

“She Deserves Better:”

A Feminist Exploration of Gendered Bullying

By

Heather Ann MacLean

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Approved: Dr. Marnina Gonick
Supervisor

Approved: Dr. Michele Byers
Reader

Approved: Dr. Mary Delaney
External Examiner

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Abstract:

Bullying is repeated behaviour that occurs over time in a relationship characterized by an imbalance of strength and power. Gendered bullying refers to the gendered power structures that benefit heteronormative youth (Shute, Owens, and Slee 477). The research questions I am interested in exploring are: What is the relationship between bullying and hegemonic idea(l)s of masculinity and femininity? How does being bullied by boys affect girls’ sense of self and their relationships with others, in both the short and long term? I investigate these questions using feminist theories and in-depth interviewing of four women who self-identified as being bullied by boys in middle and senior high school. Results suggest that bullying took the form of gendered policing as a way to maintain the boundary between “abject” and “normal” gender identities, and the short and long-term effects on participants were low self-esteem and difficulties in social interactions. I argue that when boys bully girls, they are frequently engaging in gender policing, and are punishing girls for not conforming to a sexist, neoliberal idea of girlhood. Gendered bullying could be labelled as sexism, thus conceptualizing it as a societal, not an interpersonal, problem.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, Alex and Annie MacLean.

*How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world.
William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice*

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Chapter 1

Introduction: “And then there were the outcasts”

Reports of school bullying have been in the media frequently in recent decades. One incident in Nova Scotia became well known in both mainstream and social media. Rehteah Parsons was a teenager whose sexual assault was recorded and shared on social media. As a result she was bullied, and she took her own life in 2013 at age 17 (Ross). There is a large body of scholarship devoted to school bullying (Espelage and Swearer 365), and feminists have explored girl-on-girl victimization (Ringrose, “Mean Girl” 405) and sexual harassment (Hill and Kearl 16). Bullying is defined as repeated behavior that occurs over time in a relationship characterized by an imbalance of strength and power (Olweus 9). I am interested in boy-on-girl bullying in adolescence, or gendered bullying. In gendered bullying, “power” refers to the gender norms that benefit heteronormative students, in this case, boys (Shute et al. 477). I argue that when boys bully girls, they are frequently engaging in gender¹ policing, and are punishing girls for not conforming to a neoliberal ideal of girlhood. The research questions I am interested in exploring are: What is the relationship between bullying and hegemonic idea(l)s of masculinity and femininity? How does being bullied by boys affect girls’ sense of self and their relationships with others, in both the short and long term? In other words, I am interested in how girls’ individual experiences might be understood as a microcosm of the societal

¹ “Gender is defined as “the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex” (Merriam-Webster).

macrocosm of gendered relations.² In this thesis I explore these questions by interviewing women who were bullied while in junior high and high school.

I begin with a brief discussion of the earliest recorded definition of bullying because I think it reflects the way North Americans think about bullying today. Its definition has changed since it first appeared in the English language many centuries ago (Rigby 25), which reflects the ways words and language are always changing. The word “bullying” came into common use around the tenth century, and its two initial meanings described a man who is forceful or widely admired, the second described a person who is boastful, disreputable, and even cowardly (Rigby 25). The meaning of the word has always been ambiguous. Although currently “bully” is primarily used as a pejorative term, the positive aspects of the word still cling today. Many admire those who use force for personal ends: the CEO, the sports star, the world leader, and many others. Those who bully at school may be admired; they could be popular boys who embody hegemonic masculinity because they are seen as dominant, tough, competitive, and athletic (Meyer 38). Although bullying is often understood as an anti-social behavior (Rigby 146), the fact that bullies often hold social power shows that they have learned to assert their strength to their advantage and are rewarded for it (Meyer 38). This is evident in my participants’ stories, as they were frequently bullied by boys with high social status.

The word “bully” has been in existence for centuries, but the meaning we ascribe to it today in a schooling context is a recent construction. Research on bullying began in the 1970s in response to sensational incidents in Europe and North America (Duncan and

² It must be noted that gender never operates within a vacuum; it is always involved with race, class, ability, and sexual orientation.

Rivers 1; Walton i). In one example from 1979, a 16 year old girl in San Diego, California shot and killed a principal and custodian of an elementary school and wounded eight children (Day). This initial bullying research was led by Scandinavian psychologist Dan Olweus, and his work became known in North America in the 1980s. Prior to about 1980, bullying was seen as a bothersome but normal characteristic of childhood. It was also considered something that could help a child develop character and coping skills (Walton i). Starting in 1980, school shootings occurred at an exponentially increasing rate. In the United States, between 1969 and 1978 there were 16 school shootings, then from 1978 to 1989 there were 29, and from 1989 to 1998 there were 52 (Klein 2).

Between December 2012, when a disturbed young man entered an elementary school and killed 26 children and teachers in Sandy Hook, Connecticut, and June 2014, there were 10 shootings in schools and colleges where the killer intended to commit mass murder (Carroll and O'Connor). The mainstream media blames many factors for these violent acts: psychopathy, poor parenting, violent video games, access to guns, and bullying.

In response to the research and media coverage, an anti-bullying industry has emerged and has produced careers in several fields including academia, medicine, and education, reflecting not only the need for interventions, but also the financial interests at stake (Walton 237). Researchers collect and analyze data, educators write policy, and psychologists design programs and write books to explain and combat bullying.

Journalists report on tragic incidents and researchers and psychologists are interviewed as experts on the topic. Bullying research and anti-bullying programs conceptualize bullying as an imbalance of power in interpersonal terms that can be changed through teaching

communication skills and behavior modification for both bully and victim (Walton 237). Conceptualizing bullying as a dyadic, psychological issue makes it easy to create anti-bullying programs that target individuals. However, this definition obscures and erases the societal forces, such as sexism,³ that contributes to bullying (Walton 238). Bullying often occurs because the victim is different in some way; in other words, they do not meet the norm of a community. The difference is often framed in terms of race, gender, body size, ability, and/or class, and the victims are therefore considered inferior to his or her peers (Walton 238). In fact, bullying can be thought of as a way of policing norms (Walton 238). This context is sometimes ignored in psychological research, and it is often this research that influences policy makers, in part because we live in a neoliberal society where problems are seen as the result of individual defect, and therefore can be solved on the individual level (Gill and Scharff 7). However, interventions to prevent bullying will be more effective when the power structures that influence bullying are recognized, in this case it is the power to enforce gender norms.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter Two

Bully Planet: The Literature Review

I divide my literature review into two sections. Part one examines the definition, prevalence, and impact of gendered bullying, while part two explores the larger societal and economic forces that can contribute to bullying. Gendered bullying is an example of “normative cruelties,” that is, normative practices that exclude and harm bullying victims,

³ Sexism is “the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance” (Lorde, “Difference” 115).

but are often seen as “normal” in the social context (Ringrose and Renold, “Normative” 575). I also include literature on sexual harassment and homophobic bullying. Gendered bullying is similar to sexual harassment in that they are both linked to norm-setting and policing the performance of traditional, or heteronormative, gender roles (Meyer 34). Homophobic bullying and sexual harassment involve policing gender boundaries, often enacted by students who want to affirm their place in the heteronormative social order, or heterosexual matrix (Meyer 35). Gendered bullying, sexual harassment, and homophobic bullying have heteronormativity and policing proper gender roles in common and are therefore useful to my research.

In the second section, I outline some factors I believe contribute to bullying. They are neoliberalism, postfeminism, and contemporary masculinity. It is important to include this information because I am interested in looking beyond psychological explanations for bullying. The first factor is neoliberalism, an ideology that supports free trade and maximizing corporate profits at the expense of social policies and programs (W. Brown 39). Under neoliberalism people are seen as having an unlimited number of choices, and are solely responsible for the choices they make, they are unhindered by such factors as race, sex, class, or ability (Bezanson 32). Neoliberalism also influences ideas about gender. Under neoliberalism, the notion of postfeminism has proliferated. We are told we live in a postfeminist age, where women have achieved equality, and feminism is no longer needed (McRobbie, “Post-Feminism” 255). Within this culture of neoliberalism and postfeminism, a new concept of ideal girlhood has emerged. Ringrose and Walkerdine call her the super girl, one who embodies older forms of ideal femininity such

as being pretty, nice, and having the appearance of sexual availability combined with newer forms taken from traditional ideas of masculinity, such as being assertive and self-controlled (10). Girls who fail to embody the super girl ideal often exist outside a model of neoliberal subjectivity, and are considered gender deviants (Ringrose and Walkerdine 12-13). Indeed, these girls were viewed as popular in my participants' schools, and my participants were judged against them, both by the bullies and themselves.

Also under neoliberalism an ideal of masculinity emerged. A central component of compulsive or hyper adolescent masculinity is the control of women's bodies and sexuality (Pascoe 114). Boys feel they are entitled to police the gender deviants, in this case, girls who do not conform to hegemonic gender norms. It is my hope that including these larger factors; neoliberalism, super girls, and aggressive masculinity provides a better idea of why gendered bullying occurs.

Chapter Three
Theory: How We Got to Normal

I draw on theories of norms, discipline, and heteronormativity to understand the systemic nature of gendered bullying. I employ feminism as a lens that allows me to examine power manifested through bullying, in terms of norms and the social construction of gender roles. I use the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu in my thesis. Foucault's work is useful because he describes how power is often expressed through a norm, which can disqualify and invalidate those who do not fit the norm (*Discipline* 233). Feminists such as Sandra Lee Bartky have taken up Foucault's theories of norms and applied them to women's lives.

I draw on Judith Butler's theory of the heterosexual matrix to place my participants' experiences in context. We live in a heterosexual matrix, which is a grid of cultural intelligibility which means that if bodies are to make sense, there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender that is hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of sexuality (*Gender Trouble* 208). This can be considered a form of symbolic violence because everything outside of "normal" is rendered unintelligible, and not quite human (Brady and Schirato 105). Being viewed as outside the boundaries of normal had consequences for my participants, they suffered from depression and low self-esteem.

I also found Pierre Bourdieu's theories of symbolic power and social capital useful to my research. Bourdieu sees all social practices as economics directed toward the maximization of material profit (Shilling 145). Power relations are a part of all social interactions (Haskell and Burtch 91). Students with social capital have the power to police those outside the norm, in my research the outsiders were seen as gender deviants (Thompson 18). Besides examining the impact of bullying as it happens, I am also interested in the long-term consequences of bullying.

In thinking about the long-term impact of gendered bullying, I draw on Henri Bergson's idea of time as duration, as interpreted by Gilles Deleuze and Rebecca Coleman. The past is re-experienced through its connection with the present and future (Coleman 94). Coleman uses the concept of "things that stay," which she defines as intense moments of the past which endure and intertwine with present and future temporalities (Coleman 87). The past affects the present by limiting what the participants believe they

can do in the present (Coleman 87). However, my participants also learned ways to translate and rotate their negative bullying memories in a positive way in the present (Deleuze 70). Bullying is a thing that stays because it reveals the participants' place in the heterosexual matrix, i.e. the sexist social order.

Chapter Four
Interviewing While Feminist: Research Strategies

In this chapter I outline my methodology and my epistemology when approaching my research topic. As in the theory chapter, I work from a feminist standpoint. Feminist methodology can be used to understand marginalization occurs through and within oppressive structures (Intemann 505). Feminist methodology is also interested in gender construction and who benefits from hegemonic notions of gender (Lina Leavy 87). I am interested in situated knowledges; knowledge of a certain time and place, in this case the knowledge of girls who are perceived as gender deviant in North America in the late 1990s and early 2000s. I am also interested in what Foucault called subjugated knowledges (“January” 7). These are “disqualified” knowledges. My participants have such a knowledge; they know what it is like to be a gender deviant girl and to exist outside the hegemonic ideal of femininity. This concept is also in line with feminist researchers interested in experiences that go unnoticed or under reported (DeVault and Gross 217). I approached the interviews with my participants from a feminist perspective in which the goal was to bring women and their experience to the center of research (DeVault and Gross 174). I interviewed my four participants twice, there were eight interviews in total. To analyze the data, I chose a method called Thematic Analysis, which is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes in the data (Braun and

Clarke 77). Feminist theories of gender norms and roles informed the themes I chose, and how I interpreted the interviews.

Chapter Five
Impossible to Ignore: An Analysis of Gendered Bullying

The analysis chapter is divided into three sections. In Part I: Policing, Reaction, and Resistance, the participants explain why they were bullied, how it manifested, and how it affected them at the time. They were bullied primarily by popular boys who disparaged their appearance and engaged in mock flirting. The goal of this bullying was to allow popular boys to affirm their superior status, and to reinforce norms by bullying the Other, in this case the gender deviant girl. As a result, my participants felt depressed, even suicidal. This section reveals the power of the heterosexual matrix and how girls are punished by those with more status, who have the power to police gender norms. In Part II: Living in the Heterosexual Matrix, I examine the heterosexual matrix of my participants' schools, in particular learning who was popular and why via my participants' subjugated knowledge of social relations in their schools. My participants did not meet the norm, so I felt it was important to explore their understanding of the norm they were judged against, because all students were implicated in the matrix, not just my participants. I wanted to know how the popular boys displayed their social capital, and I was also interested in the popular girls who embodied the norm, the super girls. The participants often felt inferior next to them.

In Part III: Some Things Last a Long Time, I explore the negative long-term effects of bullying in terms of duration, or the way the past is connected to the present. For my participants, it involved feeling anxiety in social situations, including romantic

relationships. I also examine what could be called the positive aspects of bullying. One of the ambiguities of gendered bullying is that my participants do not see it as an entirely negative experience; they were able to take something positive from their experiences and use it to help others.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: Name the Problem

After a summary of the thesis I suggest that gendered bullying stems from certain children and adolescents being perceived as different and in violation of the norm. Gendered bullying stems from sexism, and cannot be separated from a sexist society. Unless these differences are named and understood as sexism in schools and the larger society, individual, behavioral-based interventions will be limited in their effectiveness, and bullied students will continue to suffer.

Behind the Thesis: My Bullying Experience

I did not want to overshadow my participant's stories by writing about my experience throughout the thesis, but as part of the reflexivity process it is important to share my experience because it has influenced my work. I was bullied as a young teenager. For two years, grades eight and nine, I was ignored, avoided, and bullied. There were instances of overt bullying, mostly on the bus, and always by boys. It was very upsetting because there was an audience watching a captive victim, and they seemed to enjoy my humiliation. But what hurt in a different way was the continuous grind of exclusion. Jessie Klein describes school for bullied kids as being like a day prison (239); this was precisely how it felt for me.

On one level, I did not know why I was being bullied and excluded. I did nothing to provoke anyone, and the bullies did not know me. But on another level, I knew exactly why. It would be years before I identified as a feminist, but I knew, like every woman and girls knows, what the norm for femininity was, and I also knew that I did not meet it. I was not that feminine in looks or attitude, which made me a target for bullying. If I had been thinner or had been a bit more outgoing and placating, I do not think I would have had such a difficult time, or perhaps it would have been difficult in a different way. Mida echoes my thoughts in the analysis chapter, when she says that she could not imagine a conventionally pretty girl being bullied in the way that we were. I have also learned, first as a bullied teenage girl and I still learn it every day as a woman, that no girl or woman can ignore patriarchy, as all are negatively affected, one way or another. Women and girls live in a “patriarchal world where being a women equals second class” (Mackay 198). Feminism has allowed me to see my own experiences and those of my participants’ as not isolated incidents but rather on a continuum of sexism and misogyny. Below I provide a sketch of each participant, and their stories.

Mida’s Story

Mida was the first person I interviewed for Dr. Gonick’s bullying project in 2010. The bulk of her gendered bullying experience took place at a rural Nova Scotia high school where she attended grades 7 to 12, covering the ages of 12 to 17. Our interviews were over three hours long, perhaps because Mida endured severe bullying throughout her entire school life. Also, being the oldest participant, she was in her late 20s at the time of the interviews, she had the most time to think about her experiences.

Chloe's Story

Chloe, the second participant interviewed, also responded to the advertisement on the classifieds site, and I found it interesting that Chloe and Mida had similar experiences in different areas of Nova Scotia, almost ten years apart. She quietly wept during both interviews, and I told her that she was free to end the interview at any time, but she always kept going. Her answers were short, and I did not want to prod her too much and risk making her more upset. If I had the option to interview her again, I would have allowed her to flesh out her answers through e-mail.

She attended junior high in a major metropolitan area starting in the early 2000s until she moved to another county with her family. Chloe described herself as quiet and introverted. Although girls are expected to be quiet and sweet, a girl who dives into books, or shuts herself off from the world with headphones, is not someone who looks like she wants to please others. Her bullies seemed to resent that she did not want anything to do with boys. Chloe was the only participant who reacted with physical aggression at one point, and she does not regret it, because the bullies had threatened to come after her younger sister, and as a result she was not bullied as frequently.

Anne's Story

Anne's interview was the result of sending out an e-mail to a university's Women's Centre. Most of her bullying experience took place in rural Nova Scotia, around the same time Mida was in school. Anne states that it was a "small town with small ideas." When she moved to a larger town she was no longer bullied.

She was bullied by boys who made fun of her hair and her general appearance. Like Mida and Chloe, the gendered bullying affected her self-image and she doubted whether she would ever have a romantic relationship. However, that doubt seems to be behind her as she had a long-term boyfriend at the time of the interviews. In her second interview, I learned more about the hierarchies in the school, and who was popular and why. Anne also had a unique experience the other participants did not mention: she befriended a popular girl who seemed to embody the “super girl” mentality that our neoliberal culture expects girls to aspire to. She learned that the girl worked very hard to appear “perfect.” As an adult she volunteered with an organization that counsels youth, and she learned that all disclosure is self-disclosure, which means that anything anyone says is a reflection on them, not the person they are saying it to, which helped her put her bullying experience in perspective.

Jackie’s Story

Jackie’s interview was the result of sending out an e-mail to a university Women’s Centre. She told me that when she was in school she was tall, overweight, and outspoken, and as a result she was ostracized and bullied. In this way, she is similar to Mida. They are not afraid to be “real,” although both discovered there were consequences to “realness.”

Jackie, a Canadian, went to a private middle school in the Eastern United States, around the same time as Chloe, in the early 2000s. Jackie lived with her parents and brother in a wealthy suburb. In such a community, an emphasis was placed on being successful, which included getting good grades and being involved with sports. Children

were expected to succeed at every endeavor. However, Jackie believes an “American mentality” added another dimension to the competitive spirit of her town. Classmates did not go out of their way to be friendly to a self-described “loud,” “overweight” girl. Jackie describes a box everyone had to fit into; smart, attractive, athletic, and wealthy. Some children, including Jackie, could not or would not fit into that box and were ostracized as a result.

Conclusion

I am interested in the gender norms that underlie some bullying behaviors, and how gendered bullying can be seen as a way of policing those who are considered “gender deviants.” I draw on feminist sociological literature on bullying and sexual harassment, and I use a feminist lens to interpret theories of norms and socially constructed gender roles to examine and explain gendered bullying. My methodology consists of in-depth interviewing, and thematic analysis. Although my participants came from diverse backgrounds, sexism factors into their experiences of gendered bullying, manifested as being seen as Other and thus deserving of punishment from boys. The overall goal of my research is to increase understanding of the gendered nature of bullying and how it is a reflection of a sexist society in which boys have the ability to police girls’ appearance and behavior.

Chapter 2

Bully Planet: The Literature Review

This literature review chapter has two sections. In the first section, I examine the definitions of bullying and its prevalence and impact on victims. In the second section I explore what I believe to be some of the cultural forces behind bullying, mainly a ideology of neoliberalism that promotes competition, and heteronormative notions of gender. Bullying is about power, but I argue that “power” must be placed in a sociopolitical context that considers the effects of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity and femininity on bullying behaviors.

Part 1: Bullying: Definitions, Prevalence, Impact

What is Bullying?

I begin by offering a definition of bullying. Dan Olweus, considered a pioneer in bullying research, defines bullying as “repeated negative behavior, both verbal and physical, that occurs within an asymmetric power relationship” (9). Negative behavior refers to inflicting or attempting to inflict injury or discomfort (Olweus 9). Australian bullying researcher Ken Rigby adds to Olweus’ definition, stating that bullying is also a desire to hurt, expressed as a hurtful action which occurs in a relationship marked with the unjust use of power (51). The hurtful action is typically enjoyed by the aggressor, and the victim feels oppressed as a result (Rigby 51). To demonstrate that behavior is bullying, you must show that the bully is more powerful than the victim and is seeking to hurt that person (Rigby 40). This power imbalance was evident in my interviews. The bullies had more power than my participants in terms of social status, and judging by my

participants' reactions and the frequency of harassment, the intent was to hurt them. Rigby also adds that the bully does not need an impressive amount of power, as the weakness of the victim also contributes to the imbalance (33). The power imbalance is an important aspect of bullying, but the imbalance is subject to change (Rigby 34). For example, a bullied overweight girl who loses weight may find the balance of power has shifted in her favour, and she will not be bullied anymore. Although succinct and useful, a drawback to the definitions Olweus and Rigby offer is that they do not describe societal influences, such as gender roles and presentation, that may contribute to bullying. Researchers such as Olweus primarily view bullying in terms of individual behavior, stripped of societal and cultural contexts (Walton 32). In the second half of this chapter I place bullying in a societal context. I explore the work of researchers who consider the gendered aspects of bullying in the next section.

Gendered Bullying: Definitions and Prevalence

Most research on bullying has been gender blind (Ringrose and Renold, "Normative" 576). The term "gendered bullying" is used to capture the gendered power structures underlying some bullying behaviors (Shute et al. 477). Children and youth who do not conform to the heteronormative ideal are often the targets of gendered bullying. "Gender deviant" girls are those who transgress sexist, normative ideals of femininity, and as a result often experience bullying (Ringrose and Renold, "Normative" 575). Some examples include disparaging a girl because she is considered ugly, feigning romantic interest in her, or teasing her about her hair or weight (Eder et al. 50). Ringrose and Renold call these behaviors normative cruelties. Part of performing normative gender

roles include invoking exclusionary and harmful actions that are often taken for granted or seen as “normal” (Ringrose and Renold, “Normative” 575). Bullying and harassment are linked to norm-setting and policing the performance of traditional (e.g. heterosexual) gender roles (Meyer 34). The term “policing” is used to describe bullying and harassing behaviors that enforce hegemonic norms of the status quo, and these behaviors stem from the idea that it is acceptable for people, in this case boys, to regulate femininity and female sexuality (Conroy 346; Hill and Kearn 16; Klein 62). My participants were bullied and policed for not being “normal,” and their bullies’ behavior was considered normal, heteronormative behaviour.

Gendered bullying is also taken for granted in part because it appears to be a common phenomenon and a “normal” experience for many girls. J.E. Gruber and Susan Fineran, in their survey of four New England schools, found that the frequency of bullying and sexual harassment increased from middle school to high school (634). Campbell Leaper and Christia Spears Brown discovered that sexual harassment was a nearly universal experience, with 90 percent of the 600 girls in their study reporting it at least once (691). They also found that girls who felt less typically feminine experienced more sexual harassment than girls who felt more typical (Leaper and Brown 694). Gendered bullying occurs frequently, and below I explore some of the structures underlying this behavior.

Neil Duncan argues that the purpose or “goal” of gendered bullying is to mark the boundaries of gender roles, serving as a reminder that relationships are structured by power, and that power is gendered (128). At the individual level, gendered bullying

practices are examples of gendered power struggles, while at the societal level they help produce and maintain a value system based on gendered identity which ranks people in terms of hegemonic gender presentation (Duncan 131). Students are aware that having a positive gender reputation enhances social standing, and gendered bullying is a factor and product of the competition for a desirable social identity (Duncan 132). Where does this system leave the victims, particularly female victims?

Gendered bullying victims are often positioned as the Other. Othering occurs when subjects draw boundaries to establish and secure identities in terms of cultural hegemony (Renold, "Innocence" 426; Butler, *Bodies* 3). Girls are often positioned as the Other, or different from the norm, if they fail to cultivate their femininity in ways that are regarded as positive within dominant, heterosexual feminine discourses (Renold, "Innocence" 426). In Emma Renold's research, transgressing gender norms, whether intentional or not, often produced "heterosexual failures:" "aggressive" or "weird" femininities which positioned girls as heterosexually undesirable by many of their peers (Renold, "Innocence" 428). The popular boys and girls then used these "failed" or gender deviant girls as objects of ridicule, thus maintaining heterosexual hierarchies and securing their identities as "normal," appropriately gendered subjects (Renold, "Innocence" 428). Popular students used the Other to define themselves as "normal," which occurs in a pivotal time in these "Other" girls' lives.

Adolescence is a time when many boys and girls begin to see themselves as sexual actors, and when romantic relationships become prevalent in junior and senior high, the school becomes a market. Groups assess who is desirable and to what degree,

attractiveness becomes a commodity as social status hinges on dating (Thorne 153). The transition from childhood to adolescence can be thought of as an initiation into compulsory heterosexuality¹ (Basow and Rubin 33). Most people do not perfectly conform to the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, yet these cultural expectations still serve as standards against which people judge themselves and others, and these expectations can be intense at the beginning of adolescence (Basow and Rubin 26). Girls who do not fit the norms of a homophobic and heterosexist culture can find adolescence to be a painful time. It is also in this environment that sexual harassment occurs.

Another Shade of Sexism: Sexual Harassment

Violence against women, like school bullying, has been referred to as an epidemic in the mainstream media, but an epidemic implies that a phenomenon peaks before subsiding, while violence against women, sexual harassment, and bullying, are common in our society and they do not appear to be declining in the near future (Duffy and Cohen 146; Klein 65; Rigby 92). I draw on sexual harassment literature because sexual harassment is not framed as an issue that affects individual women, rather it is understood as a societal and political issue directly connected to the imbalance of power between women and men (Duffy and Cohen 146). It is used to remind women of dominant gender scripts (Conroy 347). Sexual harassment occurs in a social context that marginalizes women and privileges men, especially those who perform heterosexual masculinity (Conroy 346). Conroy argues that interventions will not be effective as they might be if we fail to recognize that sexual harassment maintains hegemonic gender roles (349).

¹ Compulsory heterosexuality is the idea the heterosexuality is an institution that all women must conform to in a patriarchal society, regardless of their sexual orientation (Rich 27).

Sexual harassment literature, because it places emphasis on sexism as an underlying structure of the behavior, is important to my research.

Sexual harassment and gendered bullying exist on a continuum of often unrecognized violence against girls and women (Shute et al. 488). However, there are a few differences between them. Sexual harassment is defined in terms of how it is received by the victim, while bullying is defined by the perpetrator's intention to harm (Shute et al. 478). Bullying can occur at any time in life, while sexual harassment typically begins in adolescence (Hill and Kears 7). The differences between bullying and sexual harassment may be less important than an awareness of the sexism that underlie both (Shute et al. 479). The common denominator of both behaviors is power. More specifically, gendered bullying reveals the power boys have to police gender and sexual norms, and sexual harassment also reveals the power men have to police women's sexuality.

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) has been studying sexual harassment in schools since 1993, with their last survey published in 2011 (Hill and Kears vii). In their national survey of 1965 students (1002 girls) in grades 7 through 12, nearly half, (48 percent) of students surveyed, had experienced some form of sexual harassment, and 87 percent of these students said it had a negative effect on them (Hill and Kears 2). Girls were more likely to be harassed than boys (56 versus 40 percent) (Hill and Kears 2). Unwelcome sexual comments, jokes, and gestures were the most common types of sexual harassment, experienced by 33 percent of students (Hill and Kears 11). Sexual harassment is rarely reported, with only 12 percent of girls who experienced harassment reported the incident to a teacher (Hill and Kears 2-3). This information is

consistent with my participants' experiences; they rarely told teachers about their experiences, though some confided in parents.

Unwanted sexual attention and policing gender norms stem from the idea that it is acceptable to regulate femininity and female sexuality (Hill and Kears 16; Klein 62). Environments that encourage hypermasculinity where masculinity is displayed through aggressive acts, sexist behaviors, and repeated displays of heterosexuality, tend to create inequalities that can lead to sexual harassment and gendered bullying (Klein 76). Bullying and harassment of girls is often a prerequisite to proving manhood and achieving status and popularity for boys (Klein 76). Also, gendered bullying and sexual harassment are so common that students say they are not aware that they are participating in sexual harassment, or that their behavior is hurtful (Klein 67). Hill and Kears found that many students who admitted sexually harassing others did not think it was a big deal (44 percent) and many were trying to be funny (39 percent) (Hill and Kears 3). Shute et al. also found that many boys thought gendered bullying was a joke (486). This suggests that boys are unaware or unwilling to recognize that their actions may bother or harm others, or that the level of harm is acceptable (Hill and Kears 4). Another interpretation is that sexual harassment is initiation into male-dominated society and is therefore seen as normal or even required by the perpetrators. Leaper and Brown found that girls often tolerate or do not recognize sexual harassment when it occurs (685). This fact again reveals that sexual harassment and gendered bullying are normative cruelties. It appears so ordinary and normal to some that it does not seem like a problem, but in fact bullying and harassment are ways of policing femininity and female sexuality.

LGBT Youth Experiences with Bullying: Gender Treachery

We live in a white capitalist patriarchal² society, in which supremacy is predicated on obvious differences: between men and women, rich and poor, and white people and people of colour (Khayatt 49). These differences, many of which people try to prove scientifically as “natural,” must be maintained ideologically (Weedon 95). They can also be maintained through policing in the forms of bullying and harassing behaviors. As I continued my literature review, the idea of gender policing, which is the pressure to conform to gender expectations (Klein 4), became more important to my analysis, and my thoughts turned to the school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) youth.

There have been many stories in the news about young people, some barely teenagers, taking their own lives as a result of homophobic bullying (Hubbard). In Varjas et al.’s review of the literature on bullying and homophobia, LGBT youth suffered similar consequences to other bullied teenagers: depression, anxiety, decreased interest in school, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation and suicide attempts (66). Victims of homophobic bullying may not always be gay, in fact that number may be as high as 70 to 80 percent (Varjas et al. 60). The bullies may not be targeting sexual orientation so much as they are targeting gender presentation, such as a boy who behaves or dresses in a feminine manner, which they assume is a sign of homosexuality. Some of the causes of homophobic bullying include beliefs related to homophobia, heterosexism, and gender

² I draw on Ruth Bleier’s definition of patriarchy: “...the historic system of male dominance, a system committed to the maintenance and reinforcement of male hegemony in all aspects of life ... Its institutions direct and protect the distribution of power and privilege to those who are male, apportioned, however, according to social and economic class and race. Patriarchy takes different forms and develops specific supporting institutions and ideologies during different historical periods and political economies.” (162).

role conformity (Varjas et al. 61). Homophobic bullying is often perpetrated by students who want to assert their position in the heteronormative social order (Meyer 35). Bullying on the basis of sexual orientation, like gendered bullying, involves policing gender boundaries, because homophobia bolsters heterosexist views.

Heterosexism refers to the belief that heterosexuality is morally superior to other sexualities (Hopkins 99). Patrick Hopkins, inspired by Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, uses the term "gender traitor" to describe someone who violates the "rules" of gender identity and/or gender performance (99). His definition is similar to Emma Renold's notion of gender deviants discussed earlier ("Innocence" 428). Hopkins argues that heterosexism underpins homophobia. Heterosexism is built on the binary of heterosexual and homosexual, which is built on the man/woman binary; the first terms are considered positive and superior, the second terms, negative and inferior (Hopkins 100). When a teenager is bullied for being gay,³ what is often being punished is the failure to adhere to the gender binary and the assumption of homosexuality that emerges from that reading. As long as these ideologies go unquestioned and unanalyzed, LGBT youth will continue to be bullied in school (Meyer 41). Gender-nonconforming heterosexual students will continue to suffer under heterosexism as well.

