to get even with someone who does something to you that you don’t like? |
| Yes | No | 20. | Do you sometimes feel angry when you don’t get your way? |
| Yes | No | 21. | Do you sometimes feel like making fun of other people? |

Figure 2. Sample CSD items

Figure 2, cont.

| | | | |
|-----|----|------------|---|
| Yes | No | 22. | Are you always glad to cooperate or share with others? |
| Yes | No | 23. | Are there times that you don't like it if somebody asks you to do something for them? |
| Yes | No | 24. | Do you sometimes get mad when people don't do what you want them to do? |
| Yes | No | 25. | Have you ever borrowed anything without asking for permission first? |

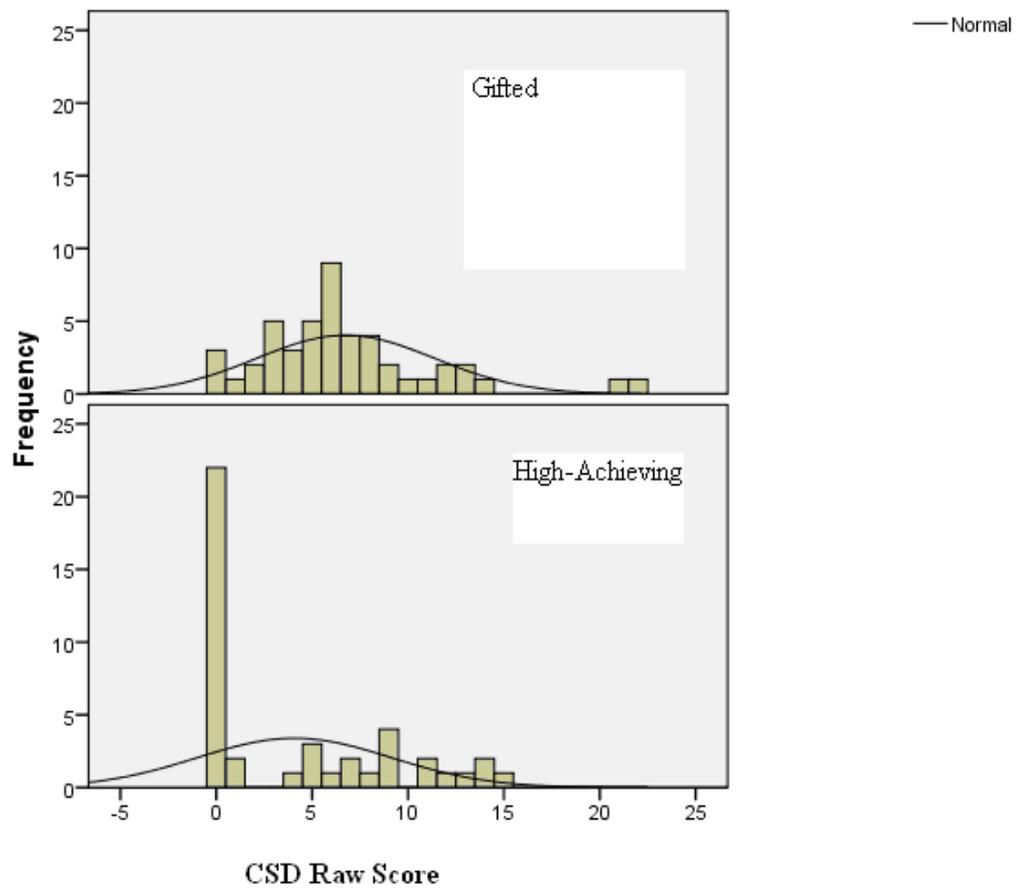


Figure 3. CSD Results for Gifted and High-Achieving Students

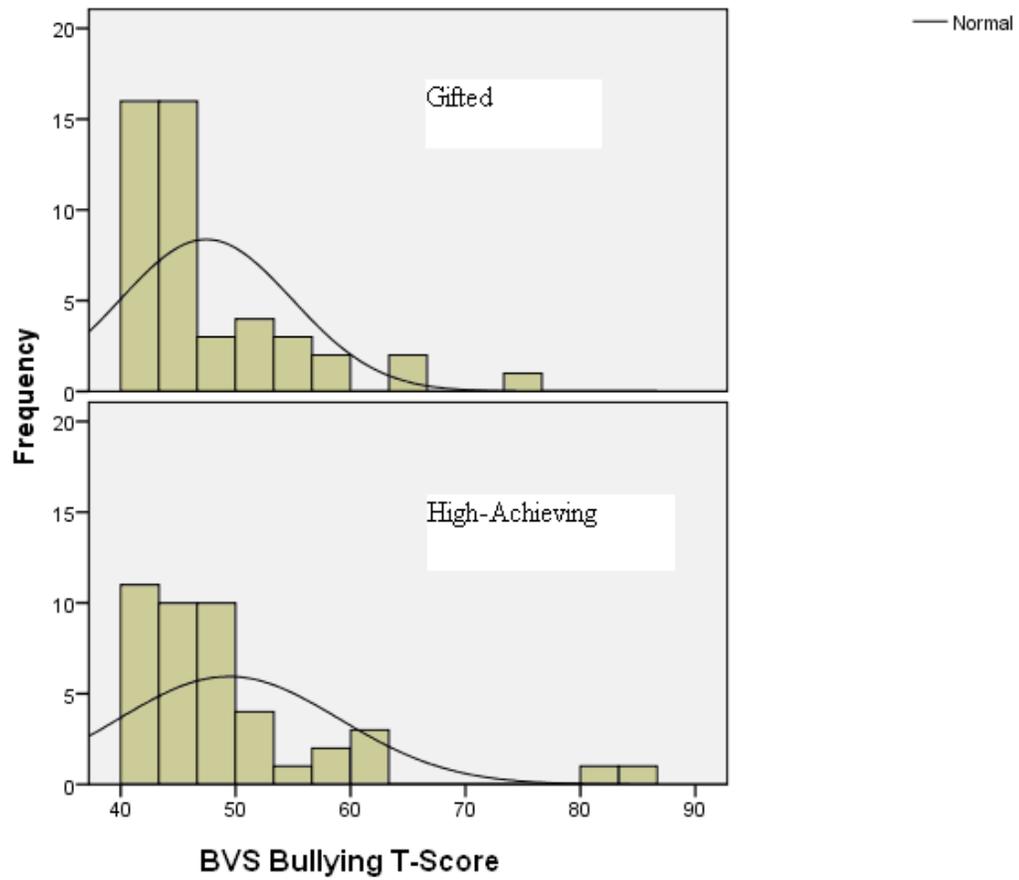


Figure 4. *BVS Bullying T-Scores of Gifted and High-Achieving Students*

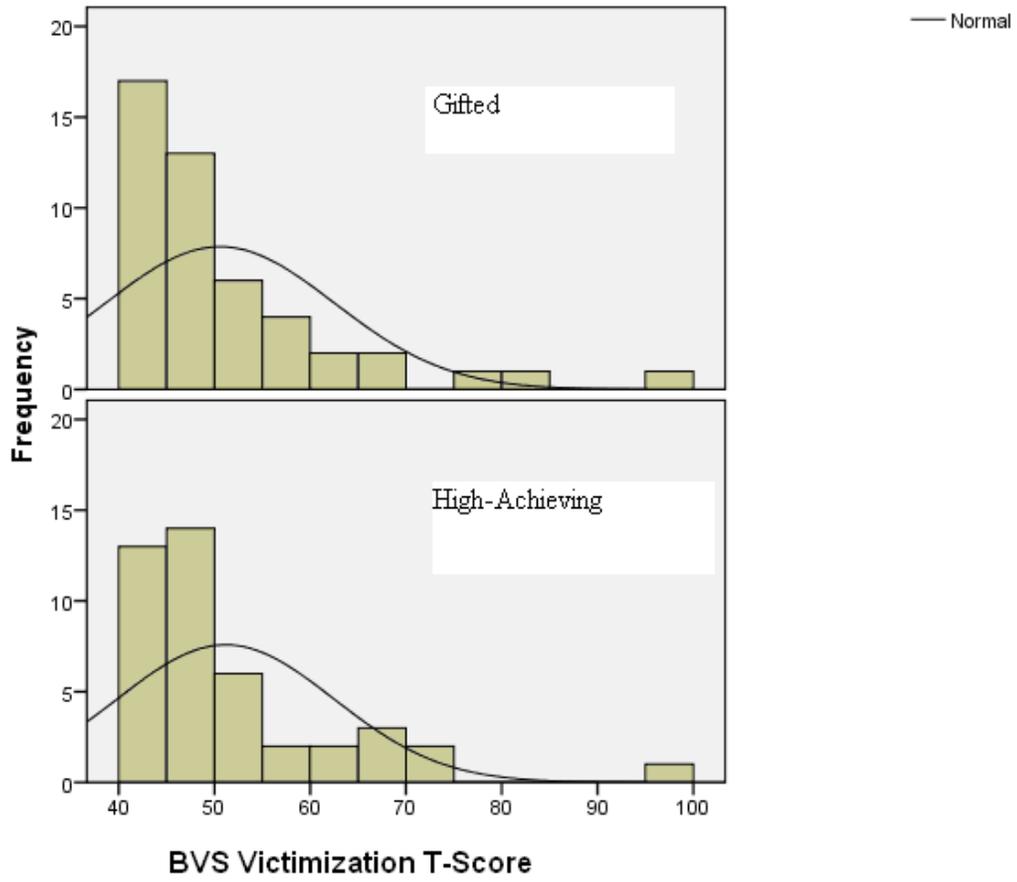


Figure 5. *BVS Victimization T-Scores of Gifted and High-Achieving Students*

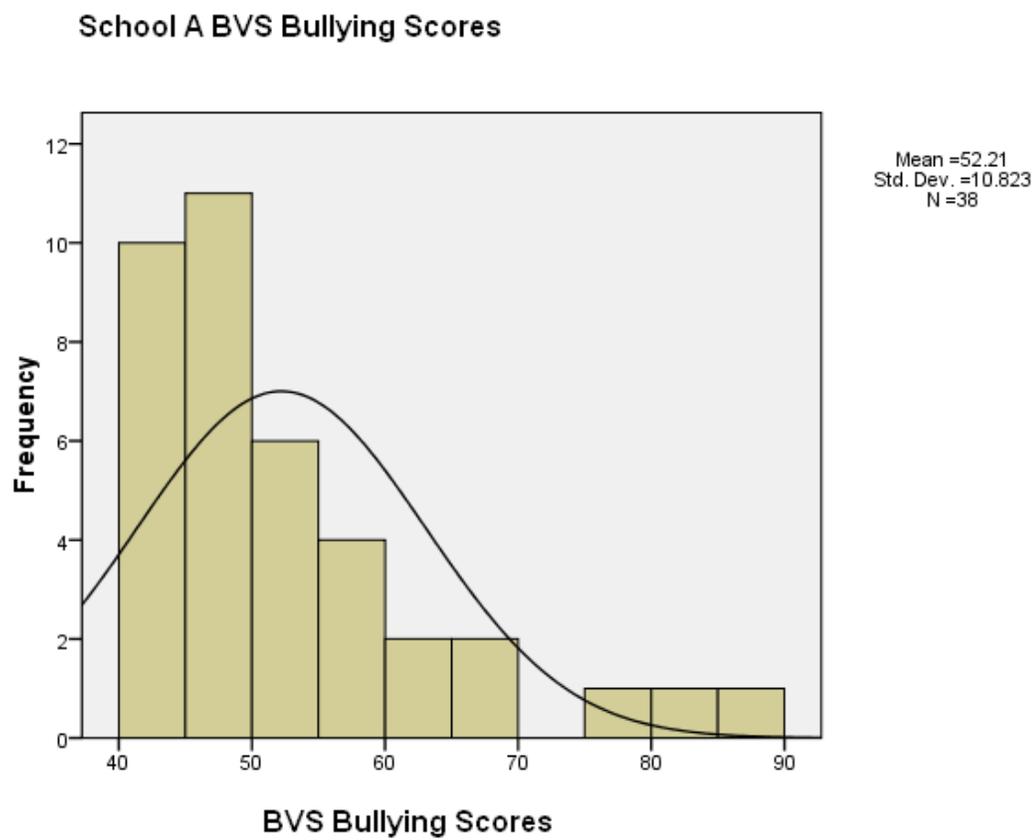


Figure 6. *Post-hoc Analysis: Frequency of BVS Bullying Scores (School A)*

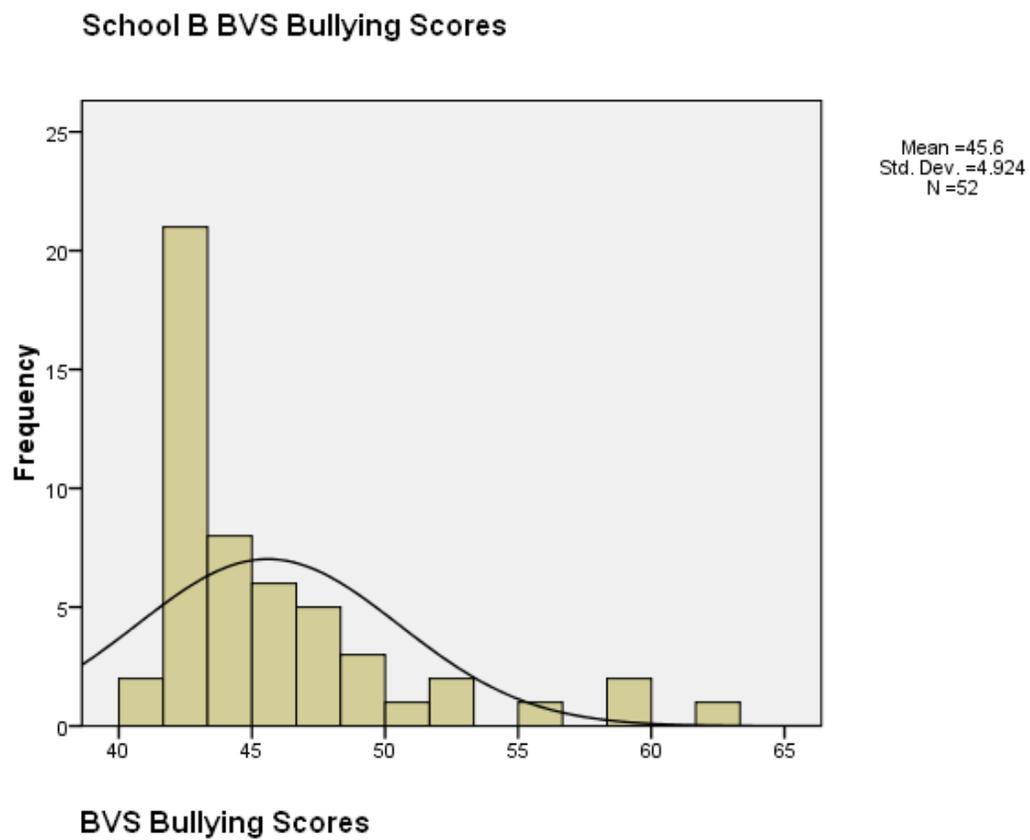