Underlying homophobic bullying is the idea that gender norms need to be policed. The requirements for being "normal" rely on narrow ideals of gender and sexuality (Ward and Mann 236). In their study of homophobic bullying among 11 to 14 year old boys, Phoenix et al. found that the boys' identities were policed for failing to conform to a core,

³ It is important to state that for LGBT youth, bullying is also an issue of sexuality as well as gender presentation.

heterosexist notion of appropriate masculinity, and those who did not conform were punished through verbal taunts and peer rejection (188). Policing has the dual effect of punishing boys who transgress the hegemonic norm, and reinforcing the boundaries of “normal” masculinity (Phoenix et al. 188). Wayne Martino argues that policing heterosexual masculinities is framed in terms of identifying sex-inappropriate practices, which makes heterosexuality seem natural and superior (224). Struggles around sexuality are connected to struggles around gender, and the homophobia and heterosexism found within schools derives from and feeds misogynistic versions of masculinity (Epstein 105; Khayatt 50). The heterosexism found in a school means LGBT youth are the stigmatized Other, and as that Other, they fuel the regime’s heterosexism (Smith 309). Although my participants identified as heterosexual, the literature on homophobic bullying is useful to my project because researchers often view it as a result of gender policing, which stems from heterosexism, and perceived deviation from a norm.

Bros Being Bros: The Bullies

For my participants, their bullies were boys⁴ in their classes. The bullies were popular, much more so than the participants, and often athletic. They displayed a “proper” masculinity which was valued in the school culture. “Normalized masculinity” is often an underlying factor in sexual harassment and gendered bullying (Shute et al. 488). This idea of the bullies being “normal” is reflected in Dan Olweus’ research. He found that bullies have little anxiety and insecurity, do not suffer from poor self-esteem, and they also display little empathy for the victim (Olweus 34). Rigby found that bullies may appear

⁴ My participants also told me about being bullied by girls, but this thesis is not about those experiences.

happy and extroverted (45). Some researchers posit that bullies may engage in antagonistic behavior because they have a strong need for power, and bullying brought them benefits and rewards such as social dominance (Cantrell 6; Hymel and Swearer, 296; Juvonen and Graham 178). In the case of gendered bullying, my participants' bullies achieved social dominance in part through humiliating girls.

The Kid Eating Alone: Bullying Victims

From popular culture, we have a notion of what victims of bullying are like: socially awkward, "different," perhaps overweight, or the new kid. Dan Olweus found that typical victims are often cautious, sensitive, and quiet (32). They have low self-esteem, are lonely, and have few, if any, close friends (Olweus 32). If bullying is about relationships of power, then in this context the victims have little if any power, and are thus a person few students would want to associate with (Rigby 33). They are seen as deviating from the norm for being overweight, having a disability, or perceived homosexuality (Juvonen and Graham 178). In a benign environment, this type of person may not be bullied, but in an intense, competitive environment like some schools, they frequently become prime targets for harassment (Rigby 33). In the case of my participants, they deviated from gender norms in schools where these norms were strictly enforced.

Popular students and those students of the lowest social status, (Eder et al. call them "isolates"), have something in common; they are both highly visible, but for very different reasons (49). For isolates, the visibility is painful and embarrassing because the attention is negative, while their popular peers appear to enjoy their level of visibility

(Eder et al. 49). Female isolates are bullied for their perceived unattractiveness, in particular their lack of sexual attractiveness to boys (Eder et al. 50). In general, isolates have few ways to escape from their unpopular position, since so few people are willing to befriend them (Eder et al. 54, 119). My participants were all marked as different in some way, Mida even identified as an outcast. Chloe was a new girl, quiet and not stereotypically feminine. Anne mentioned that she was overweight, and again, not typically feminine. Mida saw herself as overweight, and spoke her mind in a school where girls were expected to conform, and Jackie identified as a larger girl living among thin country club girls. The boys, acting as gender police, bullied my participants for being different, something that has had both short- and long-term effects on them.

Bullying's Impact on Victims

Short-Term Effects

In everyday discussions, and from my own bullying experiences, I have found that some people try to downplay bullying by saying it is a stage that children go through, or that it is a rite of passage. To see bullying as a rite of passage is not to see it as a problem, or at least a very minor issue. It is now widely accepted that a situation that causes mental and emotional stress can produce anxiety and depression, and may affect physical health as well (Rigby 124). Bullying can have a detrimental impact on children and adolescents' physical and mental health (Gruber and Fineran 636). Some researchers frame the effects of bullying as developmental, as one that affects the transition from childhood to adolescence (Carlisle and Rofes 23). School bullying in adolescence can have a negative impact because as children become teenagers, their identities are influenced by

relationships with peers as much as or more than familial relationships, and if these peer relationships are negative, they can have short- and long-term effects (Carlisle and Rofes 23). At the same time, the pressure to conform to gender roles can intensify, and the punishments for not conforming become serious. Many of the long-term problems involve low self-esteem and personal relationship issues (Ledley et al. 37). Ken Rigby has found that victims do not adapt to being harassed, and those who endure the most bullying are most likely to experience low self-esteem (107). This is because being victimized may strengthen the child's belief that she is not very successful in interacting with others, which in turn may lead to more bullying (Rigby 108). The literature reveals that gendered bullying is a negative experience, often with serious consequences for the victims.

Bullying victims often internalize their experiences. Victims often suffer from depression, and also have higher rates of absenteeism and physical health complaints (Espelage and Swearer 373). Being bullied can also lead to anxious behaviors, which may perpetuate victimization and lead to more anxiety (Espelage and Swearer 373). Research suggests that bullying often negatively impacts girls more than boys. For example, a Finnish study of over 16000 adolescents found that bullied girls are eight times more likely to be suicidal than their peers, compared to four times more likely for bullied boys (Kaltiala-Heino et al. 349). Victimized girls also have higher rates of depression compared to boys (Bond et al. 483; Espelage and Swearer 373). In their multisite, four-year study, Esbensen and Carson found that girls were more likely to be repeat victims than boys, and repeat victims reported more fear of victimization in school, higher

perceived risk of victimization, and perceived the school environment as less safe (221). Clearly, gender is an important factor to consider when studying the impact of bullying.

There are several reasons as to why bullying is such a stressful experience. For those who are bullied, school can be like a day prison (Klein 239), as they have little control over what happens to them and no status or group to protect them. Like prison, bullying can sometimes be more than the victim can endure (Rigby 123). Bullying can be unpredictable and confusing to the victim, reducing their ability to cope, and can feel humiliating, which makes the victim more vulnerable to bullying (Rigby 123). It can be difficult for a victim to stop or escape bullying. Changing schools is not always an option, and the victim may become isolated and stressed (Rigby 124). As bullying continues, the victim may experience learned helplessness in the absence of any support (Rigby 124). Bullying can be stressful while it is happening, and there can also be long-term consequences for victims.

Long-Term Effects

Does bullying have a significant impact on victims when they are adults? A 2015 research synthesis found that victims continue to experience the effects of bullying after it has ended, and it can lead to “maladjustment” in adulthood (McDougall and Vaillancourt 307). In their survey of undergraduate students, Roth Ledley et al. found that frequent teasing during adolescence was associated with less comfort with intimacy, less comfort in trusting and depending on others, a greater degree of worry about being unloved or abandoned in relationships, and poorer self-esteem (37). Ledley et al.’s study is representative of other research that recruits undergraduate students as participants in

large-scale studies, often measuring bullying impact through surveys and questionnaires. This type of research, while essential, fails to capture older victims and those victims who have no postsecondary education. Few studies of the long-term impact of bullying have been conducted (Juvonen and Graham 175), and very few have been qualitative studies. One such study was conducted by Nicholas Carlisle and Eric Rofes, who administered lengthy questionnaires to fifteen men. The men reported feeling shame, anxiety, and relational difficulties as adults as a result of their school bullying experiences (Carlisle and Rofes 16). These studies suggest that low self-esteem and problems with relationships in adulthood are two of the major long-term consequences of being bullied in school.

Dan Olweus's study of Swedish bullying victims found that most victims had "normalized"⁵ as young adults at age 23 because they had more freedom, or power, to choose their own social and physical environments (Olweus 33). However, Olweus found that bullying victims were also more likely to be depressed and had poorer self-esteem; the persistent bullying had "left its scars on their minds" (Olweus 32). Retrospective studies have shown that bullying can have a significant effect on the victim's ability to form intimate relationships (Rigby 110). Victims may also have difficulty trusting friends, asking for support, and developing confidence: "Rather than develop their humanity, they find themselves wounded and undermined" (Klein 235). In this section I explored gendered bullying, its prevalence, described bullies and victims, and the short-

⁵ Olweus does not explain what he means by "normalized."

and long-term effects on the victims. Bullying is about power, the power of norms and the power some people have to cite those norms and police those who deviate from them.

Part 2: Bullying in Context

In this section I want to explore the larger forces beyond the school that can influence bullying. We live in a neoliberal culture, which has implications for how we think about bullying, and also how we understand masculinity and femininity.

The Bully Economy: Neoliberalism

Bullying occurs on intimate and global scales. Just as children have power struggles on the playground, the worlds of professional sports, politics, and business are concerned with power as well (Rigby 74). These worlds may seem disparate, but an ideology of domination runs through them all. What does power mean in the Western context? A power relation studied in isolation from its cultural and institutional context is easily perceived as an anomaly and not part of a larger system of domination (Allen 268). I want to discuss neoliberalism because in order to understand bullying, we need to comprehend the total context in which bullying occurs (Rigby 43), and neoliberal ideology influences behavior. Neoliberalism refers to policies of free trade which maximize corporate profits and social policies that reduce or dismantle the social safety net (W. Brown 39). Neoliberalism is the belief that the market knows best, and market values are not just applied to the economy, but to all institutions and social action via social policy (W. Brown 43). Under neoliberalism, people only have worth in terms of the marketplace (Deresiewicz 26). In other words, neoliberalism seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market (Harvey 3). Neoliberal governance also includes “*the*

psychological internalization of individual responsabilization” (Gill and Scharff 6, emphasis in original). What this means is that people are thought to have an unlimited number of choices, and they are not hindered by barriers such as race, ability, age, or gender, and that they alone are responsible for the choices they make. Neoliberalism has implications for how people view themselves, others, and the world.

While neoliberalism stresses that people are free to make their own choices, in reality their choices are shaped by a small number of people in power (Braedley and Luxton 11). The strength of neoliberal ideologies lie in the fact that they appear to be common sense, based on liberal concepts of individualism, choice, and freedom, where success depends on hard work and making “good” choices (Luxton 174, 180). In this environment, the individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices, but some fail to do so (McRobbie, “Post-Feminism” 261). One of the most insidious features of neoliberalism is its denial of inequalities such as race, gender, and ability (Luxton 175), which can make it more difficult to address complex issues at the societal level.

Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on competition, individualism, and personal choice, has affected every aspect of our culture, including education and gender relations, which Klein calls the “bully economy” (5). These ideologies, coupled with sexism and misogyny, have helped institutionalize harmful aspects of masculinity such as aggression and dominance, and has intensified gender policing (Klein 5). People learn to acquire different types of capital, and children who are found wanting often cannot fulfill their potential. In this way the “bully culture” circumscribes their lives (Klein 12). Schools are

microcosms of our society, and therefore can be influenced by neoliberal ideology and policies.

Hierarchies are seen as a normal part of social life, and they could not exist in schools if the larger society did not accept them as well (Klein 39). We live in a world where “humanity [that] is so geared to winning that those who are unable to win are pushed down. Right from the beginning...it’s success” that matters (Vanier quoted in I. Brown F3). Institutions influenced by neoliberal ideology, such as many schools, create a culture where there are clear “winners” and “losers” (Ringrose and Renold, “Normative” 575). The results of a competitive, winner-take-all neoliberal mentality can be found everywhere, including in the schools of one of the wealthiest communities in North America. Teenagers in Palo Alto, California, a town close to Silicon Valley, have committed suicide at rates five times higher than the national average (Rosin). One former student said the Palo Alto schools fostered “competitive insanity,” another said “...I thought there would never be any escape” (Rosin). Their comments reveal that neoliberalism is often seen as the final statement in how the world works, and there is no way to change it; the only “choice” is to change yourself.

Students are told that financial wealth and superficial gender markers are required to be accepted, and being known as the richest, prettiest, or most athletic student will dramatically enhance their futures (Klein 155). Schools that foster this sort of climate reflect our less compassionate, less empathetic society (Klein 177). The idea of neoliberalism as not only an economic policy but also a mindset is useful for my study of gendered bullying. It posits that those who fail to live up to neoliberal ideas of girl and

womanhood are simply not trying hard enough, and should be punished, much like those who cannot find employment are not working hard enough, and deserve to live on meager social assistance, or no assistance at all.

Super Girls: Being a Girl in a Neoliberal World

Neoliberalism has some gendered aspects, at both the individual and societal levels. On the economic level, the loss of the social safety net in advanced capitalist countries has had particularly negative effects on working class and poor women, because neoliberal governments refuse to acknowledge collective responsibility for social reproduction, for example, not investing in education, health care, and child care (Braedley and Luxton 15; Harvey 170). Gill and Scharff suggest that neoliberalism is always already gendered, and women are constructed as its ideal subjects because women are required to transform themselves and regulate every aspect of their appearance and behavior (7). This means that neoliberalism impacts women on the economic level, and also on the personal level, through how they think about themselves and present themselves to the world.

There is a close relationship between neoliberalism and postfeminism. Postfeminism is an ideological double movement, it takes feminism into account, while also repudiating it (Gill and Scharff 4). Postfeminism suggests that equality has been achieved in order to emphasize that it is no longer needed (McRobbie, "Post-Feminism" 255). Similarly, neoliberalism posits that we have reached the "end of history" and there is no new historical era on the horizon, only more neoliberalism (Deresiewicz 28). Under postfeminism young women are offered certain choices in exchange for rejecting a

feminist politics (Gill and Scharff 4). For example, a woman can pursue any job she chooses, but is not given the option of universal daycare if she decides to have children. A postfeminist sensibility tells women that they can do anything, but it elides the fact that social inequalities are real hindrances, which reveals postfeminism's neoliberal roots.

In a postfeminist world, femininity is increasingly thought of as a bodily property. We can see evidence of this sensibility in the dominance of a "makeover paradigm," the constant sexualization of girls and women's bodies, and a resurgence of the idea of natural sexual difference. There is also a strong emphasis on individualism, empowerment, and choice. Neoliberal rhetoric obfuscates the generating forces behind personal choice (Bordo, *Twilight* 38). These themes co-exist with and are structured by stark inequalities and exclusions that relate to race, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, and ability (Gill and Scharff 4). Ideas of the "social" and "political" have been replaced by individualism, which in turn can make it difficult for feminist activism to effect change at a political level.

In part because of the impact of neoliberalism and postfeminism, women are expected to embody "feminine" virtues such as emotionality and being accommodating, but they must also learn to embody the "masculine" values of self-control and an overall sense of mastery (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* 171). The postfeminist woman must be "tough and cool, but warm and alluring" (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* 173), difficult attributes for most women to embody simultaneously. Angela McRobbie calls this girl who balances the expectations of neoliberal girlhood the "phallic girl," one who appears to be bold, confident, and aggressive ("Top Girls" 732). However, these traits are only a

temporary form of phallicism, and it is predicated on the refusal to critique hegemonic masculinity, for fear of losing power gained within a hegemonic masculine regime (McRobbie, "Top Girls" 732). The phallic girl and woman appears to have gained equality in that she can rise in the ranks at work, express a dislike for feminism, and, feeling safe that she has gained some privilege as long as she conforms to a male-dominated world, feels no need to challenge hegemonic masculinity (McRobbie, "Top Girls" 733). However, that power has a price when women must act in ways that are objectifying (L. Brown et al. 1268). The phallic girl or woman is also at risk for a range of possible punishments, such as gendered bullying, which causes anxiety and pain for those women and girls who misread or refuse to follow the rules (McRobbie, "Top Girls" 733). The concepts of neoliberalism and postfeminism affects how girls see themselves, and sets up the idea there are clear winners and losers when it comes to performing femininity.

When one type of person is ridiculed, usually another type of person is idealized. One of the aims of the gendered socialization of early adolescence is to achieve a desirable, properly gendered, sexual reputation (Duncan 139). This reputation is won in competition, so there must be a "gold standard" embodied in one girl or a group of girls, which often becomes a fetishized identity. It must be composed of a combination of traits and attributes that, alone, are attainable by the majority, but combined, becomes nearly impossible to acquire (Duncan 139). This is one way to describe super girls. The idea of the super girl involves performing positions usually attributed to femininity such as caring and emotionality, and those attributed to masculinity, such as rationality and

assertiveness, all while appearing effortlessly beautiful (Ringrose and Walkerdine 10). For my participants, the super girls were popular, attractive, did well in school, were athletic, and/or heavily involved in school activities.

I suggest that some girls are bullied because they are not performing femininity “correctly.” As they enter adolescence, girls can feel pressure to embody what are often contradictory masculine and feminine characteristics (Ringrose and Walkerdine 7). Girls who fail to embody these characteristics exist outside the boundaries of normative girlhood and appropriate models of neoliberal subjectivity, and when this happens, they are often regarded by other students as gender deviants (Ringrose and Walkerdine 12-13). Being labeled a “gender deviant” can have deleterious effects on children and adolescents. For girls, an emphasis on beauty, attractiveness, and dating may cause stress and negative health outcomes regarding their appearance and peer group status (Gruber and Fineran 634). In this thesis, I examine the idea that girls who do not embody neoliberal femininity may be more susceptible to gendered bullying within an aggressively masculine school culture.

It would seem that one of the central issues facing many middle-class girls is having to embody masculine assertiveness and feminine passivity (Ringrose and Walkerdine 7). Some aspects of the mainstream media shows that being assertive, clever, and beautiful yet still nurturing is easy to achieve, yet in real life meeting this ideal is impossible, but anything less than perfection is seen as a personal failure (Ringrose and Walkerdine 10, 13). Beyond the boundaries of normative girlhood and neoliberal subjectivity are the Others, those who embody deviant or failed femininity. They are “in

danger of slipping into unmanageable excess,” for example through pregnancy, dropping out of school, or violence (Ringrose and Walkerdine 12). The gender police expect constant proof of normative femininity, and their bullying can take the forms of aggressive acts, sexist behaviors, and repeated displays of heterosexuality (Klein 89; Pascoe 89). For my participants, the boys regulating those borders are policing from a position of hegemonic masculinity, which I discuss further in the next section.

The Boys at the Back of the Bus: Bullying, Masculinity, and Aggression

In this research project, I was limited by the fact that I did not interview any men who self-identified as being a bully as an adolescent. However, I was able to explore some factors that may contribute to gendered bullying, such as neoliberal views of masculinity. Jessie Klein asked her undergraduate students to describe the qualities needed to be successful in our society. They came up with competitive, aggressive, and powerful, words they associated with masculinity (Klein 156). Although there are many different ways to “do” masculinity, certain aspects seem to dominate. Connell calls this hegemonic masculinity, which is the gender practice that provides legitimacy to patriarchy, and ensures that men are dominant and women are subordinate (*Masculinities* 77). It is important to note that hegemonic masculinity is not an unchanging monolith. Rather, masculinity is a process and a field through which power is articulated, rather than an endless list of practices performed by individuals (Pascoe 13). The definition of masculinity is not universal but context specific, with other definitions of masculinity are found in different areas and different times (Pascoe 14). Regional and local constructs of hegemonic masculinity are shaped through the articulation of these gender systems within

global processes (Connell and Messerschmidt 849). Men might take their cues not only from the men around them, but those in the media, or the global arena.

An aspect of school climate⁶ that is relevant to gendered bullying is a culture of aggressive masculinity that is often driven by athletics. While masculinity and femininity can take multiple forms within a single school, one form is often the most predominant and valued over others (Eder et al. 94). In Donna Eder et al.'s ethnographic study of a middle school in the American Midwest, being male was tied to being aggressive. Sports placed a strong emphasis on aggressiveness, and many of the high-status boys were athletes (Eder et al. 98). Similarly, in Wayne Martino's interviews with Australian teenage boys, he found that the dominant group of boys, known as "the footballers," had power and policed other boys' masculinity through homophobic name-calling (231). Adolescent boys often use homophobic remarks as a way to gain status within their peer group, demonstrate their masculinity, and perpetuate the subordination of gender non-conforming youth (Varjas et al. 64). Their aggressive masculinity can affect all students in the school, not just other boys or LGBT youth. In this culture, young men are encouraged to be surly, hostile, and violent, displaying what may be called a hyper heterosexuality or masculinity (Faludi 37). Klein, in her wide-ranging interviews with current and former students on bullying, found that boys were expected to display a "flamboyant heterosexuality," which involves dressing in a masculine fashion, disparaging girls, bragging about sexual exploits, and beating up smaller boys (Klein 90).

⁶ School climate refers to feelings and attitudes toward school, student teacher relationships, and student-peer relationships (Wilson 294).

Through these and similar actions adolescent boys construct a gender identity, which is sometimes built on abusing and bullying girls.

As boys become more concerned with displaying an aggressive masculinity and sexuality, girls are often caught in the position of being treated like sexual objects, not actors (Eder et al. 101). In my thesis, I am interested in learning if the hegemonic masculinity of the broader culture outside of school contributes to gendered bullying. Hypermasculinity is shaped by socioeconomic factors, yet is rarely examined in this context (Klein 156). Prior to neoliberalism's ascendance, men often displayed their masculinity through their work, such as manufacturing. In her book *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, Susan Faludi argues that as the North American economy became more industrialized and service-oriented, many men have lost this outlet, and are now more heavily invested in displaying their masculinity through bodily performances (30). Perceptions of masculinity have changed over time, and it has implications for how women are treated.

Compulsive or hyper heterosexuality consists of sexualized practices, discourses, and interactions, it is not just a sexual orientation but also a political institution (Pascoe 86). Practices of compulsive heterosexuality indicate that control over women's bodies and their sexuality is still central to adolescent masculinity. By dominating girls' bodies, boys defended against being seen as gay, increased their social status, forged bonds of solidarity with other boys, and defined their masculinity in terms of mastery and dominance (Pascoe 87, 114). Few, if any, boys and men live up to ideal of hegemonic masculinity, just as few girls and women live up to the ideal of hegemonic femininity.

However, many men benefit from the hegemonic order, because if they invest in it they can withdraw a “patriarchal dividend,” which is the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women (Connell, *Masculinities* 79).⁷ The patriarchal dividend is paid out in terms of honour, prestige, and the right to command, and it is also material in the fact that men make more money than women and hold more power (Connell, *Masculinities* 82). Boys withdraw the patriarchal dividend of social prestige when they bully a girl because she is considered gender deviant.

Boys are expected to provide constant proof of their emerging adult masculinity in the form of aggressive acts such as sports (Frosh et al, 10), and sexist behaviors (Klein 89). This is an example of Judith Butler’s notion that one must perform their heterosexuality over and over to prove its legitimacy (“Imitation” 24). Because, as Susan Faludi argues, masculinity is not an inner resource, rather it is something a man must acquire (35), much like a woman is not considered heteronormative unless she looks and behaves in a recognizably feminine manner. In the current climate of masculinity, schools become training grounds for boys to become sexist by associating masculinity with violence, sexism, and heterosexism, and as a result a school culture of violence and bullying persists (Klein 54). Through bullying, boys can affirm their masculinity and in turn their popularity, or dominance. Boys learn how to live in the “unbelievably arid and limiting version of manhood that this culture offers” (Flinders 43).

⁷ Here, Connell uses a stock market metaphor, which will be seen again in the theory chapter with Pierre Bourdieu, who also uses economic metaphors to discuss social life.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the nature of gendered bullying and some societal and cultural factors that may contribute to it. The term gendered bullying is used to explain the gender structures underlying some bullying behaviors (Shute et al. 477). Gendered bullying involves policing gender performances that are not considered “proper” or heteronormative. For my participants, they were considered “gender deviants” and were bullied as a result. The literature on bullying demonstrates that being a bullying victim can have serious short- and long-term impacts on victims. Literature on sexual harassment and bullying of LGBT youth is also useful to my thesis, because both gendered bullying and sexual harassment involve gendered power relations and sexism, and homophobic bullying and gendered bullying have gender policing and heterosexism in common. Gendered bullying occurs within a larger framework of neoliberalism, which emphasizes choice, competition, and individualism, and postfeminism, which constructs the “super girl” as the ideal all girls must embody. A culture of aggressive masculinity also contributes to gendered bullying. In the next chapter, I discuss feminist theories that examine the power of norms and socially constructed gendered roles.

Chapter 3

Theory: How We Got to Normal

While researching bullying and talking to participants, the concept of power arose frequently. The theme of power in terms of policing gender norms and how it relates to gendered bullying is what I will discuss in this chapter. I will also discuss concepts of time and memory to explore the long-term impact of gendered bullying. As I demonstrated in my literature review, gendered bullying can be understood as stemming from a culture that fosters (hetero)sexism, aggressive masculinity, and neoliberal idea(l)s of gender. In order to study these phenomena, I require theories that situate my participants' experiences within a framework of norms and domination that is particularly harmful to girls and women, and can account for the impact bullying had and continues to have on their lives. Using a feminist lens allows me to demonstrate that my participant's experiences are not isolated incidents (Conroy 346). I can then understand how structural power differences between men and women are reflected in the school setting (Conroy 348). I draw on theories of norms, discipline, and heteronormativity to understand the systemic nature of gendered bullying.

Seeing Through a Feminist Lens: The Personal is Still Political

Feminism as an idea and a movement spans centuries, countries, and cultures. One of the most well-known slogans from second wave feminism of the 1960s and 70s, and one that is still relevant today, is "the personal is political" (Hanisch 113-116). Through feminism, women realized that their experiences were not something that happened to them as isolated individuals, their experiences were influenced by politics and were

therefore political (hooks *Margin* 24). Feminism and feminist theory can be used to reveal how women's lives are influenced by larger systems of domination and oppression, such as sexist, hegemonic idea(l)s of gender. Therefore one goal of feminism is to “end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (hooks *Everybody* viii). It is a “struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture” (hooks *Margin* 24). Kate Millet argues that men's domination over women is “perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power” (25). The ideology of domination and power affects every aspect of women's lives, including my participants' experiences with bullying in school, a part of so-called ordinary life. Feminism, in order to understand women's experiences and subordination, must be committed to examining ordinary life (Frye, xi; hooks, “Theory,” 2; Moi, “Examples,” 193). In my thesis, I draw on feminist theories and feminist interpretations of theories in order to understand my participants' experiences of gendered bullying.

Doing feminist theory can be a critical and political practice. Its purpose is to understand and improve the position of women (Mann 9). Feminist theory states that gender is a socially constructed, hegemonic ideology, and aims to uncover the specific consequences of that construction (Moi, “Bourdieu,” 1019). It is not enough to describe reality, rather, the broader view of the “politics of society as a whole” must be considered, in other words, systems of domination (hooks *Margin* 25).¹ Gender is one of those systems of domination. Gender is a construction that endures and becomes a social fact with real effects on people (Moi, “Bourdieu,” 1031, 1036). One reason why it endures is

¹ I explored how the system of domination works in terms of the economic and political ideology through neoliberalism in the Literature Review chapter.

that it appears to be “natural” and “normal,” which obscures the socially produced power relations between men and women (Moi, “Bourdieu,” 1030). Because being a woman has negative, often serious consequences in a patriarchal society, it is vital to explore and deconstruct women’s experiences, but a deconstruction remains “politically toothless” unless it also uncovers the societal interests at stake in the construction (Moi, “Bourdieu,” 1036). I draw on theories that help to interpret my participants’ experiences of gendered bullying and filter these theories through a feminist lens. From my literature review and my interviews, I learned that bullying occurs in a societal context of competition, normality, and sexism, and bullying affects girls differently than boys. This knowledge in turn affected the theories I chose to employ in my analysis.

Two ideas that drive feminist theory are women’s oppression and the socially constructed gender roles of “woman” and “girl.” I draw on theories that further explore these notions in the context of school bullying. Bullying is a complex issue and requires more than one theory to understand it. Academics can be resistant to drawing on different theories to make sense of a phenomenon (Moi, “Examples,” 199). However, Women’s Studies is multidisciplinary, and reflecting that aspect of the discipline, I have chosen theories that I believe best describe some of the underlying issues of gendered bullying, and could be applied to my participants’ experiences. I chose the theories of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Pierre Bourdieu to better understand why hegemonic gender and social norms exist and how they are enforced. I also draw on the work of Rebecca Coleman and Gilles Deleuze to explore how memory impacts the long-term effects of bullying. Foucault and feminist theorists influenced by his work explore the way norms

operates in society, Judith Butler describes how gender roles are socially constructed as norms and why they are enforced, while Pierre Bourdieu is interested in how those in power acquire, maintain, and display their power through embodying the norm, which has consequences for bullying victims. Feminism fuels my inquiry, and I chose theories that allowed me to explore the issues that emerged in the literature review and interviews; “normalcy,” gender policing, and the impact of past experiences on the present.

Michel Foucault: Power Shifts

Although a majority of researchers define bullying as a power issue, few have unpacked what power means in this context, which is the power to cite and enforce a norm, in the case of gendered bullying, the gender norm. There are two ways I want to discuss power. One is the “new” ways of thinking about power, where power is thought of in terms of discipline and hegemonic norms. The other way is the “older” form, in terms of repression and oppression, where power is enacted in visible, often public ways. Both forms of power circulate today (Ward and Mann 221), and bullying can be thought of in terms of both the old and new forms of power. Bullying can be a cruel display of power and it can also reveal the subtle, disciplinary nature of gender norms.

Foucault explores how the notion of power has changed over the last few hundred years. Prior to the 18th century, power was visible and spectacular. Monarchs or others in authority enacted public, brutal punishments on their subjects as a way to control the population, and also to display their power (*Discipline* 216). Foucault argues that beginning in the 18th century there was a shift in how punishment was carried out. Violent punishments such as torture and beheadings gave way to more subtle and

insidious forms of discipline, framed in terms of “norms” (*Discipline* 136). He conceives of power in terms of discipline, the subtle coercion of supervising activity, which leads to bodily control (Foucault *Discipline* 137). Foucault is interested in how bodies become docile, that is, self-manageable and quantifiable (Ward and Mann 223). While disciplinary power is invisible, at the same time it makes those it is subjected to visible, and it is in being constantly viewed that allows the individual to participate in and regulate his or her own discipline (*Discipline* 187). Central to Foucault’s conception of discipline is Jeremy Bentham’s notion of the panopticon, a model of penitential or other disciplinary institutions, where the prisoners are seen, but they cannot see their jailers, and thus they begin to regulate themselves (*Discipline* 202). Where before a ruler's attention was on the person being punished, now the attention of those in power is on everyone so they would behave “normally.” Foucault argues that panopticism creates a disciplinary society. As he writes, “our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance” (*Discipline* 217). With the surveillance power of the internet, drones, and smartphones, and video cameras in stores, streets, and private homes, in no other time in history has this idea been more fully realized.