Figure 7. *Post-hoc Analysis: Frequency of BVS Bullying Scores (School B)*

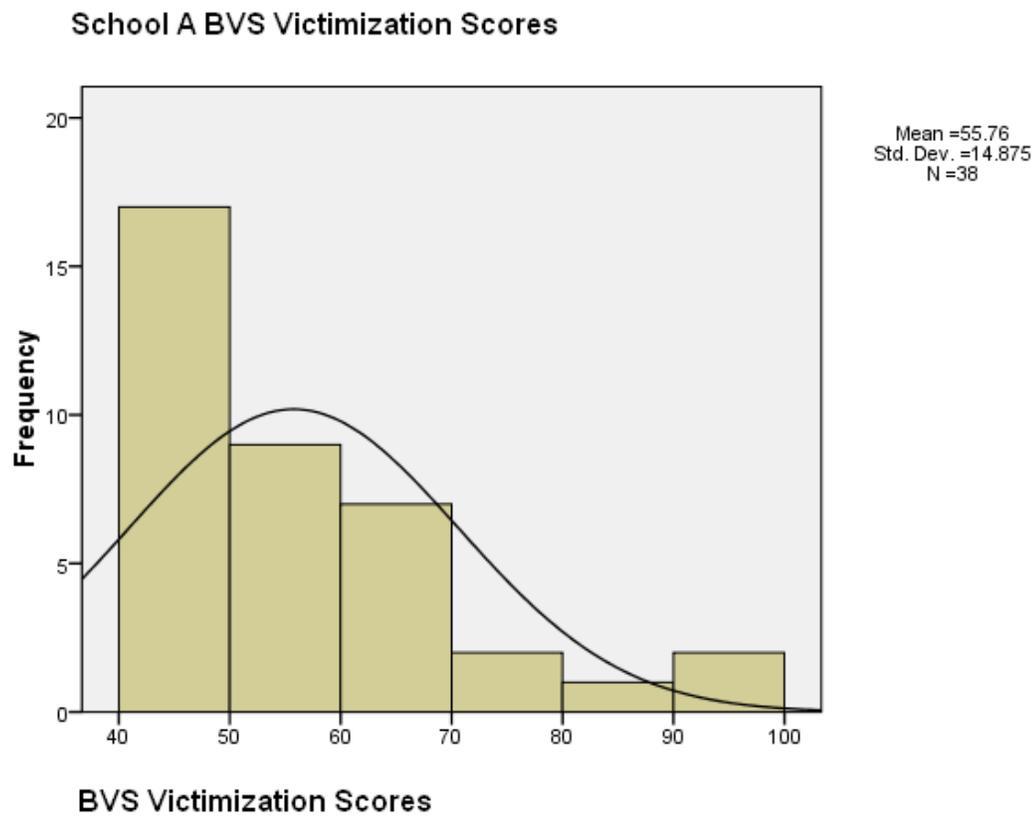


Figure 8. *Post-hoc Analysis: Frequency of BVS Victimization Scores (School A)*

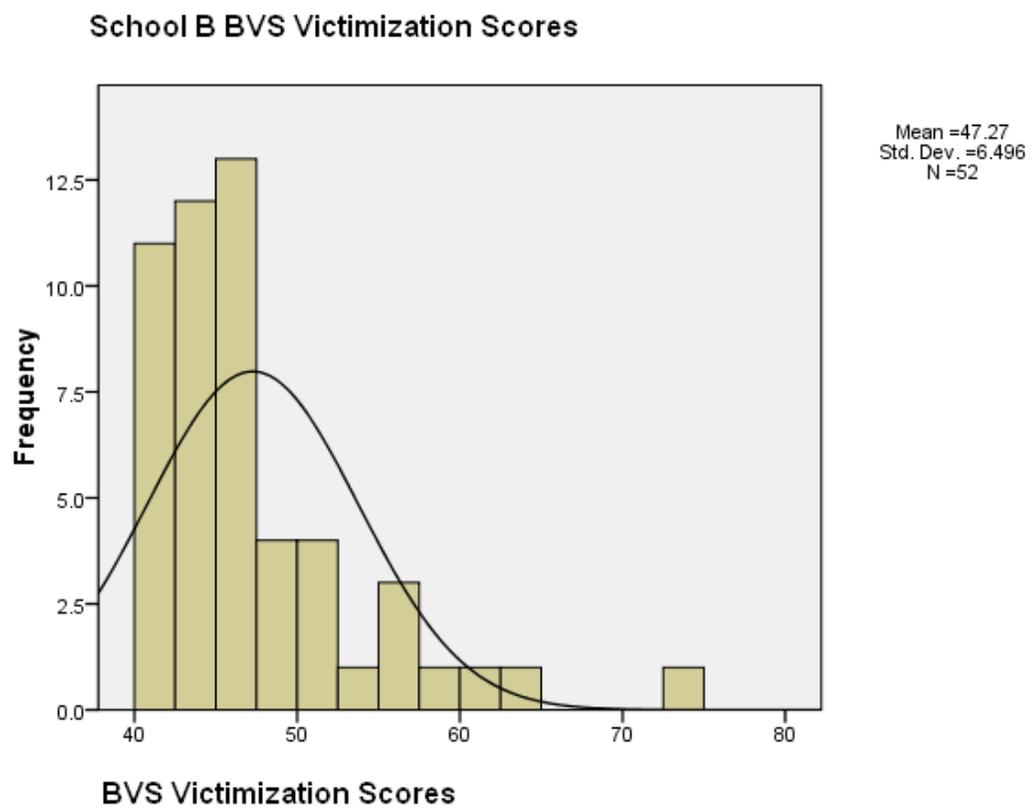


Figure 9. *Post-hoc Analysis: Frequency of BVS Victimization Scores (School B)*

Appendix B

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Bullying, Victimization, and Emotional Intelligence in Students
Who are Gifted or High Achievers

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

We, researchers from the department of Educational Psychology and Counseling at The University of Tennessee- Knoxville, are asking your permission for your child to participate in a study that investigates rates of bullying and victimization in relation to emotional intelligence of ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders who are identified as gifted or high achievers. The purpose of this study is to determine if the two groups, students identified as gifted and students who are high achievers, are similar in characteristics in areas such as emotional intelligence or in rates of reported bullying and victimization. Specifically, we would like to ask your child questions based on three questionnaires, the Reynolds Bully-Victimization Scale for Schools, the Children's Social Desirability Questionnaire, and the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory- Youth Version. A sample of each of the surveys will be kept on file in the school office so that you may see the instruments beforehand if you please. Also, a short demographics page asking for your child's grade in school (e.g. 9th, 10th), race, date of birth, and any leadership activities (e.g. secretary of class, basketball captain) will be included. Your child's name will not be included on any survey or form.