This idea of discipline through surveillance is congruent with the neoliberal world we live in today, where we are expected to self-regulate and consume many products in order to do this, and surveillance is so widespread in part to protect the assets of the wealthy and control the poor. Despite power manifested as pervasive surveillance that leads to self-regulation, Foucault stresses that disciplinary power has not completely replaced more obvious and/or violent forms of power, rather the two are linked together,

making it possible to bring the effects of power to the micro level of a society (*Discipline* 216). I see these two forms of power in my participants' bullying stories. Citing a norm, the bullies publicly humiliated and policed my participants' gendered behaviors and marked them as other, thus linking the old and new forms of power.

Power in the form of discipline also creates ranks and hierarchies. Classifying and distributing people along a scale or norm disqualifies and invalidates those who do not meet the norm (*Discipline* 223). This mode of thinking has consequences for the way we think about the body, and the female body in particular. At the end of the 18th century, the “calculable body” emerged, one that could be weighed, measured, and ranked according to a norm (Huff 46). The individual body is compared to a body that does not so much reflect an average that exists in reality, but a cultural ideal, and in this system physical differences become aberrations (Huff 45). Those who do not measure up to scientific and/or social standards of normalcy are considered abnormal, and are targeted for correction and exclusion (Ward and Mann 223). This idea is at work in the next section, in the way women are expected to measure and weigh themselves and then correct various aspects of their bodies based on these measurements. The calculable body is an example of the importance of norms, and how disciplinary power affects the minutest elements of our bodies.

Michel Foucault is interested in how discipline operates on micro levels of social interaction, and how norms can become internalized and taken for granted. However, Foucault does not consider how men and women are disciplined and experience norms differently. As Judith Butler says, Foucault has a “problematic indifference to sexual

difference” (*Gender Trouble* xxxiii). Some feminist scholars have taken up Foucault’s conceptions of norms and discipline and have used them to describe and understand women’s experiences of oppression. I will discuss some of these applications in the next section.

Get Small: The Feminist Applications of Foucault

Foucault explains how norms develop and how they influence behavior, and feminist theorists explain how norms influence women. As Caitlin Moran says, many women perform feminine maintenance not to look like a model, that is, an exceptional example of hegemonic femininity, but rather just to look “normal” (44). In this section, I explore what “normal” means for women in Western culture. Although some women seem to have more freedom under neoliberalism, the older ideas of women taking up less space and being silent still remain, because under neoliberal postfeminism, women have some power, but their power is based on upholding hegemonic gender norms and rejecting feminism (Gill and Scharff 4). Women have gained power, but in a postfeminist world, they are still expected to exude a “proper” femininity. For example, Michelle Obama broke barriers by being the first African American First Lady. Although many admire her toned physique, she has also been criticized for displaying a muscular and therefore “mannish” body (J. Stein). In my research I found that bullies frequently attacked my participants’ physical appearances. Jackie, Anne, and Mida especially felt singled out for being overweight. Anne and Chloe were bullied for not being “feminine” enough. I explore this idea of “proper” femininity, and what it means not to have it, below.

The ideal female body is a manifestation of misogynist, racist, and classist norms borne from a culture that devalues women. The ideal woman's body is disciplinary in that women learn to discipline themselves, and internalize the norms of femininity (Hartley 62). The disciplined body can be seen as a larger system of subordination, one that still sees women as inferior to men (Bartky 85). In her book *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, Sandra Lee Bartky uses Foucault's conception of discipline and applies it to women's lives. Under the old forms of power, husbands and fathers enforced patriarchal authority, and the state and church also had the power to correct and control women (Bartky 79). As the old forms of domination receded, although they did not disappear, new forms rose up. Normalizing technologies of self-improvement contribute to the systematic objectification of some women as abnormal (Ward and Mann 223). Women as an advertising demographic, regardless of age, race, or sexual orientation, are told how to look and behave, but women also receive cues from friends, family, and the wider world on how to be "properly" feminine, or docile.

Women's bodies are rendered docile through regulating the body's size, shape, posture, and gestures (Bartky 80). The feminine body should not suggest unruliness or "too much." It also suggests that women who do not discipline themselves are defective or deviant, which is reflected in advertising that tells women, overtly or covertly, that their bodies are deficient (Bartky 71). Becoming a "proper" girl or woman requires a great deal of time, money, and effort. Everyone to some degree will fail to become the ideal, and women often feel shame for being deficient (Bartky 72). Discipline through the pressure to embody hegemonic femininity is complementary to our neoliberal society.

Thinness is woven into the rhetoric of health, fitness, and advanced capitalism in order to maintain high levels of consumption (Bartky 80). Also, advertisers have co-opted the feminist idea of “empowerment” to sell everything from plastic surgery to pore minimizer in a move feminist critic Andi Zeisler calls “empowertisement.” Performing heteronormative femininity does not appear patriarchal because women discipline themselves freely, not because a man told them to (Bartky 80). However, women who self-police their femininity do so to earn favor in a male-dominated world and to please the male gaze (Bartky 80). Although femininity and compulsory heteronormativity are disciplinary in nature, there is no formal institutional structure. No one goes to “girl school,” which creates the impression that the production of femininity is voluntary or “natural” (Bartky 75). There is no need for “girl school” because it is all around us, in our families, schools, the streets, and the media. Everyone knows what the ideal is for women. The ideal is for women to conform to hegemonic femininity, but for the women who cannot or will not conform, what penalties and punishments do they face?

Sandra Lee Bartky expands on Foucault’s conception of power to explain the production of “ideal” femininity. Cecilia Hartley argues that Bartky does not link the male construction of the ideal female body with hate and contempt for the bodies that cannot or will not mold to those ideals (63). Since many women do not fit the ideal for one reason or another, it makes sense to further describe their rejection. Women who do not fit the ideal are seen as freaks and losers, unworthy of admiration or love (Hartley 64). These women are treated with derision, one that can be tied to women’s personal freedom (Hartley 63). Hartley primarily focuses on fat women, but I believe her argument applies

to other aspects of “failed” femininity as well. Women who are overweight, too loud, or take up space are “too much.” In other ways, they are seen as lacking, “not enough,” not making enough of an effort to be beautiful and thin. In a world where women are bound, they have “let themselves go” (Hartley 63). Women who do not conform to the cultural ideal are seen as violating prescribed sexual roles, which are a threat to existing power structures (Hartley 64-65). These women are punished in various ways. Writer Ashleigh Shackelford recounts what happened when she spoke her mind at a party: “...I was punched in the face by a guy who felt like I talked too much shit and, thus, deserved to be put in my place. When he hit me, more men laughed with him than those who came to my rescue.” Hartley notes that women who are “too much” and have “let themselves go” do offer a form of resistance in that they reject sexually stereotyped roles through taking up space and refusing to be perfect (70). I found this to be true in my participants’ interviews, however, there is a price to pay for this resistance.

Although some women have more power today than perhaps ever before, women still cannot gain physical power as well as economic and political power, if she does she is in rebellion against male power structures and all that is feminine (Bartky 65). Even as femininity is regulated and disciplined, as I mentioned in the literature review, women and girls are expected to embody the “masculine” language and values of self-control, emotional discipline, and mastery (Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* 171). This current ideal of the “perfect” woman is impossible to live up to. Virginie Despentes writes of her, “...I for one have never met her, not anywhere. My hunch is that she doesn’t exist” (11). But she does exist in women’s minds, and in our culture as an ideal to strive for, lest they lose the

privileges that come along with it. I have examined notions of discipline and norms and how they apply to hegemonic notions of femininity, now I turn to Judith Butler and the social construction of gender roles.

Where the Mongrels Live: Judith Butler's Heterosexual Matrix

Judith Butler is interested in how norms can foreclose on certain identities and possibilities regarding gender. She argues that heterosexuality is a compulsory performance that determines the norm, and defying the norm brings with it the potential for ostracism, punishment, and violence (Butler, "Imitation" 24), which is something other researchers have also emphasized (Bartky 76; Hartley 64; Ward and Mann 223). We live in a heterosexual matrix, which is a "hegemonic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to make sense, there must be a fixed sex expressed through a fixed gender that is defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 208). In plain language, what this means is that we are gendered, our world is both gendered and arranged in terms of hierarchies and norms, and therefore we must look and behave in a certain way to be seen as normal in our world. A gender performance is considered "legitimate" if it is intelligible within a heterosexual matrix (Brady and Schirato 45). Different groups and eras will have varying ideas of what it means to be an "ideal" or "normal" woman, and different punishments for those who do not conform to the heterosexual matrix. In this way, the theory of the heterosexual matrix takes into consideration different historical conceptions of gender. My participants' bullies, adolescent boys living in North America in the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s, were imbued with power through displaying a hegemonic masculinity, and cited that

power when bullying their victims. They acted from within a heterosexual matrix of domination and reproduced it in doing so.

For Judith Butler, gender performance also depends on repetition and citation of a norm (Brady and Schirato 46). In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler stresses that just because gender is performative does not mean it is always playful, because what is at stake is the ability to be perceived as intelligible, or the ability to “matter” (Brady and Schirato 48). Gender is a performance, and what is being performed is the ability to be recognized as human, the performance is produced “under the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production” (Butler *Bodies* 95). Femininity and masculinity are not a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose history cannot be separated from relations of discipline, regulation, and punishment (Butler *Bodies* 232). For example, prior to the 1969 Stonewall uprising in New York which sparked the gay liberation movement, there was a law that stated that while in public a person must wear three articles of “gender appropriate” clothing, or else face imprisonment (Wolf). Up to the present day, those who identify as transgendered, or individuals who do not conform to “proper” displays of gender, face discrimination, violence, and sometimes death. There are often grievous penalties when gender norms are not “properly” cited, which reveals the exclusionary nature of the heterosexual matrix.

The heterosexual matrix requires object beings, those who are not considered subjects within the matrix because they do not adhere to gender norms, to form the outside (*Bodies* 3). As mentioned above, object beings are people who do not fit the

gender norms. The abject are required to mark the boundaries of those who enjoy having the status of a subject (Butler, *Bodies* 3). In the matrix, power works as foreclosure and denial through the creation of an “‘outside,’ a domain of unliveability and unintelligibility that bounds the domain of intelligible effects” (*Bodies* 22). Gender can constitute a form of symbolic violence, because everything outside these parameters is foreclosed, and anything outside the norm is rendered unintelligible and not quite human (Brady and Schirato 105). These unintelligible creatures “haunt those boundaries” and constantly threaten to disrupt the boundaries (Butler, *Bodies* 8). Because they are threatening to the norm, they must be policed. In terms of my research, my participants were considered to be abject beings, policed by boys acting on hegemonic notions of gender.

The concept of domains of intelligibility and unintelligibility is similar to Gloria Anzaldúa’s notion of borderlands. Borders are created to distinguish “us” from “them” (Anzaldúa 3). The only “legitimate” inhabitants are those in power, and the ones who live on the margins are “...the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, in short: those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal’” (Anzaldúa 3). In this thesis I am interested in knowing what it was like to exist in the margins or borderlands of the heterosexual matrix as a “gender deviant” adolescent girl.

Butler points out that those who do not “pass” as heteronormatively masculine or feminine face painful sanctions (*Gender Trouble* xx). I use Butler’s works to describe my participants’ position in the heterosexual matrix. I believe my participants were seen by their bullies as abject girls compared to their “normal” female classmates. My participants were seen as threatening the boundaries of the heterosexual matrix, and were bullied as a

result. I now turn to the work of Pierre Bourdieu to understand bullying behavior as a way to gain and display social power in a sexist world.

Pierre Bourdieu and the Economics of Social Capital

Bourdieu believed that power relations are a part of all social interactions, although this fact is not always obvious (Haskell and Burtch 91). Bourdieu sees all social practices as economics directed towards “the maximization of material and symbolic profit” (Shilling 145). In other words, we engage in certain social practices for our own personal gain. Like Foucault, Bourdieu was also interested in how power operates in the education system as a way of teaching social norms (Haskell and Burtch 92). According to both theorists, subtle forms of discipline play an important role in normalization (Haskell and Burtch 99). I draw from Bourdieu’s work on social capital and symbolic violence as a means of explaining school hierarchies, why some students are more popular than others, and the symbolic violence inherent in bullying. It is useful to include Bourdieu’s ideas in a feminist research project because he is interested in how power is exacted in the smallest, seemingly insignificant social interactions, something Toril Moi calls a microtheory of social power, which reveals a hegemonic order (“Bourdieu” 1019). Similarly, feminist research is interested in uncovering sexism at both the macro and micro levels of social interaction, making the personal political.

Heterosexist and homophobic environments, like some schools, are contexts in which we learn that gender conformity is the norm, and the “natural” appearance of behaviors associated with hegemonic identities make them especially resistant to reflection and change (Haskell and Burtch 98). In Bourdieu’s terms, a setting such as a

school would be considered a field, a site of struggle where power and dominance is at stake, where those with power have more social capital than others (Moi, “Bourdieu” 1021-1022). “The aim is to *rule* the field, to become the instance which has the power to confer or withdraw *legitimacy*” from other “players” on the field (Moi, “Bourdieu” 1021, emphasis in original). To avoid negative responses and gain power on the field that is school, youth learn to acquire valued personas (Haskell and Burtch 91). Social interactions teach us dominant norms, and when norms are internalized, they are often perceived as natural and influence how we act in the world. They are sometimes reproduced unconsciously as we regulate our own and others’ behaviors (Haskell and Burtch 91). As a result, we sometimes overlook the social and historical conditions that have created these norms.

Gendered bullying frequently involves verbal abuse. Bourdieu is interested in language as a site where norms are reproduced and power is circulated. Verbal and non-verbal exchanges occur between individuals endowed with resources and skills in such a way that every verbal interaction bears the trace of the social structure that it both expresses and helps to reproduce (Thompson 2). Verbal expressions are always produced in particular contexts or “markets,” and the properties of these markets give verbal exchanges a certain value (Thompson 18). In the high schools “markets” of my participants, students displayed, gained, and sometimes lost social capital. Popular boys’ sexist remarks had value in a market where gender “normalcy” was expected. The more linguistic capital a speaker has, the more he is able to exploit the system of difference to his advantage and thereby secure what Bourdieu calls a profit of distinction (Thompson

18), or in the case of gendered bullying, he can acquire a patriarchal dividend (Connell, *Masculinities* 79). The verbalizations with the most market value are unequally distributed, in that only certain people can utter them, and the expressions themselves are rare on the market (Thompson 18). For example, popular boys had the power to engage in mock flirting while less popular boys did not.

Pierre Bourdieu understood the economics involved in social interactions, and he was also aware of the connection between the body and social location, and the body as central to acquiring social status (Shilling 127). Bourdieu called this physical capital, developing a body in ways that are recognized as having value in social fields (Shilling 127). Discipline and self-surveillance are important aspects of our society, especially for women, as I have already noted. Discipline can be converted into physical capital, which can then be converted into economic and cultural capital (Shilling 137). For example, a world-class hockey player can parlay his talent into multi-million dollar endorsement deals. On a smaller scale, a college football player could use his network he gained through his physical skill to land a lucrative job with the NFL, a conventionally attractive waitress can rely on her appearance to get better tips (Shilling 128). The bullies and popular girls in my participants' schools had physical capital. The boys were athletic, the girls were pretty and often athletic. This physical capital helped to establish and maintain their social capital.

The bullies in this thesis possessed symbolic power, also called symbolic violence, which refers to the ways power is transmitted, not by force, but symbolically which gives it a legitimacy it may not have otherwise (Thompson 23). This more subtle

form of violence, or gentle violence, is “imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted primarily through the symbolic channels of communication and cognition” (Bourdieu, *Domination* 1). In this way, gendered bullying is seen as “normal.” Symbolic violence often increased or maintained the bullies’ symbolic power. Bourdieu describes symbolic violence as “almost magical, because one can achieve the equivalent of what is obtained through force” (*Language* 170). But, he adds, it is a power that can be exercised only if it is “recognized, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary” (Bourdieu, *Language* 170). One must believe that the person wielding the power is legitimate, “the language of authority never governs without the collaboration of those it governs, without the social mechanism capable of producing this complicity” (Bourdieu, *Language* 113). For Bourdieu, symbolic power is invisible and is only effective because it rests on a foundation of shared belief (Thompson 23). What gives words power and makes them capable of maintaining or subverting the social order is belief in the legitimacy of words and those who say them (Bourdieu, *Language* 170). My participants’ bullies would not have been able to bully if others (my participants, other classmates, and teachers) did not believe their words. Because they were properly masculine and therefore popular, they have symbolic power, and had the ability to make gendered bullying seem “normal.”

A criticism of Bourdieu is that he over-estimated the degree to which people are unaware of symbolic violence and its effects (*Language* 170). According to Bourdieu, norms are internalized and perceived as natural inclinations, and are reproduced consciously and unconsciously (Haskell and Burtch 91). Bourdieu does not seem to account for the critical thinking skills that are encouraged through every day interactions,

and that people can question and object to seemingly arbitrary power dynamics (Haskell and Burtch 99). One gets a sense that symbolic power is perceived as just the way things are, leaving no room for resistance. However, in their interviews with victims of homophobic bullying, Haskell and Burtch found that victims did resist symbolic violence (106). Similarly, my participants did try to stop the bullying, and two of my participants felt that there was something subversive in being perceived as gender deviant, although it was still a painful experience for them. Understanding power relations and being aware of them is the first part of resistance (Haskell and Burtch 106). Bullying can be a way for boys to display their social capital, and a form of symbolic violence enacted on victims who are not considered “normal.” Because I am interested in how bullying affects victims as adults, I now turn to theories of time and memory to understand how bullying can affect people over time.

A Brief Interpretation of Time

The transition from childhood is often complex and fluid (Valentine 38). We may only be legally defined as a child from birth to age 18, but “our childhoods still live on within us” (Valentine 39). Rather than conceptualizing adolescence as a static category that we grow out of, it may be more useful to think of it as a process that shapes us throughout our lives (Valentine 39). The education system is a significant site of identity construction, as most people attend school for the majority of their childhood and adolescent years, and the peer group cultures within the school are crucial to children’s sense of identity and self-esteem. As a result, young people must learn to articulate their individuality and at the same time conform to peer norms that are built on adult

conceptions of heterosexualized gendered identities (Valentine 42). I am interested in what happens when adolescents cannot or will not conform to a heterosexual gender ideal, and the effect that has on bullying victims over time.

Gilles Deleuze played a role in reviving the work of philosopher Henri Bergson, whose concepts of time and memory influenced Marcel Proust, among others. Here I use Deleuze's and Rebecca Coleman's interpretations of Bergson in an attempt to explain why bullying still affects my participants today. It lies in thinking of time in terms of duration. Time is measured objectively and externally through clocks and calendars, while duration is intuitive, and understood and felt in the body (Coleman 90). Duration is a becoming, but one that endures. It is not just lived experience, it "is also experience enlarged or even gone beyond, it is already a condition of experience" (Deleuze 37). Deleuze also makes a distinction between the present and the past. The present is a pure becoming, and it acts, it is useful (55). The past does not act and is no longer useful, "but it has not ceased to be" (Deleuze 55). The past does not lie dormant, it is re-experienced through its intensity, and its connection with the present and the future (Coleman 94). We experience the past by leaping into it (Deleuze 56). The "leap" is a connection between different durations, where these durations are assembled simultaneously (Coleman 94). The past is still happening, and although the past is not active, it endures and is entered into, and connected through memory (Coleman 95). As Deleuze explains, the past and present are not two successive moments, but two different elements which coexist (59). Using the idea that we carry our junior high and high school memories with us, we can think of the future as an assembly of past and present temporalities (Coleman 87).

Temporalities refer to the human perception of time, and the social organization of time (Coy xiii). Bergson, Deleuze, and Coleman use the term to describe the way people understand and experience time as non-linear.

Rebecca Coleman conducted interviews with girls on body image and was interested in how negative comments seemed to stay with them. While Bergson uses the term “remarkable points” to talk about dominant recollections (Deleuze 62), Coleman uses the concept of “things that stay,” which she defines as intense moments of the past which endure and intertwine with present and future temporalities (87). In describing the idea of things that stay, Coleman makes a distinction between time and duration.

Although linear time has progressed, if we think in terms of duration, sometimes we are brought back to an intense period in our past. Duration also entails the coexistence of the present with the past, so events that happened long ago can affect us today (Coleman 91). The things that stay endure, not because they are unchanging and stuck in the past, but because of divergence and transformation (Coleman 91). The past does not remain in place, the past is what is still happening. Certain memories move from the past and are re-experienced and assembled differently at a different intensity, and are also reworked on terms of meaning (Coleman 93). For example, a woman who was a victim of gendered bullying in a rural high school may re-experience those feelings as an adult while walking past a group of rowdy teenage boys on a city street. The scene is different, and she may react differently than she did when she was in school, but the past has moved and has been re-assembled in the present.

Deleuze and Coleman offer an explanation of how the past operates and how it influences the present and future. Deleuze also explains one of the ways in which memory operates. A memory applies itself to a present situation through two simultaneous movements. One is translation, where the memory moves up to meet the experience. The other is rotation, where it turns to the side that may be most useful to the present situation (Deleuze 63-64). Actualization is adopting the past to the present, using the past in terms of the present (Deleuze 70). The rotation is actualized when it enters into a circuit with the present, and only becomes embodied if the present is different from that which has been (Deleuze 66-71). Translation, rotation, and actualization is seen in the analysis chapter when the participants uses a painful memory for something positive, such as helping others. Coleman's concept of duration also helps explain why bullying is so psychologically damaging for some people. It is not something a person forgets as soon as she leaves school. Its intensity does not come from remembering the past, but by the way the past is connected to the present and to the future. The past influences the present by setting limits "on what of the virtual might be actualized" (Coleman 97). In Part III of the Analysis chapter I will explore the way my participants experience time and memory in terms of gendered bullying in a society that expects girls to conform to hegemonic gender norms.

Conclusion

I hope I have provided an understanding of the power structures in which gendered bullying operates, and why gendered bullying can be so devastating for victims. I interpret different theories through a feminist lens. Using Michel Foucault's idea of

norms becoming a form of power and control as older forms of power receded, we see how, especially in a surveillance society, people are expected to regulate themselves, and for women and girls, this includes living up to a certain ideal of femininity. To not emulate the ideal means loss of self-esteem, income, and loss of male patronage, which can adversely affect some women. Judith Butler suggests that within the heterosexual matrix, certain identities are foreclosed, such as those who do not exude a proper, gender-appropriate appearance and identity. For some people, this could mean facing physical violence, or being subjected to symbolic violence. My participants, in being perceived by their bullies and other classmates as unfeminine, were both “too much” in a culture where femininity means taking up little space, and were also “not enough” in the same culture that expects exaggerated displays of femininity in terms of dress and appearance. I draw on conceptions of memory and time as a duration to explain why bullying continues to affect my participants to this day. One reason is because their very subjectivity as a female has been attacked, and that the past endures and intertwines with the present and the future. Although they endured painful experiences, my participants are examples that resistance is still possible, even years after they last heard the school bell ring. In the next chapter, I attempt to translate the theoretical map I laid out in this chapter into a methodology for exploring experiences of gendered bullying.

Chapter 4

Interviewing While Feminist: Research Strategies

In this chapter I will explain my choice of methods, how I interpreted the interview data, and my attempt to be reflexive and responsible throughout this process. The overall goal of my thesis is an in-depth understanding of gendered bullying experiences from a female victim's perspective.

Feminist Methodology: Subjugated Knowledges, Situated Knowledges

Feminist inquiry begins with women's experiences; as was mentioned in the theory chapter, the personal is political. To understand these experiences, attention must be on "the ordinary, the common, and the low" (Moi, "Examples" 193). Feminist methodology informs my work. It is a way to think about women's lives and experiences, and how ideas and ideals of gender influence women. Feminist ideas and theories allow us to understand that there are different types of knowledges, that they are situated in a particular time and place, and that some knowledges are marginalized, or subjugated. I explore these two ideas in this section.

We cannot separate knowledges from the context(s) which produced them. Donna Haraway refers to these types of knowledges as situated knowledges (345). She suggests researchers should strive for an epistemology of location, where one can only make knowledge claims through partiality, not universality (Haraway 345). Haraway also speaks about situated knowledges that are not interested in transcendence, but limited location and a particular and specific embodiment (Haraway 348). Or as she says, "the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular" (Haraway 350). The

only way to understand a problem is to examine the particular case, and through describing a problem can lead to the realization that alternatives can be developed and implemented (Moi, "Examples" 209). The aim is to focus on details of a certain aspect of experience. In a situated knowledge framework, the individual is not separated from the social landscape, but is co-implicated within it (Gannon and Davies 73). I examine the social landscape, in this case my participants' schools and their position within it, in Parts I and II of my analysis chapter.

I saw common themes in my participants' stories. I do not claim that the women I spoke to reflect a universal experience of gendered bullying, merely that they, their bullies, and their communities were affected by gender ideals circulating in the larger culture. Using a feminist methodology, I can explore how norms relate to gender, and how hegemonic, sexist gender norms can affect those who are marginalized in high school.

Feminist researchers are often interested in the views of those who have been marginalized in some way (DeVault and Gross 173). I realize that the women I spoke to are white, able-bodied, heterosexual, and are educated or were attending school at the time of the interviews. In the wider world, they have certain privileges. In their junior high and high school worlds, however, they were marginalized and socially isolated, which had a significant impact on their lives. I cannot make a sweeping statement that all "gender deviant" marginalized girls have a unique knowledge of gender norms than those differently positioned in the heterosexual matrix, not all marginalized groups share the same values and interests (Intemann 506). I know I could have spoken to other women

and discovered different insights. It is likely that young women of different ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientations have had different experiences and experienced other forms of marginalization and bullying.

One way of thinking about the experiences of marginalized people and groups is in terms of subjugated knowledges (Foucault, “January” 7; Jaggar 344; Leatherby 51). Hegemonic discourses reflect the interests of those in control, and those who want to align themselves with the powerful (Jaggar 344). Michel Foucault argued that there are knowledges “from below” that are unqualified or disqualified, and they derive their power from the fact that they are different from the knowledges around them (“January” 7-8). Some are excluded from these dominant discourses, yet are still affected by them. My participants have subjugated knowledges, as they know what it was like to be “gender deviant” girls in a certain time and place, and it is different from the type of knowledge a more “properly” feminine girl might have. For feminists, or anyone interested in social change, subjugated knowledges can be a strategy for challenging hegemonic discourses (Jaggar 344). Subjugated knowledges, like situated knowledges, tell different stories about different specificities (Leatherby 51). I tried to learn about these subjugated knowledges through the literature review and theory chapters, and of course through interviews with women who had endured gendered bullying. In the theory chapter I outlined some theories about norms in relation to gendered social structures. Here I discussed how feminist methodology informs the way I approach the research topic and the interview data. In the next section, I discuss the interview process.

Method

The Interview Process

Using a feminist lens when conducting research problematizes gender and brings women and their issues to the center of analysis (DeVault and Gross 174). One way to bring women to the center is through in-depth interviewing. Feminist interviewing draws on the political traditions of consciousness-raising, and the research methods of life history and open-ended interviewing (DeVault and Gross 174). It seeks to understand “lived experiences” of the individual and the “subjective” understanding a person brings to a given situation (Hesse-Biber 117). The central idea in interviewing is that knowledge can be generated in structured meetings organized around talking about experience (DeVault and Gross 176). Feminist in-depth interviewing is also interested in experiences that are often hidden or ignored, (i.e. subjugated knowledges), and allows the participants tell their stories in their own words, this is why I have often used longer interview excerpts (Hesse-Biber 113, 118). My goal in using feminist interviewing as a method was to learn more about gendered bullying and hear from women who had been marginalized by hegemonic ideas of gender while in school. I discuss how I developed interview questions below.

Developing Questions

For the first set of interviews, I used Dr. Marnina Gonick’s list of questions for those who self-identify as being bullied from her research project on school bullying (see Appendix A). When developing questions, it is important to ask what shapes the questions I chose to ask, and how my social position affects the research project at all levels (Hesse-Biber 129). For the second interviews (see Appendix B), I asked questions

that I formulated based on gender relations, gender presentation, and social hierarchies within the schools, first interviews, the literature and theory chapters, and also my own junior and high school experiences. I consider these formal questions, but I also regarded each interview as an opportunity to formulate new lines of questioning. Not being tied to a set of questions, I was able to explore experiences and stories I was not expecting to encounter.

As mentioned previously, I worked from two sets of interview questions. This was my first experience conducting interviews, and in hindsight I see that some of the questions I developed could be construed as leading the participants, for example the question on Super Girls in Appendix B. This was not my intention. Often the questions I asked were not planned, but sprang up in the moment to something a participant had said, and, being new to interviewing, sometimes I did not think about phrasing before asking the question. Other questions that I had prepared were not designed to “make” the participant answer the question in a certain way to fit my argument. Something I enjoy about the interview process is that I do not know how the participant will answer, and I do not know what roads the participant will take me down. Had I realized that some of the questions could be interpreted as leading, I would have reformulated them, or not asked them at all.

In-Depth Interviewing

In-depth interviewing aims for depth of understanding, rather than breadth (Rubin and Rubin 30). Depth can be achieved by examining context, and grappling with the complexity of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting themes (Rubin and Rubin

35). In order to achieve this complexity, researchers often have to ask follow-up questions, therefore, multiple interviews are more likely to yield more data than a single session (Reinharz 37). I aimed to increase complexity not so much through the number of interviewees but through the type of questions I asked each participant.

Using feminist, in-depth interviewing as a method requires being flexible with interview questions. In order to tap into each participant's distinctive knowledge, researchers need to create new questions for each interview (Rubin and Rubin 34). In order to achieve depth, I asked follow-up questions (Rubin and Rubin 35). I found that additional questions also arose during the transcription process. When this happened, I e-mailed the completed transcript to the participant, along with my additional questions.

Interviewing people about bullying that occurred over a decade ago has its limitations, mainly, that time may have faded or distorted their memories. However, it is not so much how accurate the memory is, but the intensity that I am interested in, and how that intensity connects to gender norms. I also used what I believe is a feminist strategy for conducting interviews, which has the goal of empowering participants (DeVault and Gross 173). I let the participant control the interview process by letting them know that they did not have to answer questions they are uncomfortable with, and that they could end the interview at any time, or take a break if it was needed. I believe it is also important to involve the participants in the research process and I gave them the chance to change, omit, or comment on their interview transcripts.

A strategy I employed in the interviews was probing, which is also known as active listening. It is a way to support the participant and encourage them to tell their

story without pushing the researcher's agenda into the conversation (Hesse-Biber 126). There are three different types of probes (Hesse-Biber 126-127) and I used all three in my interviews. The first is the "silent probe," using gestures such as nodding and eye contact. The second is the echo probe, where you repeat what the participant said, so they know you are listening and also to underline the importance of what they said. The third is the "Uh-huh" probe, in my case it would be the "Mhmm" probe, providing an affirmative sound to encourage them to continue. The goal of using these techniques was to support the participant while they were telling me painful stories, and being compassionate in the research process (Hesse-Biber 127). My goal was not to become friends with the participants, but I also did not want them to feel like subjects being studied coldly and clinically, my only intent extracting their most painful bullying experiences. I was interested in what they had to say on an academic and personal level, and was empathetic to their experiences.

My research project was part of Dr. Marnina Gonick's project on school bullying, and was covered under her ethics approval from Mount Saint Vincent University. Participants signed a consent form (see Appendix C) that included a promise to share results, articulated the degree of confidentiality, and also listed the possible benefits of participating in the research (Rubin and Rubin 104). I went over the consent form with them before they signed. Interviews were audio recorded, and took place in office space at Mount Saint Vincent University, or in the participant's home. Interview length ranged from thirty minutes to three hours. I asked my participants' to choose a pseudonym, and if they did not want to, I told them the pseudonym I chose for them and asked if they were

comfortable with it. I also omitted or changed names and identifying characteristics that could identify the participants. Consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet at Mount Saint Vincent University. The audio of the interviews, the transcripts, and thesis were stored on a password-protected computer that only I could access.

Self-Disclosure

I have been bullied and have witnessed bullying. I sometimes shared these experiences during the interviews. Shulamit Reinharz states that many researchers view self-disclosure as a good feminist practice (32). Self-disclosure can be beneficial because it can be the beginning of a “true dialogue” and allows participants to become a “co-researcher” (Reinharz 33). However, it is easy to hijack the interview and use it to explore the researcher’s experience (Rubin and Rubin 83). It can also make the researcher vulnerable to criticism for what is revealed and for the very act of self-disclosure (Reinharz 34). I shared personal stories only when I felt it was necessary to encourage the participant to tell a story, or to convey empathy. Instead of self-disclosing when it was unnecessary and only for my benefit, keeping a journal was helpful for dealing with any strong emotions that arose during the research process. I also used the journal to keep a running file of ideas as they emerged, and to record my thoughts about the interviews, and possible strategies for the next interview (Rubin and Rubin 77). Keeping a journal was also useful to encourage self-reflexivity.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the ways in which the researcher’s views, history, and opinions affect the research process (Wasserfall 24). Our backgrounds affect what

questions we ask and how we understand, derive meaning from, and analyze the data (Rubin and Rubin 29). I often thought about my own junior high and high school experiences during the interview process, this affected the questions I asked. I also became aware of my own internalized sexism and misogyny when analyzing the data. In order to be aware of this process, researchers need to continually examine their understanding and reactions to the data (Rubin and Rubin 31). Many researchers make a distinction between strong and weak reflexivity. The authority of the author is deconstructed when using strong reflexivity (Wasserfall 25). Weak reflexivity is a continued self-awareness about the ongoing relationship between the researcher and the participants (Naples 41). I believe a weak reading of reflexivity was practical for my thesis. It required me to ask critical questions, like what relationship I have with my participants, what influence my presence and knowledge could have on them, and to whom I am accountable for the knowledge I produce (Weedon 158). When I was self-reflexive, I was aware of the opinions and emotions I brought to my research.

Rahel Wasserfall is careful to point out that reflexivity cannot solve all the tensions in feminist research. Reflexivity is not in itself a process for overcoming distortion or exploitation. We cannot think that our research is a complete representation of participants' lives, and we must take responsibility for that representation (Wasserfall 25). I also must take responsibility for my investment in the thesis. I am invested on many levels, not only academically and intellectually, but emotionally as well. Complete objectivity is impossible to achieve, so I was aware that any strong emotions I may have can bias and influence the way my participants respond and how I interpret the data

(Rubin and Rubin 31). Again, keeping a journal and receiving feedback from my thesis advisor helped mitigate these factors, although one cannot expect to be completely divorced from their feelings when conducting research. In the reflexivity model, analysis is an ongoing process, and self-analysis is an important part of that process.

Analyzing the Data: Thematic Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data is a necessarily subjective process, relying on the researcher's appreciation of the "enormity, contingency, and fragility of signification" (Attride-Stirling 403). Qualitative research is valuable because of its explanatory power, and this cannot be achieved without methodological rigor at all stages of research. A research project can seem straightforward and clear during the planning and data collecting stages. At the analytic stage, however, it can become murky, and this is because analysis can be a highly intuitive, theoretically-driven stage that does not always occur in a linear fashion (Attride-Stirling 403). I chose Thematic Analysis as the method most useful for analyzing my data.

Analyzing the data and writing about how I did it was the most difficult part of conducting my thesis research, as I had never analyzed qualitative interview data before, and I had a difficult time finding an analytic method that really fit. With qualitative work, there are no hard and fast rules, and often, different methods blend into each other (Stanley and Wise 191). Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis as a method is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within data, and you do not need to have a certain theoretical framework in order to use it (Braun and Clarke 77-81). It was flexible enough for my needs. Below I outline Thematic Analysis, its six steps and how I

employed them, and some of the issues that arose along the way. I have tried to make the analysis process as clear as possible because working with qualitative data almost always involves the idiosyncrasies of the researcher. Another person could look at the same data and come up with a different conclusion than I did.

Thematic Analysis is not loyal to any theoretical framework, but feminist theory informed the themes I developed, and how I interpreted the data. It can often seem that themes are already present in the data, but the researcher always plays an active role in identifying patterns (Braun and Clarke 80). Braun and Clarke mention two types of analysis: inductive, which is coding the data without using a pre-existing coding scheme. The second is theoretical, which is driven by the researcher's theoretical interest, and who may already have categories in mind before coding begins (Braun and Clarke 83-84). I used both types of analysis. Some themes were inductive, such as short- and long-term effects of bullying. Others were theoretical. For example, I thought one theme would be context (Part II: Living in the Matrix). I searched for that theme by posing relevant interview questions and by reading transcripts in search of that theme. I was interested in Pierre Bourdieu's idea of social capital, and how that was displayed. His theory lead to me to ask about popular cliques, and where they congregated at school, which became a subtheme. Asking these types of questions established that the bullies had social capital and it was displayed in other ways besides bullying. It also established where my participants stood in terms of the relations of ruling within their schools.

I describe my findings using existing literature on bullying and various theories in an attempt to explain the significance of patterns and their broader meanings and

implications (Braun and Clarke 84). This is called identifying themes at the semantic level. There is also a latent level of explanation, where the researcher tries to identify the underlying ideas, assumptions, and ideologies that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data (Braun and Clarke 84). For a latent thematic analysis, the development of themes themselves involves interpretative work, and the analysis of broader structures and meanings are theorized as underpinning what is actually articulated in the data (Braun and Clarke 85). For example, the literature suggests that gendered bullying is a form of policing, which informs my creation of a theme titled Policing, Reaction, and Resistance. I am looking at the underlying structures that support gendered bullying at both the semantic and latent levels.

Braun and Clarke state there are two approaches to Thematic Analysis, realist and constructionist. A realist approach allows you to theorize motivations, experiences, and meanings in a straightforward way, because a straightforward relationship is assumed between meaning, experience, and language. Language reflects and enables us to articulate meaning and experience (Braun and Clarke 85). In a constructionist approach, meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than residing in the individual (Braun and Clarke 85). It seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts and the structural conditions that influences people's experiences (Braun and Clarke 85). I believe I have used a combination of realist and constructionist approaches. On the page, these approaches seem quite different from one another, but in practice, disparate approaches can be combined. Researchers often combine a number of analytical and theoretical positions, suggesting a human ability to work within the contradictions, because social

reality itself is often contradictory (Stanley and Wise 191). I found this to be true in my research and analytical processes and tried to represent these contradictions as best I could.

Doing Thematic Analysis

There are six steps to Thematic Analysis. I will list and describe the steps, as well as how I used the steps in my research in greater detail. Step One: Familiarize yourself with the data. Step Two: Generate initial codes. Step Three: Search for themes. Step Four: Review themes. Step Five: Define and name themes. Step Six: Produce the report.

Step One: Familiarize yourself with the data (Braun and Clarke 87). I transcribed the interviews verbatim. I felt it was important to preserve the distinctiveness of my participants' speech, but I did edit for clarity and brevity. The first step is to notice patterns of meaning. For me, this happened with my first two interviews. Mida was my first, Chloe my second. I noticed similarities between Mida and Chloe's stories, primarily being bullied for how they looked by popular boys, and suffering as a result. I had already had some ideas for codes and themes at this state of the research process. In the early stages of coding, I had a great deal of information, 244 pages of interview transcripts. My goal in that early stage was to refine the data as much as I could, and to think about the data in terms of my research questions. To do this, I read my literature and theory chapters before I read the transcripts, so the concepts would be fresh in my mind. There is an argument against this technique, that it can narrow your analytic field of vision. Others argue that it can enhance your analysis by sensitizing you to more subtle features of the data (Braun and Clarke 86). With so much data, I found it helpful rather than harmful. As

the analysis went on, the analysis, literature, and theory chapters were all shaping each other through my engagement with all three. I also checked the transcripts back against the audio in case I missed something (Braun and Clarke 88). I completed step one many times, reading and re-reading the interviews, refining my codes after each reading.

Step Two: Generating Codes (Braun and Clarke 88). This step involves coding interesting features of data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code, and coding for as many themes and patterns as possible, while being sure to retain the context (Braun and Clarke 87, 89). In the beginning, I coded all the data, because I was not sure what I would omit. For example, I asked the participants a series of questions about how they coped with the bullying at the time. I heard some interesting responses, but I cut this section from the final analysis because it was not key to my research questions, and I simply did not have room to address it in the thesis. I coded each interview individually, then combined all the participants' interviews according to theme. I chose to arrange the analysis in this way so it makes sense to the reader, and they can see each participant's response to each theme and sub theme. From here I began to refine codes. For example, through coding I identified two types of bullying, disparaging appearance and mock flirting. Through these codes, I began to see an overarching theme: gender policing.

I did not use a software program to code my data, other than Microsoft Word. I hand coded using highlighters before I replicated this on a computer. From there I continued to refine my analysis. Step Two I also repeated several times. Multiple passes at the data was invaluable, as it revealed something different every time.

Step Three: Searching for Themes (Braun and Clarke 89). After coding, codes are then sorted into themes and combined to create an overarching theme (Braun and Clarke 89). I found it useful to divide the analysis chapter into three overarching themes, with subthemes. At this step, I thought about the relationship between the codes, themes, and different levels of themes, and what would make sense according to the research questions. My two research questions are what is the relationship between bullying and hegemonic idea(s) of masculinity and femininity? How does being bullied by boys affect girls' sense of self and their relationships with others, short- and long-term? From these two questions, I generated three themes. Part I: Policing, Reaction, and Resistance. Here I examine the short term effects of bullying, and the relationship between masculinity and femininity in relation to gendered bullying. Part II: Living in the Matrix: I focus on the relationship between bullying and gender ideals in the context of the school. Part III: The Things That Stay, I look at bullying's long term effects, both negative and positive. Again, it took some time to generate these themes.

Step Four: Reviewing Themes (Braun and Clarke 91). The data within themes should be cohesive, and there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes (Braun and Clarke 91). I tried to create themes in a way the reader would understand, and also reflect my underlying questions and arguments. I found Part I: Policing, Reaction, and Resistance often spilled over into Part II: Living in the Matrix, where I describe my participants' schools and the social structures, because you cannot separate bullying from the context in which it occurs. Yet combining them would make for an unduly large thematic section, so I kept Part II separate because I want to

emphasize the importance of context, and explore the underlying structures that may contribute to bullying. I am sure there is another way I could have arranged the data, but this is the way that made sense to me. I could have kept the two thematic sections separate if I had severely edited my participants' responses, but I think I would have lost some of the participants' unique voices, not to mention context. I accept that the two sections overlap; it is the nature of the data, when speaking about bullying experiences my participants' almost always spoke about them in context.

Step Five: Defining and Naming Themes (Braun and Clarke 92). In this section, you not only paraphrase the content of the data extracts, but also identify what is interesting about them and why (Braun and Clarke 92). As well as identifying the "story" that each theme tells, it is important to consider how it fits into the broader overall "story" that you are telling about your data in relation to your research questions (Braun and Clarke 92). The goal here is to return to the research questions and the theoretical issues underlying them, and address them with arguments grounded in the patterns and themes that emerged in the exploration of the texts (Attride-Stirling 394). This is the step that is most subjective, and it is where the researcher's subject position can come into play. For example, in Part III: The Things That Stay, I am interested in the long term effects of bullying. My participants reported feeling social anxiety, which is common according to the bullying literature. Using theories of duration, I interpret this anxiety as the way the past is connected to the present and future, and how they feel as women in the heterosexual matrix. I was trying to move away from individualistic, psychological

explanations, although they have validity, and discuss how my participants' reactions can be explained in a larger context that takes gender into consideration.

As mentioned earlier, I read my literature and theory chapters prior to reading the transcripts. I looked for commonalities among my participants' experiences, and moments of divergence. I examined their words, for example in the depression subtheme, I write about how their experiences fit into what the existing literature says about bullying and depression, and I also examine their depression in terms of power and gender, looking at depressed feelings in terms of their position in the heterosexual matrix. I also examine the types of words they used. Mida especially used evocative language and spoke in metaphors and analogies when discussing her bullying experiences. I looked at their words individually, for example Anne in Part II calling the popular girls the "queens of the school," and also collectively. When talking about reaction to bullying, words of restriction, of permanence, and of foreclosure came up again and again. I began to see that for the victim, bullying is about restriction in significant ways in terms of how they feel about themselves, their situation, and what they can and cannot do with their lives. This is another idea that also came to me late in the analysis process, through repeated readings of the transcripts.

Step Six is producing the report (Braun and Clarke 93), in this case a thesis. It tells the complicated story of the data in a way that convinces the reader of the validity of the analysis (Braun and Clarke 93). I have tried to make every chapter relate back to my research questions and main argument.

The goal with my research strategies is to provide tools to examine my participants' experiences with gendered bullying. Using a feminist methodology which is interested in the social context of women's lives, and understanding how marginalization can occur through oppressive structures allows me to explore my participants' experiences with gendered bullying. I examined their experiences in the context of their school climate, and considered how the social landscape may have affected their bullying experiences. Feminist in-depth interviewing was used as a way to bring their experience to the centre of analysis. I also tried to be reflexive throughout the research process, being aware of how my experiences and social location affects the research process. I analyzed the data using Thematic Analysis, to find themes within the data. I present my analysis in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Impossible to Ignore: An Analysis of Gendered Bullying

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore my participants' experiences with gendered bullying. In Part I: Policing, Reaction, and Resistance, the participants explain why they think they were bullied: it was based on their appearance, and not behaving like a typically feminine girl. They also recall how they were bullied; primarily by popular boys, through disparaging their appearance and mock flirting. In my analysis, I argue that the goal of this bullying was for popular boys to affirm their "superior" status, and to reinforce sexist norms by bullying the Other, or gender deviant girls. Being bullied caused depression for my participants, and for Mida, thoughts of suicide. All tried various ways of ending the bullying, but only leaving school by either moving or graduating seemed effective. Chloe did use aggression to fight back, and I explore this aspect of her experience in detail. This section reveals the power of the heterosexual matrix, and how girls are expected to meet a certain norm, and if they do not, they are punished by those with more social capital, in this case, boys.

Part II: Living in the Heterosexual Matrix. Here I explore the background of my participants' schools, including who was popular, and why. I wanted to know how the popular boys displayed their social capital in ways other than bullying. They displayed their capital through where they congregated on school grounds, and through the importance of sports in the school. I was also interested in popular, pretty, and athletic girls who embodied the norm because these were the girls my participants were compared

to, and compared themselves to. Participants often felt like failures next to them, but two of my participants, Anne and Mida, had mixed feelings, in that they were not interested in becoming like the popular girls, and even seeing a certain advantage in being thought of as a gender deviant girl.

Part III: The Things That Stay. In this section I discuss the long-term effects of bullying in terms of time as a duration, and the past coinciding with the present. For my participants, the bullying is still happening in some capacity. My participants mentioned feeling anxiety in social situations, including romantic relationships with men. This is because in the past they were ridiculed, and in the present they expect the same to happen. Where once they were reviled, they are now desired, which the participants met with disbelief. Gendered bullying negatively affected my participants, but they mentioned positive effects as well. My participants felt that the bullying made them feel empathy for others, and Anne and Mida have helped others who have experienced bullying. I include this section to show that bullying is a complicated experience, with both negative and positive long-term effects, which is an aspect of bullying that is not often examined in depth.

PART I: Policing, Reaction, and Resistance

My homeroom class was upstairs, and [I had] to make the decision, what was gonna happen to me, was I going to be insulted, the way that people would be like 'Oh, Mida' you know, pretend to like me but they didn't, or would I be called 'bitch' for no reason.
-Mida

All four participants were white and identified as heterosexual. They were not so far outside the norm of their communities, yet the slightest deviation from proper femininity made them outcasts. My participants did not perform femininity “correctly,”

this is reflected in the form of bullying that took place, primarily mock flirting and disparaging their looks. In this way, the bullies displayed their power. Power relations are a part of all social interactions (Haskell and Burtch 91). Gendered bullying is a way for the boys to display the patriarchal dividend, which is the advantage men gain from subordinating women (Connell, *Masculinities* 79). Displaying the patriarchal dividend was part of school culture for my participants. Jessie Klein outlines three additional traits of everyday school culture. The first is gender policing, the second is boys displaying a hyper masculinity, and the third is normalized bullying (4-5). In the case of my participants, gendered bullying is a strategy that the most aggressive members of the gender police used to acquire and maintain high social status (Klein 5). The bullies were able to maintain their status through policing gender roles.

Gendered bullying made my participants the Other. Othering refers to the process of drawing boundaries, often based in terms of cultural hegemony, that subjects use to establish and secure identities (Renold 426). Girls were often positioned as the Other if they failed to develop their femininity in accordance with within dominant heterosexual feminine norms (Renold 426). In Emma Renold's research, transgressing gender norms, or choosing not to invest in dominant modes of masculinity and femininity, often positioned girls as heterosexually undesirable by popular students (Renold 428). The popular boys and girls then used these "failed" girls as objects of sexual ridicule, thus maintaining heterosexual hierarchies (Renold 428). Gender deviant girls and women are "*impossible to ignore*," and this fact fuels the sexist attacks against them (Moi, "Bourdieu" 1039, emphasis in original). For the participants, it was also impossible to

ignore the bullying and the effect it had on them. The bullying was often public, persistent, and deeply personal. Their bullying experiences manifested primarily as disparaging their appearance and mock flirting, also known as reverse insults. The bullying left my participants' depressed and even suicidal. In a sexist society with narrow gender norms that also condones men and boys policing women and girls appearance and behaviour, it was impossible for the bullies to ignore these "gender deviant girls." In this system where gender presentation is given great importance, it was also impossible for my victims to ignore the effects of the bullying.

"They just want people that are like them:" Why They Were Bullied

My participants were marked as Other, as someone to be avoided. They were considered "gender deviants" which in general made them outsiders at their school. Here, they describe why they think they were bullied. All mentioned their appearance and their behavior. Chloe says it was because she liked to read and did not try to socialize, and Anne mentions that she was "too nice," and people picked on her because they knew she would not do anything about it. Dan Olweus would label such behavior as "passive," as it signals to others that they are insecure and will not retaliate if they are attacked (Olweus 32). Both Mida and Jackie mention that they were "real," and did not conform to gender norms. This type of behavior Dan Olweus would call "provocative," their behavior may irritate others and cause tension (Olweus 32). Seen through a gendered lens, being outspoken is not often encouraged in girls. Whether they were passive or provocative victims, the threat of bullying was always present for my participants.

As we talked more about their experiences with gendered bullying, my participants mentioned why they thought it happened. They were not popular girls, they had little to no influence over others, and few if any other students wanted to identify with them (Rigby 33). They did not look, nor behave, like “properly” feminine girls, therefore they went against the norm and as a result their behavior was policed and they were bullied. In other environments, perhaps a school with greater diversity, they may not have been bullied (Rigby 33), but as I explore the landscape of their high schools, especially in Part II, it becomes evident why they were prime targets for bullying. Mida explains this by saying “they just want people who are like them.” My participants were either too nice or too “real,” too willing to speak their minds. This behavior, combined with the hegemonic ideas of gender circulating within their schools and communities (which I discuss further in Part II), led to gendered bullying.

CHLOE

Chloe gave very short answers during the interview. Talking about this subject made her upset, and I did not want to probe deeply, for fear of upsetting her further. Reading appears to have marked her as “uncool,” and different from the other students in her class, in particular the popular boys. Reading went against the norm, and norms can be a way in which power operates (Foucault, *Discipline* 223).

H: [...] ¹ Why do you think that you were targeted? If you just want to elaborate on that if you can.

¹ Symbol key:

A pause in speech:

Editing for clarity/brevity: [...]

Interview transcripts were also lightly edited for clarity and ease of reading.

C: I have no idea. A big part of it probably was that I wasn't as active as a lot of kids in the neighborhood, I enjoyed sitting down and reading and... they didn't, they viewed it as something to be laughed at, like watching Disney movies. "Reading's not cool, what the hell are you doing?" So...it's called a book, pick one up.

C: I find it extremely difficult to believe that anyone could find me attractive. 'Cause the main thing that they picked on was my looks (crying).

Her statement "I have no idea" suggests that she did not see herself as provoking the bullies (Olweus 32). She was not deviant in a "loud" way, such as Mida and Jackie, yet boys still marked her as different. Chloe here describes herself as someone who likes to read, not someone who engages often with others, which set her apart and made her a target of ridicule (Olweus 32). Appearance was also an issue for Chloe, as it was for all my participants, they were expected to look a certain way (thin, well groomed, conventionally attractive), but did not measure up.

MIDA

Issues of gender are inherent in Mida's explanations for her bullying experience, being "real," or speaking her mind in a school that did not reward that kind of behavior for girls, and also her appearance made put a "target on [her] back." Being called "ugly", a "monster," and "fat" marked her as Other and outside the confines of hegemonic femininity. She also mentions the toll bullying took on her; she gave up on her appearance, not caring what she wore to school, or how her hair looked. This also happened to Chloe and Anne.

M: After a while because it (bullying) took effect on me because I was like no matter what I do, it didn't matter so I just kind of gave up. So they'd call me the greaser, 'cause I, my hair would be kind of oily, they would just say all the swear

words, they'd call me bitch or they would just say 'Oh, you're ugly, you're a monster, you're fat.'

M: Somehow... I think, the one thing about me is that I always try to be real, I always try to be genuine, I never, no matter what it was, I never tried to be something that I wasn't.

H: Yeah.

M: Sometimes the kids would go along with the flow and I was never that kind of girl, I would never go along with things, I would always [...] be who I was, and if you didn't like it, well, then, when that's your problem. Not so much I didn't say that to them (laughing) [...] And I think in school people are more like, people go along with the flow or don't challenge anything, or are indifferent, they just want people that are like them, and so when you're different or you're not exactly like everybody else, and that automatically puts the target on your back.

When Mida states "I was never that kind of girl" she seems to have known if she had not been so outspoken, she would not have been bullied, but she did not want to change her personality for her bullies. I discuss resistance further in later sections.

ANNE

Girls are expected to be "nice," in other words accommodating and non-confrontational (Ringrose and Renold, "Normative" 584), but people took advantage of Anne's kindness. There is no way to be a girl or woman without facing some sort of censure. She, like many girls, was in a double bind. If you are too nice, people will walk all over you ("I could be abused"), but at least you have friends. If you do assert yourself, you are seen as not nice (or a bitch), and could end up friendless. In a later section, she mentions that although her female friends bullied her, she was grateful to at least have friends, it was important to have some sort of support. Anne uses the word "abuse" to describe her bullying, a word Mida also uses in a later section and something I will discuss in the Conclusion chapter.

A: I think it because I was nice (laughing) that's my theory, anyway. I was a nice kid, I still am, I'd like to think I'm a nice person, but I don't let people walk all over me so much anymore, but, I'm, I always have been, I probably always will be a people-pleaser [...] I would be nice to anybody regardless of how they treated me. So I think people realized that I could be targeted, I could be abused and I would come back and still be nice to them and not cause a stink about it or go to somebody about it.

A: I've always been a fairly chubby kid, like, I'm not fat, I wasn't the biggest kid in school or anything like that by any means, but I was not one of the skinny kids. Also, the worst part of it though was when I was in elementary school and junior high school right up until grade nine or ten, I think, like, grade ten was like the big year that everything changed.²

A: I didn't have my first boyfriend till I was 21. You know, when you're that age (a teenager), you want to have a boyfriend, you wanna fit in, and then to be walking down the halls and have all the popular guys tell you you're fat and ugly, not exactly the boost of self-confidence that you need to try to do anything, really.

Here she identifies popular boys as her bullies and that they targeted her weight and called her “ugly.” One reason it affected her is because she wanted to fit in and be seen as “normal,” but could not. Not surprisingly, given that we live in a culture that worships thinness, it has been found that overweight children and teenagers are more likely to be bullied than their “normal” sized peers (Janssen et al. 1187). Mida, Anne, and Jackie all identified as being fat when they were in school, and they were targeted for their weight. For women, being fat is associated with being out of bounds, of being “too much,” meaning a threat to the gendered order, and fat girls and women face scorn for daring to defy the rules of femininity. As Ariel Levy writes, women should not be judged by their

² Some clarification on this passage, when Anne says in grade 10 everything changed, she is referring to standing up to her female friends who bullied her, and doing things she wanted to do, like being in the school play, but was worried her friends would ridicule her if she tried out.

size, “But this is the system. This is the real world. And to act otherwise is to incur consequences: if you are overweight ... you will be mocked” (xxvi). This type of bullying affected Anne’s self-esteem and she implies it is one reason she did not have a romantic relationship until she was 21. Boys were policing her gender presentation, and as popular boys they felt they had the power to do so.

JACKIE

Jackie was bullied for being overweight and being her outspoken self in a community where conformity was mandatory. She reveals ambivalence about her experience, saying it was “not a big deal,” yet she “irked” some people. We will see this ambivalence again in Part II. She would also say that she was “very loud,” which is not stereotypically feminine behavior. She also implies that she was an outsider as a Canadian in America.

J: I don’t know, I mean, I was a Canadian kid in an American school, so, that was one. I was overweight. I don’t know, I was just me. And some people are irked when you’re just yourself, and it just happened to be a whole bunch of people (laughing) irked by it. But it’s not a big deal I guess, you know.

J: I’m always very loud, too. I’m still kind of loud, but, it’s not a big deal now.

She says that being loud is “not a big deal now,” meaning that it was in the hypercompetitive, gender policing world of her private school. Here we see that the participants were bullied around issues of femininity: weight, attractiveness, and being “loud” or too much. In other words, they were perceived as being outside the confines of heteronormative femininity, and the bullies used this to enforce the norms.

“Who’d wanna make out with *you*?” Policing, or How They Were Bullied

Bullying is about establishing and reinforcing powerful social positions, and while doing this boys also demonstrate that they have the power to enforce dominant ideas of proper gender expression. My participants were policed and punished for being different from stereotypically feminine girls. Femininity (and masculinity) is a citation of a norm, and it cannot be separated from relations of discipline and punishment (Butler, *Bodies* 232). Through Othering and drawing boundaries between what is normal and what is abject, bullies secure their identities as popular, powerful, and properly gendered boys (Renold 426). Here I describe how the bullies drew the boundaries, through disparaging their appearance, mock flirting, and exclusion.

Disparaging Appearance

As we saw in the first section, my participants believed they were targeted in part because of how they looked. During adolescence, it becomes clear that high school is a market, and the girls who have the most beauty capital are given favor (Thorne 153; Eder et al. 103). Schools are often gender-limiting environments, ones where only certain gender expressions are met with approval from other students, and it is here that students learn that gender conformity is the norm. Because the behaviors associated with hegemonic identities appear “normal,” they are often resistant to change (Haskell and Burtch 98). Sandra Bartky outlines three ways in which women are expected to be feminine. One is being thin, the second is an economy of movement; women are not expected to take up space, and the third is an ornamental surface, which is to be smooth and groomed, in other words, under control (Bartky 66-69). Girls like my participants who are “too much,” too tall, too fat, too loud; or lacking in some way, not pretty enough,

or not docile enough, are a threat to hegemonic power structures, and must be policed (Hartley 63-65). My participants were bullied for not meeting norms of femininity, and the bully is seen as “normative” for engaging in bullying.

CHLOE

The bullies targeted my participants’ weight, skin, hair, and overall appearance. I begin with Chloe, who mentions that the bullies mocked her looks and her skin because she had acne scars.

C: I had a really bad habit, it was borne of stress. I have scars on my face, I had acne. So I would pick to make them go away.

The feminine body should not suggest unruliness or “too much,” which is exactly what my participants were. It also suggests that women who do not discipline themselves are defective, which is reflected in advertising that tells women, overtly or covertly, that their bodies are deficient (Bartky 71). To become a “proper” girl or woman often requires a great deal of time, money, and effort. Everyone to some degree will fail to reach the ideal, and often shame is involved in feeling deficient (Bartky 72). In Part II, Chloe compares herself to the popular girls, and felt she had failed at femininity, which she found distressing. To be a properly feminine girl is to have social capital. In my participants’ stories, we see what happens to those girls who do not have this type of social capital. Donna Eder et al. found that the majority of appearance insults were directed at social isolate girls (119). Some isolates were considered unattractive, and were avoided because no one wanted to be associated with a girl others consider “ugly” (Eder et al. 119). The process of insulting girls about their appearance further reinforces the importance of looks. Through these insults, being unattractive and having low status

became associated with each other, and the practice of insulting isolate girls increased all girls' anxiety about their appearance (Eder et al. 119). Policing the isolate girls in turn is a warning to other girls to appear feminine, unless they want to be isolates, too.

MIDA

Mida was bullied throughout elementary and secondary school. The bullies did everything they could to make her feel like the Other. For example she was excluded, mocked, and flirted with as a joke. In junior high, her Otherness was made painfully explicit when someone drew a cartoon of her and passed it around the classroom. This was an overt display of gendered bullying, marking Mida as a “gender deviant.” Mida’s experience is a particularly cruel example of gendered bullying, but as we will see with Anne and Jackie, even bullying that appears mild to the outside observer can have an impact on the victim (Rigby 42). In a later section Mida describes the toll gendered bullying took on her. We also get a sense of how pervasive Mida’s bullying problem was. School for her was never good, as she says, but this incident seemed to mark a turning point for her. In her words it “put her off the deep end.”

M: I was in a class, and... a friend of mine was in that class with me ... school for me was never good, but there would be some classes that were better than others cause I'd have people in there that I knew. But mostly, whatever class I was in there would be one or two people that would be the trouble makers that would say derogatory comments to me or try to get things going and ... I remember one day in this class for some reason I don't know why, but somebody had drawn a pretty... not very flattering picture of me. And they had sent it around the class and they wanted everybody to sign on the picture derogatory comments.

M: I remember sitting there and my friend³ passing this paper and I said, ‘What is that?’ And she’s like ‘Oh, it’s nothing.’ And I’m like, I-I didn’t understand, I was like ‘What do you mean? Is it something about me,’ cause I just had-you know how sometimes you get that feeling?

³ The friend, who did not help her in this situation, apologized to Mida years later.

H: Mhmm.

M: And she's like 'Don't worry, I didn't write on it.' I was like, 'Well what do you mean? What was on it?' And she looks at me and I'm thinking: I knew it was something bad but I didn't know how bad it was. And so then I looked in front of me and then I saw it, I saw like, it looked like (nervous laughter) like a monster or something that someone had drawn but it was supposed to be me. And... all these comments that people had put on there about what they felt about me, about how they, you know. And I remember just running out of the room, bawling, and running into the washroom and just thinking like, 'How could people be so cruel?' And how could this person, that I thought was my friend pass it along and not have stopped it? And, uh, I felt pretty alone, I guess.