If you give permission, your child will be asked to spend a maximum of 45 minutes with a group of other students filling out the questionnaires. This will be done in your child's classroom at school at a time when his or her teacher feels it is convenient and will not interfere with your child's progress in school. A researcher or a graduate student will administer the questionnaires and help the participants if they have questions.

Identities of participants and their individual results will remain anonymous. Neither the researchers nor the graduate assistants will use your child's name or any other identifying information in oral or written reports. In addition, no names will be written on any of the surveys. Results of the students' individual responses to questionnaires will not be shared with the students, parents, teacher, or any school personnel. We will assign code numbers to student's identities for the purposes of analyzing the results.

Your child will be asked for his or her assent to participate. He or she may withdraw from this study at any time by simply telling you, the researchers, or his or her teacher. You may also withdraw permission for your child's participation at any time by contacting one of the researchers through the phone number or e-mail address below. We are not aware of any significant risks involved in your child's participation in this study.

Benefits of this project are its contributions to the knowledge base concerning bullying, victimization, and emotional intelligence of students who are gifted, and students who are high achievers. However, declining or deciding to participate will in no way affect your child's grades or affect your child's standing in school in any other way.

If you have questions at any time about this study or the procedures, please contact one of the researchers: Sherry Bain (phone: 865-974-2410 e-mail: sbain2@utk.edu), Megan Parker (phone: 865-235-7667 email: mparker9@utk.edu), Kelli Jordan (phone: 770-355-8882 email: kjordan3@utk.edu), or Taylor Pelchar (phone: 865-573-9903 email: tpelchar@utk.edu).

Please sign below and return this form to your child's school if you understand the conditions of this study and agree to allow your child to participate if he/she wishes. You may keep the extra copy of this form for your records.

Name of student _____.

Parent's signature _____ Date _____

Figure 1. *Parental Consent Form*

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Bullying, Victimization, and Emotional Intelligence in Students Who are Gifted or High Achievers

I understand that in this research project I will answer questions about bullying, victimization, and emotional intelligence.

If I choose to be in this project, I understand that the following things will take place:

I will spend a maximum of 45 minutes in my regular classroom with other students who choose to participate. We will fill out three questionnaires about bullying, victimization, and emotional intelligence. Also, a short demographics page asking for my grade in school (e.g. 9th, 10th), race, date of birth, and any leadership activities (e.g. secretary of class, basketball captain) will be included. My name will not be included on any survey or form.

The information I give about myself in this research project will **not** be shared with anyone in my class or with my teachers, parents, or guardian. My identity will be anonymous, and the information I give will be kept private by the researchers and their assistants.

I understand that if I choose to participate, I will not be graded for anything that I do in this research project. If I choose to not participate, I understand that my grades or standing in school will not be affected.

Contacts: I understand that I may ask questions of the researchers before I decide to participate. I also understand that if I have questions about the research at a later time, I may contact Dr. Sherry Bain at (865)974-2410, or e-mail Dr. Bain at sbain2@utk.edu. Or, I can ask my teacher or parents to help me get in touch with Dr. Bain.

If I feel that filling out the questionnaires has made me feel unhappy, I will be able to see the school counselor.

Participation: I understand that I do not have to participate in this project if I do not want to. I can take a break during the questionnaire session if I need to. I may drop out of the project at any time by telling my parent (guardian), my teacher, or one of the researchers.

I will sign my name below if I agree to be in the project and if I understand all the things listed on this page. *(If a child is unable to sign his/her name, verbal consent will be documented by the researcher.)* I will keep the second copy of this Student Assent Form for my own information.

Student' s Signature

Date

Figure 2. *Student Assent Form*

Dear Ms. Parker,

I have been informed regarding the research project that you would like to do at Siegel High School through the students of Mrs. X, Mr. X, and Mrs. X. You have my approval to conduct this research within the guidelines as described by Mr. Don Odom, supervisor of instruction, Rutherford County Schools.

Figure 3. *Letter of Permission to Conduct Research from School Principal*

Vita

Megan Parker grew up in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and graduated from Middle Tennessee State University in 2005 with a degree in Psychology and minors in Education and Business Administration. She then went on to pursue a Masters Degree in Applied Educational Psychology (2008) and a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in School Psychology (2010) at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Megan is particularly interested in researching the needs of and adding to the research concerning gifted students.