In this incident the bullies had social power to make Mida a spectacle (Faris and Felmlee 48). Their actions reveal the belief that those who exist outside the norm should be policed and punished. The old and new forms of power are at work here in this incident (Foucault, *Discipline* 216). Through the drawing, she was made a spectacle, which is the old form of power. Drawing her as a monster was also a way of policing her gender presentation based on norms, which is an example of the new form at work. Judith Butler states that the heterosexual matrix is exclusionary, one that requires abject subjects to create "proper" subjects (*Bodies* 3). Drawing Mida as a monster marked the difference between subject and abject, it defined who is normal and who was Other, or monster, the not quite human (Brady and Schirato 105). One definition of 'monster' is "one who deviates from acceptable behaviour or character" (Merriam-Webster). One could also argue that the "monstrous" is seen as excessive, the "too much" girl. Repudiating people based on gender presentation is a way of reinforcing culturally hegemonic identities of differentiation through repulsion, in this case drawing Mida as a monster. The bullies confirmed their identities as powerful males through making Mida the Other (Butler, *Gender* 182). The comments on the drawing, and the fact that no one stopped it from

circulating, reinforces this idea. Here, like all the examples in this section, we see the heterosexual matrix at work, excluding those who do not fit in in a particularly stark and cruel manner. Mida was now, more than ever, publicly marked as the Other, and later on she discusses the effect this incident had on her.

ANNE

Anne seems to understand that some of the bullying was gendered in nature, as she uses the term “sexualized bullying,” for example, being told she was unattractive and unworthy of male attention (Eder et al. 119). Like Mida, it also positioned her as Other in the heterosexual matrix of her school. Bullying was a way of pointing out that she had failed at femininity, since others did not find her attractive.

A: Once I got a little older, like grade nine grade ten when you’re 15, 16 years old, [...] it came out with the sexualized bullying which wasn’t like sexual harassment or anything like that, but it was like, ‘You’re too fat to get, to be attractive’ or, ‘You’re never gonna get a boyfriend’ or ‘Who’d wanna make out with *you*?’ or whatever.

Hair was an issue for Anne, as it was for Mida. Although Mida was teased for having greasy, frizzy hair, Anne’s was thick and unruly. When it was cut short, she was teased for looking like a boy. Hair is traditionally supposed to be a woman’s “crowning glory,” and style can communicate many gendered cues (Brownmiller 57). Today, many actresses, singers, and models have long, flowing hair, often aided by extensions, which is supposed to communicate youth, sex appeal, and femininity. Some women have unusual haircuts to stand out from the crowd. Other women who have hair that deviate from the norm are sometimes seen as strange or manly (Brownmiller 55). Here Anne describes having paper and gum thrown at her hair.

A: I remember the first time that it happened and I got all upset and I yelled at them and stuff like that ‘cause, you know it’s what you do. Eventually I just kind of learned, I could feel it, most of the time, the worst times were when I couldn’t feel it ‘cause my hair was so freakin’ puffy, and I’d get off the bus and pieces of paper would fall out of my hair. One day, somebody threw a piece of gum, I went to pull it out and that was not a good experience. But I never knew exactly who it was, because I usually sat in the middle of the bus, but it was always the cool kids that sat in the back of the bus, and it was them that was doing it, so I had a general idea of the group that was sitting back there, but I never knew exactly who it was.

Anne notes that the popular children occupied a privileged space on the bus, and that location was one way of displaying status (Bourdieu, “Social Space” 20), something I will discuss in greater detail in Part II. Anne mentions that it was the “cool kids” who bullied her in this instance as a way to enhance their popularity. Also, like Mida, she was singled out and turned into a spectacle, which is an old form of power and also marked her as Other. Bullying here can be thought of as a spectacle, wanting others to see the ridicule, to reinforce the bullies’ status as superior to the victim, while also enforcing the dominant gender codes. She also says that when it first started she did try to fight back through yelling, but it appears that she eventually gave up, but she did initially show resistance to this behavior.

JACKIE

As I mentioned in the introduction, Jackie came from an upper middle class family, and lived in the United States as a child and young adolescent. Her bullying appears to have manifested in more subtle ways than it did for the other participants. The type of bullying she mentioned was primarily exclusionary in nature. In an upper middle class community, she stood out for being overweight, and was excluded from activities. A girl or woman who is overweight is “too much” and therefore a threat to the gender

system (Hartley 63). It also marks her as Other. Unlike Anne, Chloe, or Mida, bullying did not have an influence on how Jackie presented herself in terms of grooming and clothing. I could speculate as to why that is, and it is something I would go back and ask her about.

J (e-mail): The bullying affected the way I saw myself in that I always felt (and still do feel, to a certain extent) that people only notice my weight. No matter what I was doing, it always felt to me like they were subconsciously judging me for being overweight; I have good friends now that I know do not think like that, but it's still hard to get out of my mind when so many people picked on me for being overweight (and for so much of my formative years). It didn't affect what I wore, I wore what fit and what looked good for the most part; I'd do my hair and make-up how I felt--it didn't affect me that way.

My participants were judged by their appearance, and judged for their perceived lack of femininity. Bullies targeted their appearance to make them a spectacle, and to make sure they knew they had not lived up to the norms of femininity. Another aspect of gendered bullying is mock flirting, which I discuss below.

Mock Flirting and Exclusion

Both mock flirting and exclusion reveals a desire to hurt, which is an important aspect of the definition of bullying (Rigby 51). Donna Eder et al. notes that mock flirting is a particularly cruel form of bullying because it is difficult for the victim to respond, and it is also hurtful because the message to the victim is that she is not attractive, and is unloved (120). Mida mentioned the most profound experience with mock flirting. One of Mida's bullies, Dwayne, could have acted this way because he wanted to affirm his status. He was in the most popular clique and he played on two sports teams. With an audience, girls could see Mida's humiliation and try to avoid the same treatment.

MIDA

At the beginning of this chapter, Mida spoke about enduring different types of bullying depending the route she took to class. She could either face verbal insults from one group of boys or face mock flirting from another group of more popular boys, Dwayne in particular. Here she describes mock flirting, precisely explaining the intent behind it. Mock flirting is another way of separating the “normal” girls from the Others.

M: It was weird because there was like phases, like different classes, different bullies, different tactics, right? Some would just actually attack you verbally in terms of ‘You’re this, you’re that’ like call you down. Others would tease you in terms of pretending to flirt with you but not really, but it’s a flirting as a joke, but to get attention, to make fun of the fact that ‘Oh, you know, I’m flirting with Mida, who’s not really worthy of being flirted with so I’m gonna make fun of that by making her feel uncomfortable.’ That was, yeah, yeah.

M: Dwayne, I don’t think that he would call me down [...] he was more kind of taunting me, but he would never really use vulgar language, Dwayne never did, to me. He was more kind of like, suggestive, to try and belittle me in terms of, I wasn’t pretty or whatever. [Mock fawning voice] ‘Oh, oh, Mida, oh, hi’ and just mocking me almost, like as a mockery.

Mock flirting is a subtle yet effective display of power, and a form of gender policing. It sounds like the bullies are being nice, but the cruelty lies in the “niceness.” Mock flirting accomplishes three things: the first is that it reinforces the message that boys have the power to rank girls based on their perceived attractiveness and the power to reinforce gender norms (Eder et al. 119). Second, it also reinforces the idea that male attention is an important part of validating femininity and a girl’s sense of self-worth, and three, it also reveals where the bully and the victim stand within the heterosexual matrix. In the theory chapter I discussed social capital. Those with social capital also have linguistic capital and they can secure a profit of distinction through uttering “edgy” statements that only certain people have the power to say (Thompson 18). It is interesting

that it was the popular boys who initiated this type of subtle gendered bullying. Faris and Felmlee suggest that those higher in the hierarchy of popularity cannot afford to appear overtly deviant, yet they still have to assert their superior position (49). The subtle nature of mock flirting made it an ideal way for boys to maintain their superior status, without appearing deviant, just daring (Eder et al. 37). It is also particularly difficult to respond to mock flirting because it can seem ambiguous, which makes it difficult to combat (Eder 120). The failure to cope and come back with a line is humiliating for the victim (Rigby 123). None of my participants who experienced mock flirting mentioned a strategy for responding to this type of bullying.

JACKIE

Jackie also dealt with another version of mock flirting, going to a dance and being asked to dance by a boy she liked, only to find out it was on a dare. Mock flirting could also be considered a form of exclusion, the victim is excluded from normative behaviors such as dating, or as Jackie mentions, class projects. Asking a girl to dance on a dare also has a spectacle quality to it, singling out the Other just to show everyone how different, how rejected, she is. From the outside, it may seem fairly harmless, but the fact that Jackie remembers the incident years later speaks to the effect mock flirting and exclusion can have on the victim. Jackie experienced pervasive bullying often in terms of exclusion. As Jackie mentions, she was overweight, and she says more about what it was like being fat in an American, upper middle class school in Part II.

J: The basic general patterns were excluding me for whatever reason, whether it was at a party or during class assignments, or field trips, things like that. There's lots of things I can remember, I guess...hmmm, it's like trying to pick one (laughing).

J: There was a guy that I had a really big crush on, and went to school dance and [...] I had braces and glasses for about a year, well, I still wear glasses (laughing). [...] I got them off and I tried contacts for the first time and I felt really, really pretty, and I went to sch-I was like ‘Oh my gosh I hope he dances with me!’ and he did. And I was so excited and I was going on about it to my other friend, Caitlin S., and after a couple of days of being like really excited or whatever, she’s like ‘He did it on a dare, okay?’ and I was like, ‘What?’ and so I had to call him and be like ‘Did you dance with me on a dare?’ and ‘cause like, you-I don’t know, you just don’t bring that stuff up at school, you know. And then I just kind of (sigh) ‘Fine then, be that way, I don’t care if you’re going to be like that.’

Jackie mentions that she had just had her braces removed and was wearing contacts for the first time, she felt attractive and was hoping to be treated like a “normal” girl as a result, but that is not what happened. She was still marked as Other. The fact she confronted the boy on the phone, and not at school, “you just don’t bring that stuff up at school,” reveals that she was embarrassed by the incident. Although this was a painful experience for Jackie, she also shows agency by confronting the boy about his behavior. She did not pursue it too far, however, when she says “Fine then, be that way” she appears to have accepted the situation.

Bullying is a social behavior, with bullies often working in groups. The bullying is orchestrated by a leader, who then persuades his group to join in the bullying. CJ Pascoe found that in groups boys act as gender police (89) but this behavior was much less likely when they were not in groups (107). Bullying is often socially accepted, especially in classrooms, where popular students engaged in bullying at high levels, suggesting that it is the behavior of the most popular students that becomes normative in classrooms (Salmivalli 117). This bears out in the interviews. Mida found that if the primary instigator was not there to start the bullying, the others in his group would not start. Chloe

was bullied by a group of boys. Anne was also bullied by a group on the school bus, although she did not specify if the bullies were all boys or included girls as well. As popular, “properly” masculine boys, they had the power to enforce gender norms through bullying, and friends to reinforce the bullying and encourage it. With the norms of femininity seemingly set in stone, it may have seemed normal to bully “gender deviant” girls because they were seen as “less than.” Norms are a powerful way to regulate behavior, especially in schools. As Gerald Walton writes, “more than discrete acts of violence, bullying is also social control, enacted” (12).

In my participants’ experiences, gendered bullying ranged from being called names, like bitch, fat, or ugly, being the subject of a cruel drawing, to mock flirting and exclusion. What seems to be underlying these behaviors is policing, bullies with status making it clear they are “normal” and the female participants are not. In these accounts of gendered bullying, you get a sense of how my participants felt about the bullying, but in the next section I explore it in more depth.

“What these people say to you becomes the truth:” Reaction

My participants did not, at the time, always question what their bullies were saying about them, and instead internalized the jokes and comments. According to Pierre Bourdieu, this is because their bullies were telling them something legitimate, that women are judged on their looks and “feminine” behavior, or lack thereof (Thompson 23). The bullies’ utterances had legitimacy because the bullies have symbolic capital, or power (Bourdieu, *Domination* 1). As popular boys, many possessing athletic skill and aggressiveness which are forms of social capital, they had the legitimacy to explicitly tell

the girls where they stood in the social order. The bullies were recognized as being powerful, both from the school for being sports stars, and the fact that teachers rarely intervened, and from peers for laughing at the jabs or simply acting in a complicit manner. The bullies, through exerting symbolic power and violence, played a large part in constructing the realities of my participants. For example, they worried about when and if they would be bullied, and they had the power to shape how my participants felt about themselves, as we see in this section.

Bullying's Effect on Their Sense of Self/Self-Esteem/Depression

The fruit of humiliation is either depression or violence.
Jean Vanier

Bullying takes place within the heterosexual matrix that expects a certain type of femininity. In my participants' schools, girls were expected to be pretty and athletic. The bullying had an effect on my participants' self-esteem, which led to depression for Chloe, Anne, and Mida, and destructive and suicidal thoughts for Jackie and Mida. It has been well documented that bullying can lead to depression, and female victims seem to suffer more from depression than male victims (Espelage and Swearer 373). A history of victimization predicts the onset of depression and anxiety, particularly for girls (Bond et al. 483). The depression comes from being personally attacked and internalizing what is being said, which can lead to low self-esteem (Rigby 108). On a cultural level, it can be argued that the depression also arises from realizing they have low social capital in a heteronormative environment and falling outside the bounds of heteronormativity, or being thought of as gender deviant.

Something that Anne, Mida, and Chloe⁴ shared was no longer caring about their appearance in school. One manifestation of depression, especially in adolescence, is change in appearance (Grabill et al. 245). When Mida described not caring about her hair, and wearing sweat pants to school, I wondered if my other participants reacted in a similar manner, so I started asking them. Chloe and Anne mentioned not caring about their appearance and wearing drab clothing. Chloe often wore an old sweater, and Anne tried to “blend in to the walls.” It makes sense that if someone is being bullied for their appearance, it will in turn affect the way they dress, their grooming, and the way they feel about themselves. This may be the result of feeling depressed and perhaps hopeless, they knew they would be bullied regardless of what they wore, so why even try?

MIDA

The bullying, which affected Mida every day at school, took an enormous toll on her self-perception. Mida mentions that she internalized what others said about her. She explains that being told she was ugly lead her to believe she would not date, and she felt like high school was a “glass ceiling,” a barrier she would never break through. Anne also thought no one would be interested in her romantically. In general, bullying victims internalize the destructive, painful messages embedded in the taunts and name calling (Meyer 44). Again the idea(1) of “normal” comes up. Mida knows what the culture says is a normal adolescence for a girl, to be attractive to boys. She was not considered pretty, which caused her pain. Here, she is internalizing the fact that boys’ and men’s opinions of

⁴ I do not discuss Chloe’s story directly in this section. She mentioned that bullying affected “everything,” but she did not explicitly mention depression or self-esteem. However, she did mention that her grades dropped, and did not care about her appearance, which can be symptoms of depression.

women matter to a woman's self-esteem, and that men can dictate what is proper and desirable in women.

M: Well, when, when it was happening, it was pretty hard.

H: Oh yeah.

M: I'm not gonna lie, I mean, it... challenged, I was so confused, I didn't know who I was, in terms of... a person or a girl growing up, I mean [...] all the guys that you ever know, are telling you you're ugly, you're unattractive, obviously, you're not gonna date, or you're not gonna feel any confidence.

M: I felt for such a long time, especially when I was in school, how could I ever, it was like a glass ceiling, I'll never, you'll never get through.

M: If you don't receive positive affirmation or, or anything like that then that's where it really comes down to, like, what these people say to you becomes the truth.

M: For me, dating didn't even seem like a normal option. I never would even-I would like a guy, but I would never think that he would go out with me, you know? I never really thought as a teenager 'Oh, I'm gonna have a boyfriend.' I never really thought 'Oh, yeah, I'm gonna go on a date.' Or, 'Yeah I like this guy' like a normal, teenager life, you go out and you want to do this or that or even partying, nothing ever, I never really lived that.

M: I was pretty much bullied my whole school life, so the thought of me [...] having friends was important, just to have friends. But the thought of even having somebody that would like me for who I was and be genuinely interested in terms of dating, I never, I would daydream about it, but it would always seem like a dream.

Bullying limited her ("glass ceiling") from developing a positive relationship with boys.

She mentions missing out on an important aspect of adolescence, and for heterosexual girls an important marker of heteronormativity: dating, something that other girls may take for granted, but for Mida it was a "dream," because she was considered a gender deviant, she was shut out from this, in her terms, "normal" aspect of adolescence, which becomes an important marker of social status (Thorne 153) and can also increase feelings of self-worth (Collins 5). What others see as a given seemed like a foreclosure on an

aspect of Mida's identity, or what could potentially be part of her identity, that of being part of a romantic couple.

ANNE

Anne mentions that the bullying affected her sense of self. She did not like herself, and compared herself to popular girls, thinking her life would be easier if she was pretty, which is something Mida mentions in Part II. She also mentions the longing she felt for a boyfriend, and thinking at the time that she would never have one, and would never get married. Her feelings could be a reflection of the heteronormative culture, which puts pressure on people to be part of a couple and get married, but as mentioned above it can also be important to a person's sense of self and self-esteem. Like Mida, she felt a foreclosure on an aspect of her identity, romantic relationships, and was another way of being outside the norm. As in Chloe's story, in Anne's story there is an element of feeling like a "failed woman," in not meeting expectations set out by the popular people who influence gender norms in the school, and internalizing the messages she received from her bullies, that she was fat, ugly, and would never be loved. She expresses feelings similar to Mida's, in that she felt if she had been more appropriately feminine she would not have been bullied. Anne was also bullied by her female friends, and here she describes the difference between that and being bullied by boys. Anne internalized the bullying ("you start to believe it"), and wondered what was wrong with her, a sentiment also expressed by Chloe and Mida. Although she internalized the bullying, she also shows some resistance when she says "I wasn't going to kill myself to try to fit in to their standards."

H: This type of bullying where they're talking about your appearance and that type of thing, did it affect the way that you saw yourself, or your opinion of yourself or that type of thing?

A: Yeah, very much so, [...] I spent a lot of years not liking myself at all because people tell you 'You're fat and ugly' every day, then you start to believe it, whether it's actually true or not, it's just, that's just what happens. I spent a lot of, a lot of time feeling, not really bad for myself, but, bad because I didn't meet the expectations of the people that were making fun of me. There was a lot of time spent thinking 'If I looked like this then they would like me' or that kind of thing, but, you can't really change that very well, most of the time (laughing) not without effort or money, anyway (laughing). I wasn't going to kill myself to try to fit in to their standards. I just became depressed about it instead (laughing), which was a great alternative! (laughing).

A: So it (gendered bullying) bothered me in the way it was like, 'I'm never gonna have a boyfriend,' I just resigned myself to the fact that I'd probably, live alone for my entire life, but I was 16 when I made that decision, I didn't want to get married because I probably wouldn't. So it was just, like, my friends making fun of me and bullying me really bothered me because I wanted friends, but I knew I could go back to them. And regardless of how badly they bullied me I'd still be their friend, they'd still be my friends, that was it. But when the boys would bully me, it's like, 'Well, I'm going to be alone forever, it's a good thing I have my friends' (laughing). It was just kind of a different way of being upset by it, but I think I was equally upset by both most of the time.

Like Mida, Anne felt a foreclosure on a potential identity, that of being a girlfriend or romantic partner. She also highlights the importance of having friends while enduring bullying. The participants did not mention if there were boys in their social circle, or boys on the same social level that they were interested in romantically. If I was conducting the interviews again, I would ask this question to see if all their interactions with boys were negative and explore any positive relationships with boys.

JACKIE

Jackie mentions feeling restricted and that her life would never open up, which is something Mida and Anne also felt. She discusses how depression manifested for her. She felt hopeless, and it led to overeating. She also compares herself to thinner, popular girls in Part II. She also seemed to blame herself, wanting to “fix herself,” again internalizing the bullying experience. The term “fix myself” can also allude to the idea that if she could transform into someone “normal,” she would be accepted by her peers. This is not unusual in a neoliberal culture, where the blame is thought to lie with the individual (Gill and Scharff 6) and problems can always be overcome if one is willing to do the work. Another neoliberal aspect of this story is the fact that Jackie thought money could solve her problem, which is also a reflection of her upper-middle class upbringing. The other participants did not mention trying to “buy” friendships.

J: Yeah, I-I definitely think I mean, I wasn't clinically diagnosed or anything, but I definitely was depressed, I just, I felt hopeless, it's like it didn't matter how much things I bought. My family likes food and there's *so* many restaurants in [city]. [...] a lot of our activities were around eating, and so, I ate a lot of feelings.

J: So I guess it was just kind of like, sort of try to figure out how I could fix myself so that they would like me. Everyone wants approval, so, so that's sort of where I was with it. And, my mom's trying to be like 'It's *not* you, it's them, they have the problem, [...] be yourself, be true to yourself, do what you want, don't let people shut you down' sort of thing.

For my participants, experiencing and enduring gendered bullying lead to depression, which is common among bullying victims (Gruber and Fineran 636). They can internalize what is said about them, but also learning they are not the norm, but rather the Other, the deviant, the abject also contributes to their depression. Their position within the heterosexual matrix is not a desirable one.

“I never, ever thought my life would open up:” Destructive Feelings and Suicidal Thoughts

For Jackie and Mida, their reaction to being bullied went beyond depression to feelings of destruction (to use Jackie’s term) and suicidal ideation. As we have seen from high profile cases such as Amanda Todd and Rehteah Parsons, some children and teenagers are driven to suicide due to bullying (Taber). What seems to be driving Jackie and Mida’s intense feelings and thoughts is that they felt that the bullying was not going to end, and also it was gendered, attacking an important part of their identity. In this section especially, the profound effect bullying can have on the victims is evident. Gendered bullying reveals it is still important for girls to be attractive and display a proper femininity, and if you do not, the results can be devastating.

DESTRUCTIVE FEELINGS

“Destructive feelings” is the term Jackie uses. She describes this as a desire to “lash out,” which is not considered proper gendered behavior for girls. The desire to smash a glass could be a way of wanting to externalize her feelings. “I never thought my life would open up” echoes a sentiment Anne expressed, she felt she would be alone for the rest of her life, which again speaks to the impact bullying can have on victims. As bullying goes on, the victim finds it difficult to escape the situation (feeling “boxed in”). They may become isolated, which is in itself stressful, and the bullying situation is increasingly seen as uncontrollable, and seems like it will go on indefinitely (Rigby 124). Luckily for Jackie, her parents had the means to move the family back to Canada.

J: So I guess I was just, I was depressed, and, and just by the end of it, I was having these destructive feelings where I just, I just wished I could just lash out, it was the sort of thing if I saw a glass on a table, I-I would fantasize for 20 minutes

about what would happen if I whipped it at the wall and all the repercussions and things like that, 'cause it was just so, so like boxed in and I just, I never, ever thought my life would open up, I just thought this is gonna be the rest of my life. I was this close to going to a private, Catholic all-girls school and I was just like, 'Oh my God,' it's really scary to say, now, because I'm so secure with myself, but I don't know if I would be here today if we had stayed in [city]. And my mom recognized that, and so did my dad, and my brother was bullied, too, so [...] none of us really fit in there, so it was just kind of like, 'Okay we gotta get out of here.' And then things just kind of went up from there.

Bullying affected my participants later in life (see Part III). Their bullying experience endured. In that section I explain how past experiences affected them to this day, but here we see time working in a different way. Time is still felt as a duration, for example they felt the bullying would go on forever, and that their life would never open up. Bullying becomes a thing that stays in that the experience gets projected into the future, it has become a remarkable point and they see bullying as placing limits on their future (Deleuze 62). In other words, they can only see their future in terms of bullying. Jackie's bullying experience gets projected backwards in time as well, when she says that in the present that if the bullying continued she is not sure she would be alive today.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Mida mentioned contemplating suicide when she was at summer camp when she was 14 or 15 years old. Based on her gendered bullying, and being bullied in general her entire time in school, she felt that her life was not going to improve, but her faith stopped her from ending her life. Her story illustrates just how much bullying can hurt, that children and teenagers would choose death over another day at school. Suicidal ideation appears often in the bullying literature. For example, in their study of adults' recollections

of school bullying, Schafer et al. found that 22 percent of former victims considered suicide once, and 13 percent more than once (379).

Mida, in talking about what caused her to contemplate suicide, compares herself to the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, a story in which a man is trapped in an ugly animal's body and is reviled by the townspeople ("I'll always be...the unlovable person"). Girls not normatively feminine are seen as Other, much like the Beast, which echoes the monster drawing incident. She also makes her relationship to normal explicit ("everybody else was normal") while she was an "outcast." Mida also speaks of feeling held back in some way. These metaphors reveal that my participants saw bullying as preventing them from fully living their lives.

M: It just kind of spiraled I guess from there (drawing incident) and there were times that I thought about (nervous laughter) ending it all, I guess with things like that, when you're an adolescent, and you have to have that pressure on you and feeling that you're all alone, it does take an effect on you.

H: I'm just wondering what prevented you from acting on your feelings, was it just a passing thought and something that you knew you'd never act on, what kept you from trying (suicide)?

M: No I was pretty adamant about acting on it, just because [...] it's really hard to see the light, see something. And even if your parents can say 'Oh, I love you' but they're your parents, they gotta be nice to you, they're supposed to say that. I was actually very serious about killing myself. And it was never 'I'm going to kill myself' but [...] there didn't seem to be an out, and it was like, if this is what is all about, I don't want any more of it. I couldn't, nothing was getting better, because people always say 'Everything gets better' it wasn't getting better. And the only thing that did stop me was the fact of my faith, that I felt that there was some kind of divine intervention, because I remember I was at a camp and I was all set, I (nervous laughing) you know, the hair dryer, I was gonna hang myself, that was what I was gonna do.

M: When I look back at it now, I don't know, I can still see myself, and the fact that I was so, I was really desperate, I couldn't see a way out, I really couldn't. Now of course, I'm a little bit more flex-in terms of my faith, [...] but at that moment, I'm very thankful that I was so committed to my faith, that it brought me

through, I really did feel like, that God, not spoke to me, but I felt something telling me not to do it. But it wouldn't been for that, I definitely would have gone ahead because I didn't feel like I had an out, no.

M: I was looking at the cord and I thought 'Ok, well, I could put that over' you know (nervous laughing), kind of plan the whole thing of how I would do it. I was like 'Oh, yeah, that cord's long enough, okay, that'll fit' and actually making a plan, I was gonna do it. And it was just based on the fact that I didn't feel, I felt very unworthy, like I was some kind of strange creature, everybody else was normal, and I felt very forlorn, like I was, like an outcast. But I had no way of even coming back, like I was gonna be forever kind of (nervous laughing) I would say like *Beauty and The Beast*, like the Beast, I guess I felt kind of like, I'll always be that person, the unlovable person.

M: I obviously, I made it out ok, I'm still here, but if I didn't have my religion I wouldn't be here, that's a matter of fact, I would have killed myself, 'cause I couldn't take it anymore. It's blunt but that's the truth. And I think, sometimes people have to get that, if people don't feel they have any hope, then that's it. Then, they're gonna kill themselves because, why wouldn't they, what do they have to live for, right?

Like Jackie, if there had not been some sort of intervention, Mida believes she might not be here. Her words: "gonna be forever," "I couldn't, I really couldn't," and "there didn't seem to be an out," suggests that she was pushed to the limits of endurance and experienced hopelessness. As I read and re-read the interview portions of this section, noting the language my participants used, it struck me how often they spoke of limits, of foreclosure, of feeling cut off from certain aspects of life. For example, "boxed in" (Jackie), and "live alone my entire life" (Anne). Mida felt so restricted and cornered that she thought the only way out was to end her life. For my participants, bullying placed limits on the future, and foreclosed on certain activities and ways of thinking about the self, which for my participants took years to reverse, with varying degrees of success. In this section, we saw the effect that gendered bullying had on my participants while it was happening. Bullying, both in the short- and long-term, places limits on the victim. The

fact that they felt limited speaks to the pressure to conform to hegemonic notions of femininity, and the terrible costs involved. Although bullying affected them negatively, in general they did not try to resist, or gave up when they realized it was not effective. Chloe resisted, however, and was successful. I discuss her experience below.

A Soldier to the Bone: Chloe Fights Back

My participants had various methods of dealing with bullying. All tried telling someone, either parents or a teacher, but it seemed to have little effect, except in Jackie's case. However, for most bullied children and adolescents, the chance of telling someone leading to improvement becomes lower with age, and this increases the chance that the situation will not improve (Rigby 68). For Mida, telling teachers and parents had no effect so she stopped. For Chloe, her family was struggling with their own issues, so she did not want to burden her parents further. All participants tried to ignore or protest by talking back to the bully, but that did not seem to work. Anne related a story of sexualized bullying, where she was smacked on the bottom, and she in turn slapped the boy in the face. She was the one who got in trouble, and she still suffered gendered bullying afterward. The bullying only really ended for my participants when they graduated or transferred to another school.

Chloe physically fought back, however. In this section, she describes why she resisted. She was the only participant to mention using physical force to end the bullying. Anne also got physical with a bully, but not to the extent Chloe did. I explore this facet of her bullying experience in depth, because it is unusual in my participants' interviews and in the literature. Craig et al. found that using physical force was not a common strategy

for girls (471). This may be because it is not seen as “nice,” or feminine, behavior. But this “not nice” behavior seems to have helped end Chloe’s torment.

I will note that Chloe hinted at the physical altercation in her first interview, she elaborated in an e-mail and in the second interview. Here Chloe explains why she used physical force: the bullies threatened to start harassing her younger sister Alice. Chloe was terrified of her main bully, which reveals the power he had, but also the fear seems to have fueled her actions. Chloe cites her temper and her family’s military history (“we’re soldiers to the bone”) to explain why she took this measure. Although girls are supposed to adopt a masculine posture of assertiveness (Ringrose and Walkerdine 10), it is still considered gender deviant to be aggressive and display anger, especially physical aggression, because girls are expected to “perform niceness” (Ringrose and Renold, “Normative” 584). Chloe also mentions that when she gets angry she loses “all control,” which suggests unruliness, another trait girls and women are not supposed to display (Hartley 64). Chloe became violent with her bullies, and this made them back off. In this section we also have an idea of what the bully thought of Chloe (“the freak”), she was thought of as deviant and Other.

She did attempt to recoup her femininity by telling me that she hates violence, and only acts that way when provoked and felt “righteous” about it, perhaps in a way trying to downplay the incident, although she then went on to say that looking back, she still would have used violence. In Part II Chloe says that she felt like she failed at femininity, but this failure at being a “proper” girl helped her defeat her bullies, it allowed her to escape the norms that discipline female behavior (Halberstam 3). Could Chloe’s behavior be

interpreted as bullying? I regret not asking her this question directly, but it seems clear that she saw her actions as necessary to save her sister from bullying or assault.

C: I was terrified of him (main bully), until high school. He and some of his guy friends that had eventually gotten into it and ... started going after me for the sake of it because they had learned it was fun, too. Found out that I had a little sister, and they decided that they wanted to come see my little sister. And I found them before they found her, waiting behind her school for her. They came to school the weekend after, and said they had gotten into a fight with another school, from some kids with another school. And, they never, ever, came near me again.

H: Ok, ok, so I just want to make sure that I understand. So, they found out that you had a little sister and they were going to... come after her after school?

C: I have no idea if they just wanted to go see her, and like talk to her, or if they were going to try something, or what. But all I know is, I heard the words "We're gonna go find the freak's little sister" and it's like, three or four big, strong guys on the football team versus my eight year old sister. So, no (dry laugh). No, no. That's not ok.

C (e-mail): When they said they were going after my sister, I tackled one of them into a wood pile. Two others turned and saw, tried to come over and one tripped on the wood, the other I knocked back. Then the leaders noticed and they regrouped and ran.

H: So after that happened they realized that, it seems like that they, well, they still did it but it was...

C: They didn't push it as far. [...] 'Cause they knew what would happen. I've been genuinely angry three times in my life and my family's military history goes back to 1033, which means we're soldiers to the bone, and if you...three times in my life and every single time I have won the fight. So, and every single time I've been outnumbered, somebody bigger than me or somebody stronger than me. And, I think I was seven it took four teachers to pull me off a grade six kid. Because he made my friend cry (laughing).

H: Oh really? (Laughing) Oh, my dear.

C: I...don't do anger well. And it's funny 'cause normally I hate violence, and like, I go to peace rallies and I volunteer and I do all of this stuff, but the second you go after my friends or my family, I lose all control.

H: Did you worry about getting in trouble about that, how did you feel about standing up for yourself in that way?

C: I wasn't standing up for me, I was standing up for Alice.

H: Oh for your sister, yeah.

C: Yeah, so, at that point I was really pissed I was like 'You go ahead and fuckin' say something, tell them you were trying to assault an eight-year-old girl.'

H: Oh, ok, so you said that to them like if 'You try to say something then-'

C: Yeah, I was like 'Dare it, dare you, try it, go ahead.' So, I-I have a temper, I do have a temper. But the thing is the very few times that I lose my temper, everybody's on my side, 'cause it's righteous anger. I don't get pissed unless I deserve to get pissed, so.

H: Okay, so you weren't really, it wasn't so much for yourself, it was for your sister.

C: No, I knew I was in the right there, and I knew that at least was one fight I would win. It's like 'Go ahead, you see what happens to you, you go right ahead.'

H: Okay. So, because you were in the right, you were saying, so you didn't really worry about getting into trouble 'cause you knew you could say it was because they were going to go after your sister.

C: It wasn't so much I didn't think I was gonna get in trouble, I didn't care. I would make them pay worse than I paid.

H: Oh, okay, so you weren't worried about-

C: Yeah.

H: Any kind of repercussions, okay.

C: Like, that wasn't the issue at that point.

H: So after this point they lost interest as you were saying.

C: (Laughing) They got scared, 'cause they learned I would beat the shit out of them and I could beat the shit out of them. They kind of realized that the whole time I could have gone to town on them at any given point and I just never did.

H: Ok, I see. So, have your thoughts changed about that now, would you have handled it differently or do you think it was just out of necessity that you acted, or do you have any different thoughts about it now?

C: I still would have beat the shit out of them. I'm sorry, that's where I draw the line, you don't go after my eight-year-old-sister. I have a lot of understanding, I

try to be put myself in the other person's shoes kind of thing, but, no, 'Your thinking is flawed at that point, let's beat some new thoughts into your brain.'

C: I hate violence. Every time I get into a physical altercation with somebody, even, not a physical altercation, I get sick after, just sick to my stomach, I hate violence, I'm not a fan of it. But if it's necessary, I can win.

Chloe was bullied for being gender deviant, but acting in a gender deviant manner is what also helped her end the bullying. There is something subversive, perhaps even dangerous, about being the Other, as Anne mentions in Part II. In Chloe's story, we see this idea in effect. Hartley argues that women who do not conform to the hegemonic gender order are a threat to the power structure (64-65). Chloe's ability and willingness to act in a non-normative, gender deviant manner saved her sister from bullying, and greatly reduced her own bullying problem.

In this portion of the analysis chapter, I wanted to give the reader a sense of what gendered bullying looks like, why it may happen, and how it feels for the victim. Gendered bullying was experienced in several different ways for my participants, through exclusion because they were seen as Other or gender deviants, mock flirting, and disparaging appearance. One of my research questions is: What is the relationship between bullying and hegemonic idea(l)s of masculinity and femininity? The purpose of gendered bullying is to maintain popular boys' status as "properly" masculine boys, and to police heteronormativity, punishing those who do not appear "normal." The ways old and new forms of power interact and influence each other, old forms through visible punishment as a way to display and maintain social capital, and new forms of power in policing norms of hegemonic feminine behavior. Bullying also reveals that boys have the power to rank and critique girls' femininity. Girls who are "too much;" too loud, too fat,

too “ugly,” and too unruly are often the ones who are punished. As you will see in Part II, Anne and Mida did not particularly want to be like the popular girls, but they still suffered the consequences of not measuring up.

My participants mention feeling isolated and depressed, ugly and unwanted. The profound effects gendered bullying had on my participants at the time reveals how damaging gendered bullying can be. Gendered bullying is an attack on a girl’s sense of self, but it also shows her and others where she stands in the heterosexual matrix. As Butler mentions, heterosexuality must always reinforce itself (*Bodies* 232), and gendered bullying can be a way that this is done. Gendered bullying is a manifestation of struggles around gender norms, while simultaneously producing and maintaining a value system based on gendered identity (Duncan 131). In this way, gendered bullying is part of a continuum of sexism and heteronormativity, one that shapes the heterosexual matrix.

In Part I, I explored what it is like to be a gender deviant in the matrix. In Part II, I look at the “winners” in the matrix, the popular boys and girls, their environment, and how they affected my participants. I do this in order to understand the environment in which gendered bullying took place from the victims’ point of view, because they have subjugated knowledges on what it means to be a “gender deviant” girl in junior and senior high school, and can help explain why gendered bullying occurs.

Part II: Living in the Heterosexual Matrix

In Part I, I examined the gendered bullying my participants endured and its effect on them. In this section I explore my participants' thoughts about the environment in which gendered bullying occurs, such as who bullied them and who was seen as "normal" compared to my participants. If bullying is about power, in this case the power to police gender norms, then the relations of ruling in schools must be understood. Schools are governed and supported by the state, or other ruling institutions like religion, and often reflect hegemonic ideologies (Khayatt 49). To understand the hegemonic ideologies of my participants' schools, I want to explore the spaces where bullying occurred and how the peer groups were organized, guided by my participants' subjected knowledge gained from gendered bullying.

Schools are one place where we learn to "do" gender, and "appropriate" and "inappropriate" gender expressions (Khayatt 49). In the theory chapter, I wrote about Judith Butler's concept of the heterosexual matrix (*Gender* 208). We see ourselves and others within this matrix, and those who are perceived as not fitting the norm in terms of gender are often punished. The matrix is not fixed, it changes through time and culture and individuals' position within it can change. I argue that the schools my participants attended in North America in the 1990s and 2000s had similar versions of the heterosexual matrix, which is model of gender intelligibility that is defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (Butler, *Gender* 208). If we understand the norm, perhaps we can better understand why certain people are bullied. The students who were the gender ideals (athletic boys and pretty, often athletic girls) were popular. Other

students were measured against them, and some, like my participants, were seen as failing to measure up and as a result they were bullied. In this section, I asked the participants to describe the heterosexual matrix, or the gender norms, in their school and how popular boys and girls displayed their power and social capital.

Eating Lunch on the Floor: Space and Status

It is important to set the scene where my participants' bullying took place. As bullied, sometimes socially isolated girls, they were aware of those students with more social capital, in part because popular boys were their bullies. Those who are oppressed have to watch and monitor those in power to avoid persecution (Lorde "Difference" 114), and this was true for my participants. As social isolates, my participants had subjugated knowledge of what it means to exist on the margins of a social system. Examining the school climate reveals the school as a place of competition, where everyone knew their place, or should know it. Where people take up space, and how much space they occupy, is a form of social capital (Bourdieu, "Social Space" 20). Donna Eder found a similar rigid social stratification in their ethnographic work. The popular group of a junior high school sat in a certain area of the cafeteria, and less popular students on the other side (Eder et al. 40-42). Anne and Mida were very aware of the significance of where people congregated in their schools, and all participants were aware of the power structures in their schools and where they and others were situated in it.

CHLOE

Chloe did not find that the popular people socialized in certain areas of her junior high, yet she also notes that they stood out, using the metaphor of coloured pegs. The

popular boys and girls were more visible, and visibility was positive for them, whereas visibility for “gender deviants” is painful (Faris and Felmlee 48-49).

C: Think of one of those boards where you have all the coloured pegs, all the pegs are different colours, they’re all mixed in together, but some of them are, like neon colours as opposed to the regular colours.

H: Oh, ok, so the neons would be like the popular ones.

C: Yeah.

The biggest division she noticed in the school was class. The disparity between, in her words, the have and have nots was noticeable, and the “haves” had a sense of entitlement they demonstrated by displaying their social and economic capital.

C: Everybody in my class, their parents owned their homes, and mine rented, and they had brand-name clothing and I shopped second hand, and they got cars for their birthdays and my car broke down.

H: But do you think that the people who were more upper, I guess I’ll say upper middle class, they were treated more favorably?

C: They acted like they should be and so they were.

H: Oh, ok, so it was like a sense of entitlement then.

C: Yes, very much so. They thought they were better and so they were given better.

The “haves” had a type of capital which Chloe did not feel she possessed. Those with monetary capital (or, in the case of teenagers, access to their parents’ money) often have high social capital and the ability to be properly gendered. In comparison, Anne and Mida went to schools where class did not appear to be a significant division, whereas Jackie attended to a school where everyone was a “have.” Despite these class differences,

gendered bullying was an issue at every participant's school, revealing that sexism can affect any girl regardless of their class.

MIDA

Mida remembers the social divisions in her small, rural school as being binary. There was a division between the popular and the not popular, or the "ruffians" as she calls them. She also mentions the bench, which was a row of benches in the main hallway of the school, where the popular people socialized. It was a preferred area, as other students had to sit on the floor, and the farther away your clique's area was from the benches, the less popular you were, or as Mida says, "then there were the outcasts" to describe herself and her friends. Sitting in a preferential area is a way of displaying social capital or power, and it is not all that different from certain groups of people occupying certain areas of a city or town, or certain spaces, such as clubs and restaurants. The more popular, heteronormative students occupied a privileged space in Mida's school which reveals that a school can be a microcosm of the larger societal macrocosm.

M: [...] it was really the popular and not popular, [...] there was the really popular kids, then there were the kids that were trying to be popular that were kind of on the outskirts. There was definitely the popular ones, and you knew who the popular people were, you knew, and they made sure you knew.

H: How do you think they made it known?

M: I think just the way they would go about, you know, the bench (laughing). You had to be cool to sit on the bench, that was the thing, if you were on the bench, you made it. You were popular (laughing).

M: The prime (laughing) popular people sat on the bench outside the cafeteria, that was the spot, in the morning, lunchtime, break, if you were on the bench, that made a statement, you were popular, you made it to the bench. If you're in the cafeteria, you're just regular, nothing to fear, nothing really going on, you're just chillin' out. If you're in the hallway, you're either kind of like a hippie, like, you really didn't care, and then there were kind of like the outcasts.

Mida states the popular people made it known that they were popular by the places they congregated. She also mentions that the “regular” kids had “nothing to fear,” suggesting that popular students had the power to instill fear in other students, something Anne mentions in her story. The popular kids had the power to punish other students. These regular or “normal” kids did not have to fear because they were seen as “normal,” they did not stand out like the “deviant” students. Below, Anne builds on this idea by stating the popular people actually used their designated area as an opportunity to bully less popular students.

ANNE

Anne attended school in rural Nova Scotia. Similar to Mida’s school, the more popular students had areas that they claimed as their own. The outdoor area known as the quad was popular territory during warmer months, and it was the place where the less popular students would go when the weather turned cold, as a punishment, as she describes it, for having a low social status. She uses the word “control” (i.e. power) to describe the popular people’s relation to the area, they had power to start rumours and “make your school life hell.” She also mentions that it did not feel safe to be in the popular students’ spaces, and it was better to be invisible to them. Social isolates and popular students are highly visible, but visibility hurts the isolates, leaving them open to ridicule (Eder et al. 49). In this situation, Anne found it helpful to avoid the popular students in order to avoid being noticed and possibly ridiculed, echoing Audre Lorde’s assertion of the relationship between those in power and those without (“Difference” 114). Donna Eder et al. also found that some lower-status students feared being ridiculed

by higher-status students and would avoid going to their area of the cafeteria (42).

However, even if you did not “screw with them,” as Anne says, avoiding the popular people didn’t fully prevent bullying, as Anne’s experience attests. The popular groups displayed their social capital (Thompson 23) by punishing and intimidating students in covert ways, and occupying a coveted space, both actions are forms of symbolic violence.

H: So, did the area where you socialized on the school grounds, did that reflect social status, so would popular kids maybe have one area, and then maybe like the less popular kids would be maybe somewhere else?

A: Yeah, that definitely happened. Uh, especially in the cafeteria, there were certain tables that you just didn’t sit at because it’s where the cool kids did, and I think there were fairly typical places, if you were spending your lunch in the library, you were not one of the cool kids (laughing). [...] We had a really nice quad outside of the cafeteria, and usually the cool kids would stay out there in the summer, in the nice weather. But if it was cold, then, that’s where the not so cool kids would go. It was like they were getting punished for not being one of the cool kids, so they had to go stand out in the cold. There were a couple of other areas that, I almost didn’t even wanna walk past, because the little cliques were standing there, and they’d always have a comment when you walked by or something like that. And then there were a couple areas where you just felt safer in, usually the more out of the way areas that people weren’t gonna bother you in and that kind of stuff, yeah. And especially the library, the library was my friend for quite some time (laughing).

A: ... like I said there were certain areas that I didn’t want to walk past, because I knew they controlled them. So they didn’t have absolute power, but they had enough that you didn’t wanna screw with them because they could start whatever rumor they wanted about you and make your school life hell and just be general nuisances and jerks. So you’d try to stay either out of their way or on their good side, if you weren’t noticed, then that was the best part.

Anne also articulates that the popular students caused her to regulate her own behavior, avoiding their areas, which is a form of discipline (Foucault, *Discipline* 187). In Anne and

Mida's stories, we see popular students using space to display their social capital and as a way to influence others' behavior.

JACKIE

Jackie recalls being bullied when she started attending a private American school in grade two. She was bullied until she returned to Canada to attend high school. Here I focus on her time in junior high in the early 2000s. Popular children were favoured, and given more accolades for their achievements. Although every student had material wealth, some had more social capital than others, as evidenced by the fact that some children's accomplishments were celebrated more than others.

J: I guess I saw them as being given more advantages. In school they worked in sports, they had recognition for their achievements. If one of the popular kids did something, won a trophy, did something extracurricular and was recognized for it, sometimes there'd be big celebrations, and announcements over the PA and all this stuff. I only, well I shouldn't say only, I did this spelling bee and [...] I got fairly far up. It was, like, an announcement, one day, on the PA system. It was like 'Jackie did blah blah blah' and that was it, you know, if it had of been Shane or Melanie or somebody, there would have been a cake and it would have been this huge news report to all the parents on how fantastic they are. So, they definitely did get more recognition for things that they accomplished, compared to, so I guess that in that way they did seem like they had more power.

Unlike Mida and Anne's schools, there was not as much separation between popular students. The popular group was not so clearly defined, she mentions a small group of popular boys and girls known as The Crew that may have been short-lived. This may be due to the fact that it was a small, homogenous school. I asked her to elaborate about The Crew.

J: (She lists the names of four boys and two girls in The Crew). All those girls that would play jokes like that and the boys that were popular and played sports, they were sort of a group and they'd hang out and, so they all sort of would sit at their table and goof around

and flirt with each other, and you know, the girls that didn't, we'd sit there and be like '(Sigh) what are they doing? They're so, like, skanky and how can they be all over the boys like that?'

Although The Crew may have been short-lived, Jackie still remembers their activities, and feeling left out. She also mentions flirting, something that is important in adolescents' social lives. The popular girls displayed their social capital through flirting with popular boys. She calls the girls "skanky" for flirting with boys, and as separate from these popular girls because she was one of "the girls that didn't." As mentioned in Part I, bullying often left my participants feeling out left out of activities such as dating. She observed The Crew as an outsider, and seems to reveal feelings of ambivalence about her position in regards to this clique. In hindsight, her ambivalence is something I would have asked to her to speak more about.

The Importance of Sports

The majority of the boys who bullied my participants were popular, and popularity in their schools meant playing sports. It is another way, like sitting in preferential areas, of displaying social capital, in this case through physical capital (Bourdieu, "Social Space" 20). Those on certain sports teams, such as hockey and basketball, appeared to receive preferential treatment, just as professional athletes are revered in our culture. The difference is only one of scale. I mention this because displays of athletic talent, especially in more violent sports like hockey, are an important aspect of hegemonic masculinity (Eder et al. 37; Klein 26; Messner 93). Playing sports can bestow power. For example, athletes can have greater control of their time and space in school than other students (Eder et al. 13). In my participants' schools, playing sports made

students more visible because of pep rallies, game announcements, and athletic jackets. This visibility contributed to their popularity, whereas isolates are visible for negative reasons (Eder et al. 49). I do not want to portray the bullies as mean jocks, but merely to show that they constituted a large part of the heteronormative, hegemonic masculinity of the school and helped circulate ideas of what was considered normal. They held power in the school, and as we saw in Part I, they felt entitled to police those girls who did not meet the standards of heteronormative femininity.

CHLOE

The praise and social capital many athletes receive for acting aggressively may spill into other areas of their lives (Messner 109). Chloe seems to have understood this.

C: They were taught that being aggressive did, got you further. They took the lesson well.

H: So, were most of the popular guys, were they into sports? Was that a big deal at your school?

C: Oh God, yes, yes.

C: And then there are the sports team coaches who encourage people like (whispers) 'Act like you got hurt on the field, we'll get a penalty kick.' So you get shit like that, too, it encourages them not only to be aggressive but to be deceitful.

Chloe reveals that she believes acting aggressively in sports may have contributed to bullying, and that those in authority, like coaches, encouraged this type of behavior, it was in fact learned behavior. The athletic boys appeared to have social capital, which they then used to bully others.

MIDA

In Mida's school as well sports were a very important aspect of school life, and athletic students were at the top of the popularity food chain. If a student was on a team

like hockey, soccer, or basketball, it was guaranteed that he or she would be popular.

Sports are another display of social capital, like sitting on the bench for the popular students in Mida's school.

M: They (the popular students) were living it. Not that they were anything special because looking back they really weren't, they were just regular like everybody else, but, I think you're right, like sports, definitely helped to define who became popular.

H: Yeah, did you ever feel the people on the sports team were given preferential treatment?

M: Oh, absolutely, yeah, yeah. I think the teachers definitely, like if you were good in sports or just the general administration, you were favored. You were good in sports they'd announce it on the PA system. [...] there wasn't really an effort made to try and find something for different groups of people to kind of accommodate everybody, it was, like, either you're this or you're that, that's it.

Mida mentions that athletic students were "favoured." One way this happened was through announcements, suggesting that their achievements are important and should be celebrated. They had a valuable type of physical capital, and it translated into social capital. These announcements also made them visible in a positive way (Faris and Felmlee 48). Her remark of "that's it," suggests how permanent your social position in school can feel. This feeling was also evident in the first section of the chapter, participants mentioning that they did not think their situation would change. Mida appears to have been critical of the social system. Looking back, she sees that the athletes were "not that special," revealing that her thoughts have changed over the years, which I believe is a form of resistance to, or at least an awareness of, the hegemonic gender order.

ANNE

Sports were an important part of Anne's school culture. In the previous section, Anne notes that the less popular students were being punished by not being able to

socialize in the quad. Anne also notes the hierarchy of sports, and describes who fit where in the “pyramid,” to use her term. Her descriptions suggest that there was a hierarchy in her school with the athletic students at the top.

A: Hockey was a big thing at (school). Anybody that was on the hockey team was pretty much automatically elevated to popularity, whether they were popular before they were on the team or not. [...] If you were good at sports, you were automatically elevated regardless of your status prior to being on the team, even if you weren't great at them, if you were moderately popular at all, it also boosted you up, and yeah, sports were a major part of our school.

Like Mida mentions, Anne saw the athletic students as being “elevated” and were seen as better than the other students.

JACKIE

In Jackie's school almost everyone played a sport, but some student athletes were favoured over others. She also reveals how sports were a mark of “normality,” because if you were not in sports there was “something wrong with you.” As an overweight girl, she stood outside the popular, sporty realm, although she did play volleyball for a period of time.

J: Oh, there's definitely an emphasis on athletics, *everybody* was in sports, everybody was in everything. If you weren't doing a whole slew of activities there was something wrong with you [...] I was on volleyball for a couple of years, but again (sigh) the school was really biased and I wasn't up to their athletic caliber, so I wasn't on the team the next year.

In this section I have tried to explore the popular boys, from the perspective of the bullied. Boys (as well as girls) who played sports were popular, and Chloe made a connection between aggression on the playing field and aggression in the school. In the

next section, I examine my participant's thoughts on popular girls, who my participants were compared to, in greater detail.

Queens of the School: Popular Girls as Super Girls

This is the way I described the concept of the super girl to my participants, thinking about the concept in terms of the popular girls in my school (from Mida's second interview, edited for clarity):

H: There is a concept of the ideal girl that has changed in the last 20 years or so. Before this time, as long as you were quiet and pretty you were "doing girl" well. But now, it is also expected that girls embody masculine elements as well, to be good at sports, get good grades, and be outwardly more assertive.

If I was doing the interviews again, I would not bring up this concept as it appears to be leading, as I mentioned in the research strategies chapter. However, it was a concept that seemed to resonate with my participants.⁵

The idea of the super girl is another example of symbolic capital, which is the power to construct reality and what is perceived as the norm (Bourdieu, *Language* 166). However, people also have the ability to question the norm (Haskell and Burtch 106). For example, although Anne saw the popular girls as having privileges, she knew she had some advantage over them, because she did not have to work as hard as they did to perform femininity, which could be interpreted as a form of resistance to the gender order.

The popular girls my participants' described reflected the culture's ideal of femininity: pretty, accomplished, and athletic. Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote about

⁵ During the interviews, when I made a comment or had an interpretation the participants did not agree with, all had no problem telling me, and I am absolutely positive that if they did not agree with the Super Girl theory, they would have told me.

popular girls as women, “With envy and admiration, I observed the porcelain perfection of their smoothly ticking days” (4). Recent research has revealed that being attractive in high school favourably affects life trajectories (Gordon et al. 1). For my participants, at least when they were in high school, they felt the bullying would go on forever and they would never be accepted as themselves or have a romantic relationship. It did not appear that their lives would have a favorable outcome, in part because of gendered bullying. In the literature review, I argued that the girls were bullied because they were not seen as performing gender “correctly,” and as a result were labelled gender deviants (Ringrose and Walkerdine 12-13). As Duncan argues, one of the goals of early adolescence is to have a desired, properly gendered sexual reputation (139). In this system, adolescence becomes a time of competition (Duncan 139), meaning someone has to fail. My participants failed, and the consequences of failing, bullying and ridicule, is what I discussed in Part I. Now, I examine my participants’ thoughts on the popular girls, the ones who got “gold stars” at performing femininity, the ones my participants were judged against and found wanting.

CHLOE

In order to understand why my participants were bullied, I think it is important to learn about the girls who were popular and where they fit into their school’s social hierarchy compared to my participants. We get a sense that she was being compared to, and compared herself to, the “tall, skinny, pretty girls” and feeling that she was failing at being a “proper” feminine girl. Speaking about this perceived failure upsets her in the

interview. Being compared to popular girls negatively affected my other participants as well, but Anne also had another reaction, which I discuss in her section.

C: There was a defined popular clique, like the tall, skinny, pretty girls and the boys that played sports and were good-looking, and, but they mingled pretty freely with everybody else. So they hung out together more often than not.

H: So it was sort of a mix, all, but generally like tall and pretty as you were saying, conventionally, conventional, I will say. Did you ever compare yourself to those popular girls, like did you feel you were different from them-

C: Yes, I was far away from them, so, that's what I should be, but not, I fail, so. (She begins to cry).

When Chloe started crying, I ask if she wants to take a break or end the interview, but she wanted to keep going. She did not elaborate on this feeling of failure, and I did not want to press her when she was so visibly upset. I think her reaction reveals the powerful effect norms can have on our lives. "Failure" here is placed in a neoliberal, postfeminist context, where in order to be successful, you must work on yourself and display a proper femininity (Gill and Scharff 7). Chloe's reaction shows how it can feel when one does not live up to a norm. Her reaction also shows how norms, thought of in terms of symbolic violence, are taken for granted. At the time she did not seem to question the hierarchy of femininity and her place in it, which reveals how insidious and "natural" norms appear to be.

MIDA

Mida describes the beauty hierarchy within the school, she notes that the pretty girls were not bullied.⁶ We saw the role appearance plays in gendered bullying in Part I.

Mida believes that if she had been prettier, she would not have been bullied. She also

⁶ The popular girls may have been bullied or harassed in other ways that the participants' were either not aware of or did not mention.

shows how “natural” it is because “of course” pretty and athletic students would be popular. She did note that girls who seemed to embody masculine and feminine attributes (i.e. athletic and pretty) were more popular, but she did not want to emulate the super girls, because she had no desire to play sports. She did not think of it in terms of not measuring up, but rather in terms of longing. She admired the fact that they were accepted as they were while she was stereotyped as a gender deviant, or as she says, “picked out as unique.” She also notes how once you are labelled as deviant it is final, “this is who you’ll always be.” Once labelled, others did not bother to see anything “interesting or captivating” about you. This quote reveals the power of the heterosexual matrix, not only were you labelled as a marginalized Other, you do not “matter,” and no one would try or want to understand you.

M: I think for me, there was always this thought that if I could be prettier, if I looked a certain way, then maybe I would have been accepted. Stephanie for example, when I first met her, in grade 7 and we actually were seatmates, [...] and she seemed so nice and I was like ‘Oh yeah, this is great.’ And then as we kind of went our separate ways and she became more popular, I always thought, ‘Oh, if I could only look like Stephanie’ you know, but only because she was known for her looks, she was very pretty and that’s why I thought ‘Oh, if I could only walk in the school.’

M: I think there was this kind of people that were quiet, and didn’t say anything and were not known, those were the ok people. And the people that were pretty, or were in sports, whatever, of course they’re popular, then there’s the people that are picked out as unique [...] But the thing is I often think if there was any other girls that I can recall, that were bullied like I was, and, I don’t really know if there was or not.

M: So I was like, yes, I think it was one of those things where definitely if you were pretty. I can’t imagine if you were pretty and getting teased, that just never goes hand in hand.

M: [...] they (the popular girls) were laid back, like, they could be one of the guys, but yet they were still the girl, you know? They had to be pretty, most of them were pretty, but you also had to [...] show that you could be one of the guys

like hang out, just chill. I think there was both, you were expected, to be pretty, like when the prom came or whatever, they would probably be the prom queens, it was just a given.

H: Did you ever feel like these girls who were in sports [...] they were popular, do you ever feel like you never measured up to them, or were you even comparing yourself to them?

M: Oh, absolutely. But I would never say that I never measured up, it was more like [...] I was idealistic, like ‘Oh, if I could only, if I looked like them, maybe’ or, if, not that I even, like, for sports ‘cause I never thought I would play sports, but for some reason I always had this thought, I daydream and I go to school, I’d walk in and I’d look amazing, the guys were like ‘Oh my dear, that’s Mida!’ And there would be astonishment like ‘Oh,’ they might actually see me for who I was, and I looked at them and I’m thinking, I wish sometimes, not that I could be them, but just have this feeling of being able to sit there and be yourself, and be accepted for who you are, and be so free. [...] I didn’t feel free, and the way that people actually saw my personality or who I was or that I was appreciated for, I just felt that I was stereotyped as being ‘Okay, this is who you are, and therefore this is who you’ll always be.’ Anything outside of that that would be interesting or captivating didn’t matter.

Mida was clearly regarded as different from the popular girls, and she suffered as a result. She also mentions that the popular girls also embodied aspects of masculinity, they had to be able to “just chill” with the guys, to affect a masculine indifference. She had a desire to be seen for who she was, to be accepted like the popular girls. Mida uses the word “free” to describe the popular girls. Yet it appears that the popular girls were conforming to rigid gender roles, which hardly seems “free.” You can only be “free” in a neoliberal, heteronormative world if you conform to certain norms. She realizes that the pretty, popular girls would be the ideal, she says “of course” they were popular, and “it was just a given,” which again shows how insidious and “natural” norms can seem. In Mida’s story we see the power of norms, and the pain of not meeting them. The norm is informed by the “naturalness” of neoliberal, heteronormative femininity.

ANNE

The most popular girls at Anne's school were involved in sports and dance and were known as the Karen Avery girls, the "queens of the school" as Anne described them. "Queen" is an interesting way to describe the popular girls, as royalty is often associated with reverence and deference. Royalty occupy a public position in society, it was known where the popular people congregated and it was "their" area, and they had the power to control. Historically, royalty also had the power to punish.

And for the girls [...] volleyball was the biggest thing, and then soccer. Although the very top of the popularity pyramid, I guess, especially for the girls [...] was the Karen Avery School of Dance, and they were even referred to as the girls at school, these dance class girls were the queens of the school. And generally it was the girls that were going to dance class that were on, like the volleyball team and the basketball team and that kind of stuff.

Anne got to know a few popular girls, and she was able to see the hidden labour involved in occupying this coveted position. The popular girls seemed to receive special treatment, as they were the "queens of the school." They were excused from tests and assignments, Anne describes this as "ridiculous," perhaps revealing her disgust with the hierarchy in her school. Although she uses the word "friend" to describe her relationship with the popular girl, she also mentions that she had to ignore "biting comments" for this to happen.⁷

A: [...] I don't understand how they were able to keep up, but the thing is, I know a lot of the girls, especially the Karen Avery girls, I can't really speak for the guys because I didn't know them as well. They were brilliant, half of the girls on the dance team and the sports teams were honour students, so how that worked, unless they were getting perks again that I didn't know about, because they were missing tests and they were missing class every now and then. And between the volleyball team the basketball team and dance recitals, how they had time to study, I'm not really sure how that worked. I know some of the girls, it's funny [...] the year that

⁷ I did not explore her feelings about this further because I was not researching bullying between girls.

I decided that I wasn't going to be bullied anymore,⁸ I actually made friends with a couple of Karen Avery girls, just before I left the school, and they were, they're good people, it upsets me to no end to know that these stuck-up, prissy girls that think they're better than everybody, that if you just make the effort and ignore the biting comments sometimes, they're cool people. One of the girls I still talk to, and I don't even understand how now, because in junior high, I was convinced she hated me, because she made fun of me all the time, and now, we talk [...] fairly frequently.

A: [...] my theory now is that they were making fun of me because, and this is silly, because my mother always used to say it, but I think that they were jealous, because I didn't have to do the super girl thing, because I wasn't popular so I didn't have to bust my butt all the time, and they were resentful of that so they made fun of me for it. And I wasn't feminine, I wasn't what they were, but they had to work for it, and I didn't, and that's my theory now, whether it's actually true or not, I don't know.

Anne was also bullied by girls, and her theory is that they were jealous or perhaps angry that they had to be super girls while she appeared to be rejecting the work of being properly feminine. Popular girls seemed "free" as Mida described them, but Anne reveals the work that goes into "doing girl" normatively. Bullying was a way of policing, but the policing seems to reveal fear. Students were afraid of those who cross the borders of normalcy in terms of gender. In Part I, Mida described an incident where she drawn as a monster. Another definition for 'monster' is a "threatening force" (Merriam-Webster). My participants were seen as threatening the hegemonic gender order. The fear stems from the fact that there is something subversive, unruly, and disruptive about not conforming to hegemonic gender ideals. As Judith Halberstam writes, failure can offer its own rewards, such as escaping oppressive gender roles (3). This idea is evident in Part I when Chloe attacked her bullies, acting in a non-normative way seems to have helped end

⁸ Anne mentions the year she decided she was not going to be bullied anymore, this refers to standing up to her female friends who bullied her, and doing activities she enjoyed, like acting in school plays.

her bullying experience. However, in the high school world, Anne was punished for being a gender deviant girl. Still, the idea of challenging the gender system, however small, is intriguing. It can mean exempting yourself from the work of “doing girl,” and at the same time going against the neoliberal idea of working hard on everything, including yourself and your appearance (Gill and Scharff 7).

This idea of experiencing freedom through being a “gender deviant” has been explored in research on of gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) people. A study conducted at The University of Montreal found that LGB people who are out have lower levels of stress than closeted LGB people (Juster et al., 2013). Although this study had a small sample size, it is interesting to speculate as to why LGB people were less stressed than straight people. As discussed in the literature review, one aspect of homophobic bullying and discrimination is gender presentation (Meyer 35; Varjas et al., 61). It could be that having a sexual orientation that is considered to be in the minority releases some LGB people from having to conform to hegemonic gender norms (Savage), thereby giving them freedom to express themselves. “A guy who comes out as queer is consequently free to do pretty much whatever he wants ... You’re free” (Savage). The power of being a “gender deviant” is a topic that merits further investigation.

Although gender roles are a social fact, they are not always tacitly accepted (Moi, “Bourdieu” 1033). This sort of attitude and behavior is subversive, a threat to what is considered “normal,” that there is a sort of inverse power in being an outsider. My participants did not just submit or try to change to be “normal” by becoming more stereotypically feminine, they remained themselves. The unique type of “power” in being

labelled an outcast is a concept I would have liked to explore in greater detail. However, there is no doubt that there is a heavy toll to pay for being outside the norm.

JACKIE

Jackie describes the popular girls in her school as pretty, blond, and thin. She felt she could not do all the things that were required to be a super girl, and she, like Anne, points out the shadow side of embodying the ideal. Anne befriended a popular girl, and saw how hard she worked to maintain her popular status. Jackie watched one girl struggle with bulimia, and disordered eating in general seemed rampant among girls and women in her community. Here, Jackie mentions conformity, being expected to fit into a box, and how she was not treated the same as someone who did conform, which was especially important in her homogenous, upper middle class suburb. She reveals that the norms of femininity were known and were important (“you *had* to be thin”), yet not everyone could reach them, and even some girls who looked like they fit in struggled with eating disorders. Jackie’s exasperation with trying to reach feminine ideals is made clear when she exclaims “I just, I couldn’t do it!” This statement reveals the impossibility of measuring up to hegemonic gender norms. In this section we also see how outcasts has lower status with her remark “your opinion wasn’t as important.”

J: Yeah, yeah, they really want you to fit into this little box, and, yeah, I just didn’t (giggles).

J: (Talking about her emotional eating as a result of bullying beforehand) a lot of girls [...] Melanie’s really nice and everything but she definitely had an eating disorder, she was bulimic, she probably still is, and it’s too bad, but it’s just, it’s one of those things, you *had* to be thin, you had to be pretty, you had to be whatever and it’s like, I just, I couldn’t do it! I exercised and everything and I swam, but I like to eat and it just, it didn’t go so well.

J: [...] if you didn't fit in a little box, you were just kind of an outcast, your opinion wasn't as important.

H: Okay, so it was kind of like you had to be athletic, you had to be good at school.

J: Yeah.

H: And I'm sure, for the girls as well, like, you know, I'm sure the thin-

J: (Loud whisper) Oh, yeah.

H: Blondes, it seems like the blonde ones, you know, are always the popular ones (laughing).

J: Yeah, thin, blond, blue eyes, you're in, you're in! (Laughing).

J: Just disordered eating patterns in general, yeah, not necessarily anorexia or bulimia but yeah, you know, really small lunches and where they're in, like 80,000 sports, and stuff like that you're gonna be exercising all the time. And the moms were just as bad. My mom would go out with the women at the country club or Girl Scout meetings and people wouldn't eat. It's like, 'Oh, I'll just have a salad' that's like this big (mimes a small portion) and you're done. It was *very* focused on looks and that sort of thing. And, I mean, not to toot my own horn, but I'm not exactly ugly and (laughing) it's just one of those things where [...] it's like, why can't you just accept the person for who they are even if they do have a few extra pounds on them? So, I don't know.

In a follow-up e-mail about super girls, Jackie mentions wanting to be a super girl, which I interpret as being more confident and socially active. I failed to articulate the fact that the super girl is a result of neoliberal, postfeminist thinking about young womanhood. However, she also seems to resist this position because she says when she was in school she had no desire to participate in activities that did not interest her, and her remark "I never felt like I should be doing more" suggests that she was not interested in doing the work of being a neoliberal, postfeminist super girl.

J (e-mail): The really popular girls like Melanie and Caitlin were definitely SuperGirls, embodying all of those qualities you mentioned and then some. I didn't feel that I was a SuperGirl, but at the same time, I didn't want to be. I had the opportunity to be in a bunch of activities and sports, but I chose to only participate in the ones that I loved. I obviously wanted to be thin and attractive to boys and have all the cool clothes those girls had, but I never felt like I should be doing more. I enjoyed the activities I participated in. Looking back, though, I sometimes wonder (especially in high school) if I was more involved would I have been more popular or increased my chances of meeting potential boyfriends. Being in university and out in the real world, it's a lot easier to get into a rut of not meeting new people with a busy work schedule and heading right home afterwards. So I guess now I'm aiming to be a SuperGirl compared to back then.

In this section, I wanted to explore the school dynamics in my participants' schools: who was popular, and how they displayed their social status. The athletic boys and athletic, pretty girls were given preferential treatment, for example congregating in certain areas of the school, which is a display of social capital. Sports were important in their schools, as it gave boys a way to display a certain hegemonic masculinity, and it was also important for the popular girls, it was part of displaying a supposedly well-rounded, assertive femininity. I explored how my participants felt about their place in the heterosexual matrix. They compared themselves to the popular, or super girls, and often wanted to be like them, and feeling like they failed. Although Anne, in one way at least, felt that perhaps it was better not to be a super girl. Most importantly, this section reveals how a school creates a certain climate: hypercompetitive, hierarchical, and heteronormative, that contributes to gendered bullying. It is impossible to ignore the influence the popular students had on gender presentation and the way my participants fit into the hierarchy. In Part III, I examine how gendered bullying has affected my participants after they left high school. Bullying causes pain while it is happening, but the way it can affect people's minds after it happened can cause great devastation.

Part III: Some Things Last a Long Time

In the literature review, I discussed the short- and long-term effects of bullying. Now, and in the analysis chapter, I want to examine long-term effects from the perspective of the transition from childhood to adulthood, the effects it has on identity, and theories of duration.

Leaving high school had a positive effect on my participants. Mida became confident when she went to university where she made new friends. She also mentions that travelling and working increased her confidence. Exposure to new places, people, and situations made her realize her present life did not have to be like her bullied high school life. Leaving a toxic school environment by moving like Chloe, Jackie, and Anne, or leaving toxic friendships as was also the case for Anne, made them happier, more confident people. Yet their bullying experiences still affect them in their adult lives. Memories from adolescence can be very powerful. Many studies have found that memories between the ages 15 to 25 are the most vividly recalled, a phenomenon known as the “reminiscence bump” (Jansari and Parkin 85). This may be due to the fact that we experience a large number of new experiences at this time of life (Jansari and Parker 90). Another explanation may lie in the way the past, present, and future are connected in terms of gender norms. It is this notion that I examine in Part III.

In the theory chapter I referenced Gill Valentine, who argues that it is useful to think of adolescence as a process that shapes us throughout our lives (39). I am interested in learning about what stays with my participants from their gendered bullying

experiences in adolescence. I found two main subthemes: social anxiety⁹ related to how my participants see themselves and how others see them, and difficulties in relationships, for example feeling like they started dating later than average, and wondering why men are interested in them. As I mentioned in the literature review, some quantitative studies have been conducted on the long-term effects of bullying, but they are mainly comprised of administering questionnaires to university students (Schafer et al. 379). What I found in my work is congruent with these large survey studies. For example, a study conducted in 2010 as part of a doctoral dissertation found low self-confidence in both social interactions and romantic relationships, and that bullying victimization is a predictor of social problems in a new environment (Mebane 65). The bullying literature posits that the consistency of the experience and the developmental stage in which the bullying took place contributes to the impact on self-esteem (Schafer et al. 389). The psychological research explores important aspect of the long-terms effects of bullying, but I am also interested in exploring the larger issues around femininity and heteronormativity and how they relate to theories of memory and time. I am also interested in whether my participants' believe anything positive came out of their bullying experiences, which is also involved with notions of time and memory. The nature of time as explained by Rebecca Coleman (90) and Gilles Deleuze (37) can also be used to describe how my participants think about their bullying experience today, and also plays a part in why gendered bullying is a thing that stays.

⁹ "Anxiety" and "social anxiety" are the words my participants used to describe how the bullying affects them in the present.

Time Makes Us: Negative Long-Term Impacts of Gendered Bullying

The heterosexual matrix demands heteronormativity and “proper” femininity, and reinforces the fact that my participants saw themselves and were perceived as failures and gender deviants. Because some participants thought they would never be considered attractive or have romantic relationships, this translates in adulthood as feeling unsure when they are told they are attractive, or when someone wants to date them. Being seen as attractive does not align with their past experiences with boys in school. For my participants, they felt there was no guarantee that they would find a significant other, so when faced with that prospect, they were brought back to what they knew: gendered bullying. This effect ties into the idea that a memory’s intensity does not come from remembering the past, but by the way the past is connected to the present and the future (Coleman 91). The past can place limits on the present, and potentially the future. Memories of intense experience are not self-contained units. Memory works through expansion, a memory or cluster of memories spreads out its recollections over a widening surface (Coleman 94). This expansion is at work when new experiences takes my participants’ back to a memory of bullying, the bullying memory has expanded past the original memory and found its way into the present.

For my participants, the way the past connected with the present seems to have fueled their anxiety. Anxiety is a future-oriented state of mind, more specifically, feeling apprehensive about the future (Barlow and Durand 123). Anxiety also involves how we feel about control, or a lack of it. In childhood, we often become aware that events are not always in our control, and this perception runs on a continuum from total confidence in

our ability to control all aspects of our lives, to deep uncertainty about ourselves and our ability to deal with future events (Barlow and Durand 127). When someone is bullied, the timing of the attacks is often unpredictable, the bullying itself may be ambiguous, and as it continues, the situation is seen as uncontrollable (Rigby 123-124). This lack of control is stressful, and stress can trigger anxiety (Barlow and Durand 127). Also, anxiety may be a learned response to exposure to aggression which may lead to negative self-evaluations and avoiding social interactions (Storch and Masia-Warner 352). It may limit bullied youth's exposure to positive relationships, thus interfering with developing social skills and self-esteem (Storch and Masia-Warner 352). In their study of high school girls in a parochial, all-female high school, Storch and Masia-Warner found that bullying was positively associated with social anxiety (351). Other studies have found similar results (Espelage and Swearer 373; Fekkes et al.19; Olweus 32). My participants discuss anxiety in terms of being in a situation that reminds them of their bullying experience.

My participants were bullied for their appearance and this affects them in the present. Ledley et al. found that being teased about appearance was associated with poorer interpersonal functioning later on in life, they argue that being teased for how one looks may affect core beliefs about self-worth (38). A more feminist interpretation is that women and girls are expected to be pretty, and those who are not are punished which can damage self-esteem. As we saw in Part I, bullying made my participants feel bad about themselves, that they did not measure up to the norm, and being told they are attractive as adults is met with disbelief. Below I discuss my participants' anxieties and how bullying affects their self-perception.

Social Anxiety/Sense of Self

CHLOE

Chloe did not had the same amount of time away from the bullying experience that my other participants have, and she has trouble dealing with anxiety and social interactions, which she attributes in part to her bullying, which upsets her. All she knew was hostility at school, so she assumes people will turn on her. Bullying may lead to focusing on negative interactions and avoiding situations that have the potential for victimization, such as parties or joining groups (Storch and Masia-Warner 359). Chloe explains this below:

C: I'm...scared to put myself in situations where I'm in a group of people, because I feel like they might turn on me. I...have trouble talking to people, at all, I have severe anxiety (crying).

Worrying that people will turn on them in a group setting is something Mida and Anne also deal with.

MIDA

Mida believed that the bullying would not affect her adult life, but she notes that after so many years of being told she was ugly, she began to believe it, so much so that she feels disbelief when a man expresses interest in her, or even when someone wants to be her friend. The metaphor of restraint comes up here as it did in Part I. The mouse is in a cage all its life until it is released, but still behaves as if it is still confined. She feels unable to express herself and fears rejection. She comments on the nature of time, that her bullying experience still feels fresh. Deleuze suggest that the present and the past are two moments, happening simultaneously (59). A memory also gets translated through the

present, the past moves up to meet the present experience (Deleuze 63). Here, Mida's memory of being bullied by boys gets translated into the present when encountering groups of young men in public. The past tells her they will bully her as well, and so she reacts that way.

M: [...] just in terms of how you see yourself, and I would guess if they probably do experiments where a mouse is, you know, kept in a cage for such a long period of time, and then the mouse is out, it's probably still not gonna try and move anywhere because it's so used to being there, and it's like well why bother because but, they're like, well there's no restraints anymore, you're free to go, but the mouse probably isn't gonna go, she's always gonna stay right there (laughing). And I think the same thing is with people, if, if, for so long you're conditioned in a certain way, after a while, even if the restraints are gone, you're still gonna have that same response because it's been conditioned in you for such a long period of time.

M: I do have really bad social anxiety at times, I can't go into a room with a group of people that, if I don't know them or they're not my friends, I just can't do it.

M: I know it's 10 years ago but it doesn't...I don't know, the feelings are still fresh as if it's just happened, and it's not that I haven't dealt with it it's just sometimes you have experiences and they trigger things.

M: I remember in (city) I was on... a subway and there's all these guys and all of a sudden they came and got right in my face and started talking to me like, 'Oh, hi, oh, yeah, look at you! Oh, hey.' [...] I literally had a panic attack, like I was freaking out because all I could think of was those guys in school and they were in my face, and, need to escape, need to get away. I remember just running off the subway, like, freaked out, like totally petrified.

M: I never thought, like when I was being bullied in high school, I never thought that it would cross over into my adult life, I always thought 'Oh, once school's over, I'm not gonna have any problems, these people will be gone away.' I never, I guess I never have really thought that it would ever have any long-term impact, I thought somehow, miraculously, that I could just start living my life and [...] none of that stuff that I endured would ever carry over with me, like it wouldn't impact me. And I guess it was only when I started being out and interacting with people [...] if I don't know them, yeah, like it is still hard for me and I know, I have a really hard time trusting people, which is unfortunate 'cause I'm (nervous

laughing) you know, I'm pretty open and I'm fine, but you get me in a group of people and that I don't know and it's pretty hard.

Mida explains the bullying in terms of conditioning (Barlow and Durand 127). She mentions anxiety, and certain situations will trigger emotions and responses. Being in a group or approached by a group, she feels it is difficult to trust people, because she had endured so much bullying as a child and young adult. She had hoped after feeling held back by bullying for so many years she could finally live her life and leave bullying behind, but the bullying had conditioned her to feel fear when interacting with men or in groups. The simultaneity of the past and present is being felt here, yet the past is still happening for her.

ANNE

Anne also believes the bullying has followed her into her adult life. It slowed her down slightly in developing romantic relationships in that she had her first serious relationship at age 21, which set her apart in a high school where "hooking up" was common. In her story we see her anxiety in the present meeting her bullied self in the past. However, it is also worth noting that in this excerpt she also mentions that being bullied she learned something she considered important, which is to pursue her interests.

A: I still worry sometimes about what will people think of me. I've tried to put that behind me. I mean, I'm almost 28, which means I'm almost 30, and I have (colored) hair right now, I have my [...] piercings and I've got my tattoos, and it's like, half of me, and my mom likes to say that it's because I didn't get to do it in high school. But, I don't know, and maybe half of it is, but because I didn't get to do it (act like a rebellious teenager) in high school, I am doing it now. And I love it now, and I've learned a lot from that, that if I don't go for what I want, I'm going to be unhappy. And the big life lessons and that kind of stuff, so I do try to go for what I want, and I'm trying to get involved with other things that make me happy and that kind of stuff, but [...] I think there always will be, that little,

nagging doubt in the back of your head when you do something new, it's like 'Oh, are you sure you wanna do that?' and that kind of stuff. So, I still get embarrassed fairly easily when I try to speak out, especially if I'm in a group of people [...] it'll come up when I'm least expecting it to sometimes, I'll be at a party that it's a group of people that I've been around a million times before and they're my friends and I feel comfortable around them and then, I'll say something, a joke or a topic of conversation or just something random, and then, in the back of my head it'll be like 'Was that what you really wanted to say? Was it appropriate? What are the other people around you who are talking to you gonna say about that?' and then my face flushes and I get embarrassed and I can't, I can't help it, especially, ugh, I hate when my face flushed because it's the physical manifestation of me being embarrassed whether I actually am or not, my face will still flush, and then everybody laughs and then [...] all over again I'm in high school and people are laughing at me, but, luckily that doesn't happen very often. However it does crop up at the most random times when I'm least expecting it and it's like 'Oh, crap! That sucks' (laughing).

Anne mentions trying to put the bullying behind her, but because the past is connected to the present, she experiences the past as a "nagging doubt" and in certain situations, "all over again" she is in high school. Here the past is coming up to meet the present. Anne is living her unlived life, in that she gets to be an adolescent in her late twenties through her appearance, tattoos, hair dye, and piercings. Of course, people alter their appearance in these ways at every age, but for Anne, she connects them to adolescence. Adolescence in popular culture is seen in terms of excitement, of trying new things, having new relationships, but my participants often felt cut off from those experiences. Bullying acted as a foreclosure on aspects of Anne's identity that are now open to her. Looking back, I wish I had asked how my other participants lived their unlived life, or if that was something they even wanted to do or crossed their minds at all.

JACKIE

Jackie feels self-conscious about her weight, which can make it difficult to relate to men, but it does not stop her from dating. Her American classmates could not get past

her weight, so she did not think other people would, either. Weight, again, is such an important part of appearing feminine that being teased about weight is a thing that stays. The comments and the exclusion have stayed with Jackie, but she is able to see that she is more than her bullied self. She does not seem to experience social anxiety as the other participants mentioned. There could be several factors that contribute to this. Her supportive family, the fact that she found friends when she moved back to Canada, and also that she always had a good friend, Erica, which is something that the other participants did not mention. Again, this is something I would have liked to ask her about, so I can only speculate as to why her bullying experience does not seem to affect her as much as the other participants.

J: I automatically think that everybody thinks I'm fat, it doesn't matter what weight I am. I think the lightest I've ever been is 180 pounds, and that was a couple of years ago, and, I felt pretty confident then, especially with my established friends, I was like 'Oh my God, I'm so, like, I can't believe it, I feel great' I'm like blah blah blah and they'd be like 'You look amazing!' and but most of the time I generally think that my fat gets in the way of my personality which, I mean, I've asked my friends openly, does it or does it not, and they're like, 'You don't carry yourself like you're fat,' 'That's not who you are.' And I'm like, 'It feels like who I am,' I feel like everybody's looking at me and they can't get past, because nobody could, you know what I mean? Even if people know me they couldn't get past the fat. And so it still affects me to this day. I'm still like, if I see a cute guy [...] they'll be like 'Oh! Go talk to him!' and I'm like 'Nah, he wouldn't like me 'cause I'm fat' and they're like 'Jackie! It has nothing to do with that, just go up and be confident and be nice!' So it still affects me, for sure, but I try to get over it and realize that I have a bunch of friends now that like me for who I am, whether I have things or buy them things, and it doesn't matter, and so I try to get past that.

J: I still have my issues, but I'm a lot more secure in my personality and who I am now.

For Jackie the past is connecting to the present in the way she thinks people perceive her, in the past nobody could get past her weight, so she thinks people think the same thing in

the present. Her words also reflect the fact that in North America there is a culture of fatphobia. I discuss social anxiety in terms of interacting with men in the next section.

From Derision to Desire: Interacting with Men

The second major way bullying influenced my participants later in life was difficulties in intimate relationships with men. Every participant identified as heterosexual, and at the time of the interviews Anne was in a long-term relationship with her boyfriend. To some degree, all the participants were now having trouble adapting to the role of a desirable woman after being told they were ugly and unworthy as adolescents. Their position in the heterosexual matrix was suddenly in question. Once they were the object of boys' derision, now they were the object of men's' desires, and it seemed like both positions felt uncomfortable. Even when we encounter something that is radically new, we can only make sense of it by what we already know (Felski 27). My participants were ridiculed because of their appearance. In high school, and at every stage of life, it is important for a woman to be attractive. After years of being told that they were unattractive and being subjected to bullying, suddenly they were being told that they were worthy of male attention. My participants endured mock flirting in school, but now they had to deal with genuine flirting, which they found confusing.

CHLOE

Chloe was upset talking about this subject. She has a difficult time believing men find her attractive, I will elaborate on why this may be below, in Mida's section.

C: You don't want to engage as much, like, I find it extremely difficult to believe that anyone could find me attractive. 'Cause the main thing that they picked on was my looks (crying).

C: Like guys will say they're attracted to me, I'm like 'Why?'

Like Mida will mention below, Chloe experienced disbelief when men are interested in her. There has been a shift in her position in the heterosexual matrix which in one way is positive, but men are still defining who is desirable, and who is not.

MIDA

Mida also expresses the disconnect she feels between how someone perceives her, and how she perceives herself. She also describes the past as staying with her, as attaching itself to her (Coleman 93). Because the past is still happening, she feels like she is still getting bullied, but she is now dealing with it in a different way, trying to reconcile the "unlovely" bullied girl she was with the attractive woman she is now.

M: Since I was in primary, I could remember boys picking on me, and I'm thinking, 'Boys aren't supposed to pick on girls!' Boys are supposed to be nice to girls, and ... I guess when you see all these other girls that all the guys like, and you're not one of them, and you're the one that's the outcast, that's pinpointed as being unlovely or someone that's not worthy of being loved, after a while you believe it.

M: I shut myself off, I wouldn't date and people will be like 'No, go on a date,' and I'll be like 'No.' Because I don't trust you, I don't trust the guy. I wouldn't trust if they said 'You're beautiful.' I couldn't believe them. I'd be like, 'What are you talking about?' you're lying, or you want something...

M: I thought when I graduated that would be it, that I would never, it wouldn't affect me again, those people were gone. But I didn't realize that what they had said to me, or, how it affected me would still stay with me, and it does affect me, [...] I feel sometimes that it's attached itself to me, that it's defined who I am in the world in terms of being unable to express myself sometimes in social situations because of that fear of rejection, or that people are gonna see me in a non-favorable light if I'm different, or if I stand out. So I would say... I guess if there was ever an opportunity to be more awareness for children, and-and for just people in general to realize that it is, I guess, (nervous laughing) maybe hard-line, but it's kinda abuse!

M: I saw the ad (for bullying project), I was like 'Well, maybe I should talk' because my main thing has always been, the reason I thought something could be

better, when I didn't commit suicide, and then after that, and I got to work with people and they like me and thought I was funny, or they got to know me and I was thinking 'This is great!' And I remember being in kind of, not the popular group, but a very affluent part of a group at work, and thinking 'I can't believe this, people actually think I'm funny and great and cool,' it didn't make sense to me.

There is a connection yet also a disconnect to who she was in the past. Mida expresses difficulty in reconciling the girl she was with the woman she is now, yet still feels connected to her high school self. As Coleman says, the past lives because it is different from the present (91). By being a different person today, we are reminded of who we once were. If a person suffered gendered bullying, but as an adult meets hegemonic ideals of femininity (Mida is tall and slim, and at the time of the interviews had straight, blonde hair), it reminds her of what she once was, a "greaseball" with "frizzy hair," to use Mida's terms. She sees herself as someone who is not worthy of being loved because boys treated her like a gender deviant ("you're the one that's the outcast"). This feeling bleeds into adulthood ("people are gonna see me in a non-favorable light if I'm different"). In this section she also mentions that bullying is "kinda abuse!" She is suggesting that bullying and its effects are much more serious than most people believe it to be. I will discuss this idea further in the conclusion.

Mida and Chloe feel awkward and unbelieving when men expressed interest in them, and this marks a shift in their position in the heterosexual matrix. This shift is partly because they learned to see themselves as worthy of friendship and love, but also, men saw them as desirable. In a male-dominated society it is inevitable that male opinion of my participants, or any woman, would influence their position in the heterosexual matrix. Shonda Rhimes, the successful writer and television producer, has written about the way

she was treated after losing a significant amount of weight. Of men, she writes “They spoke to me. THEY SPOKE TO ME. Like stood still and had long conversations with me about things. It was disconcerting” (Emphasis in the original). After the weight loss, she says “I discovered that people found me valuable.” She had risen in social capital by conforming to sexist ideals. Despite the fact that men are still influencing how the participants see themselves, what had seemed like it would never change was shown as changeable, “a destiny that seemed written in stone could be erased and written anew” (Felski 23). I will discuss this idea further in a later section, “We Make Time.”

ANNE

Anne was bullied over many years and like Mida it affected her self-esteem and her ability to be in a romantic relationship. Anne mentioned in Part I that she never thought she would have a boyfriend, because the bullies told her she was unattractive and no one would want her. She states that she has learned how to deal with the detrimental effects of bullying, and she describes herself as being in a happy long-term relationship.

H: Ok, so that sounds like the bullying by the boys definitely affected your self-esteem and your self-image.

A: Yeah, quite a bit. Like I said, I didn’t have my first steady boyfriend until I was 21, and I moved to (province) in order to get that. And well now, I guess, it’s gotten quite a bit better, I’ve been with the same boy for four and half years now, so yeah, we’re pretty happy [...] he’s kind of awesome.

A: ...it’s pretty much been my entire life, that starting out from pre-school that as soon as I was thrown in to other people [...] I was getting targeted for the laughs. But, I mean [...] I’ve dealt with that now, it’s not like, I was gonna say it doesn’t have any detrimental effects, but I guess it does, I just know how to deal with them now.

Anne is different from the other participants in that she does not appear to have any difficulties in her romantic relationship, at least none that can be attributed to bullying. If

I had the chance to interview her again, I would ask her if she thought being bullied had any effect on her relationship with her boyfriend.

JACKIE

For Jackie, although she was bullied because of her weight, she does not attribute her dating issues to her bullying experiences, but rather sees them as problems that many people experience. Although earlier in the section she mentioned that she still thinks people are judging her because of her weight, she did not connect this to dating.

H: So I'm just wondering if (bullying about your weight) affected just your ability to date or go out or that kind of thing

J: Well, I don't know, I mean, I still go out, and I love travelling and I love meeting new people, I'm such an open, outgoing person that it doesn't stop me to the point where I won't, like, if it's someone in a club or something, I might be like 'Oh no, I'm not going to bother' [...] I make friends fairly easily now that I'm not living in (city) where everybody already knows everybody (laughing). I've dated guys and-and stuff, I usually end up being the friend rather than the girlfriend, or they just lack commitment issues [...] I think that happens to everyone no matter what size they are, it's just kind of a, dating the wrong guys, then anything to do with me, but I try to stay open-minded and optimistic and not let it totally get in the way.

Overall, Jackie does not seem as troubled by gendered bullying as much as Chloe and Mida. Again, I can only speculate as to why this is, but one possibility is that Jackie was able to leave her school because she and her brother were being bullied, whereas Chloe and Mida were not.

I have shown in this section how bullying is a thing that stays, through social anxiety, self-perception, and difficulties in relationships. It is a thing that stays because interactions with peers in high school were primarily negative, and they were told they were ugly and unworthy in a culture that values a certain form of female beauty, and then

suddenly being treated as an object of desire in adulthood. Their position in the heterosexual matrix changed because their perception of themselves and men's perception of them changed. In the final section, I examine the ways in which my participants managed to take something positive out of their negative experiences, although I am cautious about ending on an entirely happy note, and instead hope to reveal the ambivalence around remembering gendered bullying experiences.

We Make Time: Translation, Rotation, and Actualization

In the earlier section, I discussed how past gendered bullying experiences placed conditions on my participants' present, through feelings of social anxiety and difficulties in romantic relationships. However, the present is not completely conditioned by the past; our memories of the past are malleable and this can have an effect on the present and future (Coleman 98). Now I turn to the positive aspects of my participants' experiences. Nothing is ever black or white, and my participants' experiences with school bullying are tinged with shades of grey. I am aware that another interpretation is that my participants are speaking from a neoliberal discourse of overcoming adversity, and that we also live in a "culture frantic for resolution" (Nelson 53). Or, as David Samuels writes, "The biggest lie is that life proceeds in some orderly fashion, that there is order instead of chaos. We can't help it. That's how we're made" (71). Yet thinking about bullying in a positive light seems to have allowed them to frame their bullying experiences in a way that was helpful to them, and sometimes others as well.

The ability to extract something positive from a school bullying experience is not often reported in the literature, but there has been some mention of it. In Esbensen and

Carson's four-year study of 1100 middle and high school aged students across four states, they found that repeat victims had lower self-esteem and higher fear and perceived risk of victimization, yet they also reported higher rates of empathy than non-victims (221). In Haskell and Burtch's interview study of young queer adults who experienced homophobic bullying in school, one participant felt that the experience helped them "grow as a person," and several participants were motivated to help other queer youth as a result of their high school experience (66-67). In Carlisle and Rofes' qualitative study of 15 men who had been bullied in school, two men reported that the bullying experience gave them strength they would not have had otherwise (20). One man reported having a great deal of compassion for others (Carlisle and Rofes 21). If other bullying victims found a way to make something positive out of a terrible situation, I wondered if my participants had done the same.

I argue that one of the ways my participants dealt with bullying memories in the present is through learning how to translate and rotate their bullying experience, and as a result bullying would not be experienced as painful and useless, but perhaps useful, or at least benign. In the theory chapter, I mentioned Deleuze's theory of translation.

Translation is when a memory moves up to meet the present experience (Deleuze 63). As outlined in the previous section, this happened when my participants were in situations that reminded them of their bullying experience, for example, encountering a group of men on the street. However, the long-term effects of being bullied were not all negative. For example, witnessing someone being bullied or treated unfairly, remembering how that felt, and as a result trying to help the person in distress can be thought of as positive

effect of being bullied. In this way, my participants rotated their memories. Rotation is where the memory is turned on the side that is most useful to the present situation (Deleuze 63-64). I make sense of this idea by thinking of working on a Rubik's Cube, rotating the cube until you get the colour you need. Closely related to rotation is the notion of actualization, using the past in terms of the present, or what Bergson calls "attention to life" (Deleuze 70). The past combines with the present and future in new ways, to think of the past, present, and future in this way is to create a present and future that is not completely cut off from the past, but can still overcome the problems of the past (Coleman 100). In this section, my participants acknowledge the past and how it has negatively affected them, but they are still able to use their experiences in a positive way.

As Deleuze might say, my participants have found a way to go beyond the original experience (37). This could be a result of maturing, but it could also be a way my participants' spoke to power, or offered resistance. They did not always do it at the time they were bullied, but years later, through volunteering, being empathetic, and by seeing themselves as worthy of being loved. Resistance does not have to happen immediately. If the past is still happening, then so is resistance. Resistance can occur through connecting the past to the present (Deleuze and Guattari 5-8). I am interested in understanding how the participants used their past bullying experiences, and if they were also able to create new, positive experiences out of old, painful memories. Adolescence is not a static phase that remains firmly in the past, our thoughts and experiences in adolescence change as we age and accumulate new experiences and understandings. The past lives in our memory, but it has the potential for transformation in the present.

“She deserves better:” Bullying and Empathy

My participants felt empathy for other people, including being mindful about what they say and do to others. For Anne and Mida, they went further and used empathy to help other people and they see it as a positive aspect of their bullying experience.

CHLOE

For Chloe, empathy is expressed as being mindful of others and not judging people. More specifically, she is careful about what she says to others.

H: Do you think that anything positive came out of the bullying experience, for example [...] did it make you more empathetic?

C: Yes. Yeah, I’m very careful about what I say. I just try not to judge people, and sometimes I take it further than I should and make excuses for people who don’t deserve it.

H: Oh, ok. So you do kind of see that as, something that maybe, like a positive that came from a negative?

C: The empathy? Yeah.

Bullying is often verbal, so she knows that words can hurt others, although she suggests she may go too far the other way, as she is still learning how much empathy is too much.

MIDA

Mida still feels connected to her high school self. As Coleman and Bergson say, the past lives because it is different from the present (Coleman 91). By being a different person today, we are reminded of who we once were. As a teenager, she was bullied, but as an adult she embodies hegemonic ideals of femininity. At the time of the interviews, she was tall and slim, with straight blonde hair. Mida is committed to helping others because she does not want anyone to feel inferior (“the underdog”) as she once did.

M: I guess, in terms of how I frame it, I do realize that it gives me more compassion now, so when I run into people, [...] and they're struggling, especially like people that are immigrants [...] my response is I'm gonna help them because I think, I don't want anybody to ever feel that they're the underdog.

M: When I see people like that, the part of me that comes out is, 'Ok, well, let me share with you how *I've* coped, this is what you can do, let's get you some help.'

M: People look at me and they're like, 'Oh, you know, you look nice today' and I'm like, 'Ok, yeah, whatever,' I don't see that person I came across a picture the other day of when I graduated and I was heavier and I had short, frizzy hair and, I looked at that person and I'm thinking [...] I don't look like that person, but... when I look at that person, I-I still think that the person that was on the inside is still me. I still feel a connection, almost like an obligation to that person that I see in that picture and I'm thinking 'I want to do justice by that girl that went through all that.' Because she deserves better. So I think [...] I'll change and I'll develop and hopefully things will turn out good for me, but I don't want to ever forget that I was that person, because she deserves something better.

The way she looks reminds her of what she once was, a "greaseball" with "frizzy hair," to use Mida's terms. She wants to do better by her bullied self by helping others. She also clearly feels empathy for her former self, and realizes she did not deserve to be bullied. Feeling empathy for her former self could be a form of resistance, on some level a way of taking back the hurtful comments and actions of her bullies.

JACKIE

Jackie tries to judge people (to use her term) on merit, not on superficial qualities the way she was judged about her weight. She also uses her school experiences in creative writing. She also states that the bullying "made me who I am." Perhaps this is a way of reconciling her past with her present, and going beyond the original bullying experience.

H: Just a question about the first interview, did that make you rethink your experience?

J: Mmm, I don't know, I'm very over-analytical and I'm very past-oriented. I do look towards the future as well, but [...] I reflect on a lot of things. I mean I've

been working on a story right now, about how Luke signed the yearbook,¹⁰ the (female) character has a really difficult, like silly love life because of this curse and so I draw from it [...] I've learn-accepted it and it's made me who I am and you change one thing and you'd be a totally different person, and, so you just have to sort of go with it.

J: Being bullied, it just kind of helped me be more, try not to bully them even if I- even if I do find myself in a place of judgment, like if I'm hiring someone for a job or something like that, really try to judge people on [...] qualities. It's like, okay, can they do this job? Can they be whatever, are they on time? Those sorts of things rather than like 'Oh, I don't like their hair' or 'Oh, they're' whatever, that sort of thing.

The positive way the participants speak about their experiences reflects a redemptive way of thinking about time. This is an emotionally invested and hopeful way of thinking about the future (Felski 22). This way of thinking sees a separation of expectation from experience, that our lives as they are now are not inevitable, that other possibilities exist (Felski 23). This way of thinking about the future is much different than the way my participants thought about the future when they were being bullied, some felt it would dictate the rest of their lives. It could also reflect a neoliberal rhetoric of choosing to turn anything negative that happens to you into something positive. Regardless of the motivation, framing their bullying experiences in this way seems to be beneficial for my participants. In the next section, participants discuss putting empathy into practice by helping others.

“I want them to be free:” Helping Others

MIDA

¹⁰ Luke was a boy wouldn't dance with her and he mentioned the incident when he signed her yearbook.

Mida went beyond feeling empathy and puts that feeling into action. Mida endured the most continuous bullying over her entire school career. Perhaps it is not surprising that she has a strong reaction when she witnesses others being bullied. She feels it is her duty to help others in distress, including her brother. Again, the theme of restraint comes up. She helps others because she does not want them to be, to use her evocative terms, “in bondage,” she wants them to be free to live their lives on their own terms. One definition of “free” is not being subject to the dominance or control of others. In one way, freedom is the opposite of bullying. Mida also expresses a sense of fairness, that bullying is an issue of everyone deserving to be treated fairly.

M: There has to be another way, because I don't see it changing. My brother, he gets bullied in school and I took a very proactive approach, (nervous laugh) I will call the school, I'll chase the people down, I don't care what I have to do, because I guess when I see that I'm thinking, I don't want anybody else ever to go through. I was in the mall the other day and this kid was getting beat up by this other kid and I went right to them, and he's like 'Oh, I didn't mean a thing by it.' I said, 'Let me tell you something, that's not fair, he doesn't deserve that.'

H: Wow.

M: And the kid just looked at me (nervous laugh) and was like 'I don't even know you!' And I was like, 'You don't have to.' And so I've often in my life taken a proactive approach because I feel so strongly about the fact that people don't understand that it's not just that moment, it's [...] how it will affect the person.

M: But I will check up, I will call the school, I'd be like, this is my brother, I don't care what's going on, it has to stop, and I won't-I told him I said, 'If I have to, I will go sit in your class.' And because, I feel responsibility, and nobody else really understands if you haven't been bullied, the effect that it takes on you, and when I see my life, I don't want anybody else to feel ... the anxiety or feel afraid, I want them to be free, to have the opportunity to not be, kind of in bondage sometimes, by the things that happened to them because nobody deserves that, you should be able to live your life.

Her intervention seemed effective for that particular bully, but she notes that her brother does not tell her if he is being bullied anymore. In previous sections, Mida mentioned feeling trapped, and wanting to be free. Now that feeling motivates her to help others. This is an example of the past moving to the present, and Mida rotates and actualizes the memory and makes it useful.

ANNE

Anne decided to take something positive from her bullying experience by volunteering at an organization that helps children with their problems. While Mida will directly confront bullies and used more of a hands-on approach by helping her younger brother deal with his bullying problem, Anne uses her experience to help her friends and youth in distress.

A: But I'd like to go back to school, that's my plan [...] I want to see if I can't find out if I can do a double degree in my Bachelor of Education and a degree in social work, 'cause I'd like to be a guidance counselor.

A: I think I'm a fairly sensitive, empathetic person, especially when I've heard somebody's been, like there are people that are mean to other people, then I definitely sympathize with the victim. I'm still the person, in high school, even though the bullying was happening, I was still usually the one that they would come to talk to, and I still am, like, I am, I'm the psychologist of our group of friends, pretty much. And I assume it's because I can understand and relate to that kind of stuff, the, whatever situation. And I don't think I would be quite that able to listen to everybody's issues and have something to say, some sort of advice to give for most every issue that comes towards me if I hadn't been through the things that I've been through. [...] it's definitely, it-it's one of those things that you don't want people to be bullied, and it's a horrible thing that it happens, but, I wouldn't be the person that I am now if it didn't happen to me, so I'm definitely an advocate for, but at the same time, I'm thankful for that now (laughing) I am, that it had happened that way, because I would be such a different person now if it didn't, and I don't know if I would like that person, 'cause I'm kind of fond of the person that I am now (laughing).

Anne reveals ambivalence around her memories. Like Jackie, she echoes the sentiment that bullying made her who she is today, but is aware that bullying is a terrible thing to endure. Yet she knows she would not be who she is today if it had not happened to her. Helping others also helped her put Anne's experience in perspective.

A: It was definitely one of those things that, I've been through it so, why don't I help somebody else through it? So, that's why I decided to go volunteer there.

A (e-mail): After we moved to [city] and most of my bullying issues were behind me, I volunteered with [organization] for a while. The training there really helped me put a lot of the issues into perspective and I still hold on to one of the quotes that I learned there: All disclosure is self-disclosure. Meaning that whatever anyone says is a reflection upon them, not on you.

A: The basic definition I guess of the quote is that, people are projecting their feelings when they say something [...] somebody calling you fat or ugly or stupid, is generally how they feel about themselves. So, you have to take that into consideration, it's not about you, it's about them, what they're saying. That helped me a lot, and I, as much as I can I tell it to other people when they're going through hard times or they're being made fun of.

The explanation that the organization provided about bullying is interesting. It can help people, including Anne, make sense of bullying experience, but it is worth nothing that it is couched in a neoliberal rhetoric, which individualizes explanations for why some people bully, and it does not examine bullying within a larger social structure.

I wanted to end this chapter on a positive note, that the participants were able to glean something positive from their gendered bullying experiences, because this theme is also found in bullying literature. Anne volunteers and wants to become a guidance counselor, Mida tries to fight injustice wherever she sees it, and every participant mentioned that the experience made them more empathetic people. Although it is wonderful that they were able to use their experiences in these ways, I am aware that conceptualizing bullying in this manner follows a "power of positive thinking" narrative

often found in pop psychology. Behind this rhetoric is neoliberalism, and a pull yourself up by your bootstraps ethos. While it can be psychologically healthy to see the positive aspects of a negative experience, on a larger level, seeing bullying as a rite of passage, or something one can always transcend, can trivialize the impact of the experience. Also, while I wrote my thesis, more and more stories emerged about children who were driven to suicide from bullying (Bundale; Hubbard). It seemed almost cruel to end my thesis on an upbeat note. As Carlisle and Rofes argue, school bullying is still generally treated as if it is in a class by itself (24). Thinking about bullying in this way prevents us from linking it to the extensive research on childhood abuse and trauma, which might provide insights as to how the effects of bullying carry on in to adulthood (Carlisle and Rofes 24). Carlisle and Rofes' research reflects Mida's thoughts when she exclaims that bullying is abuse. While I highlight the fact that in some ways my participants have transformed their bullying experience through rotation, in other ways, bullying is a thing that stays. The bullied girl they once were remains within them, but they try, in their own way, to do better by her. As Rita Felski states, "If time makes us, we can also make time, shaping its patterns of rhythm and change, motion and decay" (27).

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I explored gendered bullying, why my participants were targeted, how it manifested, and how it affected them. They were often bullied by popular boys who targeted them for their appearance, and for the way they behaved. Being "too much," too "fat," too "ugly," too loud, made them the Other, or gender deviants within a heterosexual matrix that demands conformity. One intention of gendered bullying is to

secure the bullies' high status through policing gender norms by targeting those that are considered Other. The bullying had a profound effect on my participants' self-esteem. Knowing that they occupied an abject position in their schools' heterosexual matrix affected the way they felt about themselves. They felt unworthy of being loved, trapped in a situation they could not control, and were not seen for who they really are. For Mida, it also led to thoughts of suicide. This bullying took place in schools where there was often a clear hierarchy of popular boys and girls. Popular boys played sports and the popular girls displayed an assertive and sporty femininity that my participants did not embody. However, being abject was not an entirely negative experience. It was this "deviant" femininity that helped Chloe fight her bullies, and Anne mentioned that perhaps girls were jealous of her for not having to live up to the super girl ideal.

Their bullying experiences affect my participants in the present day, primarily through social anxiety, feeling uncomfortable in groups, and worrying what others think of them. It also manifests as feeling uncomfortable when men are interested in them, which is often met with disbelief. The heterosexual matrix did not shift, their place within it did. Instead of being vilified, they are desired. The pain of bullying seems to come from the way the past is connected to the present, because the past lives on in the present in negative ways, but my participants also mentioned that bullying affected them in positive ways. They felt more empathy for others, and Anne and Mida mentioned helping other people. By examining bullying we see how norms operate on a local level, such as in school, where those with social capital punish those who are considered gender deviants. This feeling of being outside the norm has positive and negative consequences that linger

long after my participants graduated. Through examining these everyday incidents of gendered bullying, we can see larger structures of discipline and control at work, and how they affect those marginalized within these structures.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Name the Problem

One of my goals in writing this thesis was to give the reader a sense of what gendered bullying feels like for the victim, in both the short- and long-term. I also wanted to convey the fact that bullying is both an intensely personal experience and is also a result of social structures and cultural norms that affect and implicate us all. Because my participants did not fit the hegemonic norms of femininity, the popular boys in their schools took it upon themselves to police them through bullying. Gendered bullying is a way to maintain the boundary between the abject and the “normal” within the heterosexual matrix. Schools are often intense sites of normalization, and those who are considered different are punished through bullying, which is also a way for the bullies to display their power in the form of social capital.

As a result of experiencing gendered bullying, my participants felt limited in their personal lives, depressed, and Mida also felt suicidal. The mainstream bullying literature states that this depression stems from repeated negative interactions with peers, and victims internalize what they have been told (Meyer 44; Rigby 123). Undoubtedly many bullying victims experience this internalization, but if we view bullying as part of a larger structure, the depression can also stem from knowing your place in the heterosexual matrix, i.e. occupying an abject position compared to “normal” students, and knowing that in a neoliberal world where status is everything, you have very little social capital. These feelings of being “less than” followed my participants into adulthood. Because of their negative interactions in the past, they sometimes enter new situations worried that

people will not like them, and if a man expresses interest in them, they often have a difficult time believing it, and both types of experiences cause anxiety. Bullying is a thing that stays, the memory of bullying colours their present lives. However, it was not an entirely negative experience. For example, Chloe used her “deviancy” to fight back against her bullies when they threatened to harm her younger sister. In my participants’ present lives, they learned to rotate their experiences and use the negative memories to express empathy, help others, and also help themselves. My participants seem to realize that they are more than their bullied selves, and that the way boys treated them should not and did not determine the course of their lives. They strive to live life to the fullest, showing their bullied selves that they deserve better. Below I sketch out some ideas for future research on this topic, and also discuss some limitations of this thesis.

During the course of my research, I found that bullying is often viewed as an individual, psychological problem, which strips it from its sociopolitical context. In North America, bullying occurs in a neoliberal economy which has implications for how we view the world and each other. The neoliberal world is competitive, and divides people into winners and losers. Our world is also raced, gendered, and classed. “Losers” are the ones who do not conform to the hegemonic ideal, which is still a straight, rich, white man, or someone who acts like one (L. Brown et al. 1266). Some bullying researchers do not consider the effects of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, so bullying often looks like a behavioral problem (Walton 237). Of course, some instances of bullying occur because two students simply do not like each other, but as I and others have argued (Eder et al. 50, Klein 76, Pascoe 89, Walton 238), most students are bullied because they are

different from the norm in some way. For my participants, it was because they did not embody hegemonic gender norms. I examined bullying in terms of gender, but in doing this I excluded other aspects of bullying, which I discuss below.

Limitations to the Thesis

Class

One of my biggest regrets is not including class as a factor in my analysis. I have touched on class a few times in my thesis, but it is not something I examined in depth. I did not ask my participants about their class background and if they thought it affected their bullying experiences. However, it was clear that at the time they were bullied my participants fell on a continuum from upper middle class to working class, and this may have influenced the resources they could access. I did not feel I had the knowledge to include class in my analysis. Also, discussing class can be a taboo subject that can make some people uncomfortable, and I was already discussing a difficult subject with my participants. I wanted to focus primarily on gender and bullying, although I realize that my participants' experiences and other bullying experiences are also affected by their class positions. We live in a culture where the gap between rich and poor grows ever larger, where it is becoming more and more difficult to "make it." Even in Canada, which is considered one of the best countries to live in, the wealthiest 86 individuals held the same amount of wealth in 2012 as the bottom 11.4 million Canadians combined (Macdonald).

It makes sense to examine class as a factor in bullying, both as to why bullying may occur and why some children are targeted over others. On a larger scale, income

inequality coupled with neoliberalism can lead to systemic discrimination in societies and can reveal people's attitudes toward equality, and how schools and neighborhoods are segregated according to wealth (Elgar et al. 357). Adolescents who grow up in hierarchical societies are exposed to more status competition than adolescents who grow up in egalitarian societies with less inequality (Elgar et al. 357). On a local level, Due et al. found that Danish adolescents from families with a lower socioeconomic status are at a higher risk of being bullied, and their exposure to bullying seems to have led to a higher rate of depression later in life ("Bullying" 467). A larger study that took place in Canada, the United States, and most of Europe found that children who are economically disadvantaged are at a higher risk of being bullied (Due et al., "Inequality" 912). There are many explanations for these results. Many types of personal resources are unequally distributed, and it may be difficult for children from a low socioeconomic background to access them. For example, they may live in low income, single parent families which can make it harder to ask for help when the available resources are stretched thin (Due et al., "Bullying" 476). I would have liked to examine my participants' class status, their access to economic capital, and how class affected their bullying experiences

Race and Cyberbullying

My participants were white, and I did not ask them about the race of their bullies, nor did they mention it. Frankly, it did not even cross my mind during the interviews, which reflects my own white privilege, and also the fact that I was intensely focused on the gendered aspects of their experiences. Race, like gender, class, and ability, is a factor that can contribute to bullying (Walton 101). Regarding cyberbullying, my participants'

experiences occurred before smartphones and social networking sites like Facebook became popular, or even existed. I asked them about cyberbullying, but it was not something that they experienced from boys. Jackie did mention being cyberbullied by girls. It is worth noting that while the Internet creates new avenues for bullying, it also provides ways for victims to fight back. In 2015, a teenage girl in Newfoundland was ranked “fourth ugliest” in her school in an online poll, and she used social media to fight back against her bullies (Bartlett). The ways in which the internet both facilitates bullying and allows for resistance, especially in terms of gender, is a necessary subject of analysis.

A Crisis for Change

When students are limited from developing their strengths because of the climate of the school, then the educational system has failed.

Elizabeth J. Meyer, A Feminist Reframing of Bullying and Harassment

If school bullying is influenced by larger social values and social structures, then we have to change the culture if we expect to make any changes in schools. Any sort of anti-bullying program or policy will be limited if it is applied within a neoliberal, hypermasculine culture and economy (Klein 242). Neoliberal ideas have rooted themselves in our society and appear “natural.” As William Deresiewicz notes, “neoliberalism believes that we have reached the end of history, a steady-state condition of free-market capitalism that will go on replicating itself forever” (28). Bullying policies often use a one size fits all approach, and rarely acknowledge that children are bullied because they are seen as different and therefore inferior to their peers (Walton 238). In some cases, especially in the case of my participants, bullying maintains social order. “Order” in this case refers to the organization of privileges and disadvantages that are

maintained by policing hierarchical categories of social difference (Walton 238). As is evident in the analysis chapter, the bullies were maintaining the hegemonic gender order in their schools.

Bullying is often based on someone being perceived as different, or in other words being outside the norm. Many schools adopt an “acceptance of diversity” policy regarding race and ethnicity, but ignore identities that are “politically loaded,” such as sexual orientation and gender presentation (Walton 12). There appears to be a refusal to speak about these types of differences in anti-bullying programs when bullying is seen as a psychological issue (Walton 11, 14). For example, Dan Olweus, considered a pioneer and authority in school bullying, created the Bullying Prevention Program. The program assumes bullying can be dealt with psychologically and relationally, but it ignores or downplays the structural foundations of much bullying behaviors, such as class, race, and gender (L. Brown et al. 1264). As L. Brown et al. argues, any prevention program which does not address differences will unconsciously reproduce a social hierarchy that places white, middle class, straight men at the top (1266). Racism, sexism, and homophobia are forms of “human blindness” that come from the same source: “an inability to recognize the notion of difference as a dynamic human force, one which is enriching rather than threatening to the defined self” (Lorde “Surface” 45). It can also be particularly difficult to address gendered bullying, because demeaning girls and women is so systematic that it appears to be “normal” (Flinders 44; Klein 65). It is also difficult to address racism, sexism, and classism because neoliberal rhetoric emphasizes the individual, so any problem is seen as being due to individual problems or personal failing.

Although it must be acknowledged that bullying is a symptom of a bigger issue in society, a problem with seeing bullying as part of a larger system of domination and inequality is that it can be difficult to translate this idea at the school level (Rigby 272). In the psychological literature, where a significant amount of research is disseminated, there is some acknowledgement of psychological researchers have begun to recognize that the social context of the school, family and community must be taken into consideration when researching and intervening bullying (Swearer and Hymel 349). Knowing that bullying is part of a larger problem, in my participants' cases, sexism, offers little help to the child or teenager struggling with bullying right now. Jessie Klein suggests that society, what she calls the "bully society," must transform, as well as the microcosms of schools and communities (205). Of course, this would require sweeping social and economic changes, as well as a critical stance toward existing structures and norms (Klein 205). This may seem impossible, but unless we acknowledge that bullying is not just about a couple of kids in a classroom behaving badly, students will still be victimized.

We cannot change attitudes and society overnight, but we can do better than the anti-bullying policies currently in place. As long as hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity go unchallenged, then gendered bullying, sexual harassment, and homophobic bullying will continue to occur. Sexual differences are a matter of social practice, and although deconstruction is important to feminism, sexual differences cannot simply be deconstructed away, real societal change is needed to change or eradicate the current meanings of man and woman, and masculine and feminine (Moi, "Bourdieu" 1034). In Bourdieu's terms, a crisis needs to occur to bring about change, a crisis brings "the

undiscussed into discussion,” where private experiences are made public (Moi, “Bourdieu” 1027), or in other words, the personal is made political. Although in public discourse bullying seems to reach a sort of crisis mode over and over again, there needs to be a discourse on the roles of power and norms in bullying to bring about change.

There are several strategies that could shift the school culture to be less sexist. Klein suggests that such punitive, limiting values need to be acknowledged, and schools need to transform their cultures and work to create caring communities to “dismantle the gender police” (Klein 240-41). At the same time, students can also learn communication skills to develop better relationships at the classroom level (Klein 241). Elizabeth Meyer adds to this idea by suggesting that educators need to play a critical role in reducing bullying.

Teacher education and school leadership programs that employ a critical and anti-oppressive pedagogy, such as the theories of educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, can provide the tools to make the gender hierarchy explicit and explore the ways of undoing heterosexist patriarchal structures that allow them to endure (Meyer 41-42). It is clear that if anything is going to change, the school culture must change, which requires that students, teachers, and families be willing to change (Meyer 42). Meyer gives an example when discussing verbal harassment, or name calling. Teachers need to publicly and consistently take a stand against this type of behavior (Meyer 43). They must tell students why words such as “fag” or “bitch” are hurtful, because if students only learn that they will be punished for using those words, they may think that being gay or gender non-

conforming is something shameful (Meyer 43). A strategy such as this acknowledges the larger power structures at work and also helps to change the school climate.

Along with a shift in school culture, we may also need to change how we think about the word “bullying.” Although my participants identified as being bullied, over the course of my research, I began to question whether “bullying” is a useful term. Although I and other researchers agree that bullying is about power, power must be contextualized, otherwise bullying only appears to be a problem of individual pathology. Bullying instead could be named as abuse: physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, and psychological. Mida brought this idea up in her interviews, and in their study of the long-term effects of bullying, Carlisle and Rofes also mention that the effects of bullying are often similar to the effects of enduring abuse (24). Bullying that is chronic and severe could be considered an adverse childhood¹ experience, one that is chronic, unpredictable, and stress-inducing. This definition includes emotional abuse (Anda et al., 174), as adverse childhood experiences can lead to psychological issues in adulthood such as depression and anxiety (Anda et al., 180). Bullying can indeed leave scars on the mind. Naming bullying as abuse and an adverse childhood event could lead to better prevention initiatives, improved interventions for students being bullied, and perhaps even help adults still dealing with the effects of bullying.

When focusing on the psychological consequences of bullying one must also be aware of the origins of the behavior. My participants’ experiences could also be named as sexism and harassment. Naming gendered bullying as sexism, homophobic bullying as

¹ “Childhood” here refers to the first 18 years of life (Anda et al., 180).

homophobia, bullying based on class classism, or on race racism, places bullying in a societal context, and sees the behavior not as an individual problem, but a systemic problem. Such naming may be difficult because the education system is an institution governed and supported by the state, and it reflects hegemonic ideology (Khayatt 49).

In this neoliberal climate, where problems are seen as individual, it seems more difficult to name problems as structural. Administrators also have an interest in naming harassment as bullying, especially sexual harassment, because behavior framed as harassment can have legal implications (L. Brown et al. 1263). In a litigious era, naming illegal behaviors “bullying” absolves the school of legal responsibility (L. Brown et al. 1263). A bullying discourse which stresses individual pathologies also erases a discourse of rights by downplaying harassment (N. Stein 789). In a just, egalitarian society, where people did not feel they were in competition for a scarce amount of resources, where girls were not judged on their looks and sexual availability, and boys did not judge and police girls’ bodies and behaviors, not only would we reduce gendered bullying, but we would also reduce other types of norms-based bullying. Neoliberalism “...is not inevitable. It is a result of the choices we have made, driven by an ideology that we have allowed to impose itself upon us” (Deresiewicz 28). We need to work to bring that world into being, but in the meantime schools and community-based interventions can help make school a better, more welcoming place to be for all students. Feminism “has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives” (hooks *Margin* 26), including children and teenagers. If students in primary and secondary school were taught about the socially constructed nature of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination in an

age-appropriate manner, we may see a reduction in bullying behavior. It would also save a lot of students from seeing the school as a prison.

I mentioned in the analysis chapter that Mida, Chloe, Jackie, and Anne described bullying as a foreclosure. It prevented them from engaging in activities or dating, or for Mida, just going a day without being bullied. When I think about the other bullying stories I have read about, I think of bullying as a sort of social death, during the time of bullying and after. Victims are often excluded from activities and rituals while bullying is happening, and can feel restricted by their bullying experiences later in life. The women I spoke to felt held back by their bullying experiences to varying degrees. Bullying can also lead to physical death; it almost took Mida at her lowest point. Anyone who is a feminist, or who believes in social justice, on some level has witnessed unnecessary suffering and wants to do something about it. The reason I undertook this study was not only to expose the sexism inherent in gendered bullying, but I also want people to realize how many others have suffered needlessly because bullying decimated their self-esteem, or they have chosen to end their lives.

Going All the Way

This time we are going all the way.
Robin Morgan, Redstockings Manifesto, 1970

Hegemonic gender norms and gender policing have had deleterious effects on my participants and countless other gendered bullying victims. Although this thesis is not a psychological study, something Jungian analyst Marion Woodman wrote seems relevant to my argument: “The opposite to love is not hate but power. Power obliterates another’s individuality” (103). Over and over again in my participants’ stories it is clear that

bullying limited them in often devastating ways. Similarly, bell hooks states that “love can never take root in a relationship based on domination and coercion” (*Everybody* 103). Feminism, as a “wise and loving politic” (hooks, *Everybody*, 103), works to break down limiting notions of gender, as well as other oppressive structures. Feminism is essential because no female is spared from sexism. That statement is not hyperbole. In no country in the world do women have equal rights (United Nations). The truth is that women and girls are victimized every day because they are female. Sexism and misogyny cuts across race, class, religion, and culture, and can take the form of murder, sex-selective abortion, rape, molestation, abuse, discrimination, and/or bullying. Sexism can be the reason you have a bad day, or it could be the reason your life ends, and every imaginable experience in between. The sexism in the form of gendered bullying I have described here may appear mild to some observers, but all sexism and acts of misogyny comes from the same place. Patriarchy goes all the way, so feminism must go all the way, because the female half of humanity deserves better.

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Appendix A: First Interview Questions (developed by Dr. Marnina Gonick)

For those who self-identify as having been bullied.

1. What was your schooling experience like? What kind of school did you go to? Where was it?
2. How old were you when the bullying happened? How old are you now?
3. Can you tell me about your experiences with bullying? Tell me something about general patterns but also specific particular instances that you recall.
4. Who were the people that participated in the bullying?
5. How did you explain this experience at the time it was happening? How do you explain it now, after the fact?
6. What kinds of feelings did you have about it at the time? Now?
7. How do you think that experience affected you at the time?
8. Do you think the experience has affected you in the long term? How?
9. What did you yourself do about the bullying at the time? In what ways did it work or not work to change the situation?
10. Did you tell anyone? At the school? Did the teachers or administration take action? Was it effective?
11. Why do you think you were targeted?
12. What did you think about the person/s who were bullying you?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Follow-up Questions to First Interviews (developed by Heather MacLean)**Mida**

No additional questions.

Chloe

1. I'm not quite clear on what happened when the bullies said they were going to go after your little sister, and you were waiting for them. Did you take any action, or did they just see you and then they left?
2. You mentioned that you like to read, did reading help you cope? If so, were there any books/authors that you liked in particular?

Anne

1. Did you ever experience cyber bullying?
2. Did you talk to you mother about the boys bullying you? Did they find out when you slapped the guy on the bus? How did they react? Was the boy reprimanded?
3. You mention talking to a guidance counsellor, when/where did that take place, could you elaborate on how he treated your problem?

Jackie

1. You mention wondering if you could buy something to make the kids like you, is buying gifts for them something you tried in the hopes of winning them over?
2. Was cyber or phone (text) bullying ever an issue for you?

Appendix B: Second Interview Questions (developed by Heather MacLean)**Mida**

1. Was there any kind of anti-bullying program in your school?
2. Was there a lot of mixing between the genders in your school at the time you were bullied? Would it have been unusual to have a platonic opposite-gender friend?
3. Did anyone (teacher, student) say anything to you, good or bad, about the drawing incident?
4. You said that teachers would see or hear bullying, but wouldn't do anything, could you read their faces? What was their reaction? What do you think about the adults who didn't help? Do you think teachers were modeling behavior for the bullies? Showing the bullies how they should treat you, essentially?
5. Do you think being bullied affected your attitude towards education and learning in general?
6. Can you recall any specific details of what the bullies would say when they made fun of your appearance?
7. Was your religion or your religiosity ever made fun of?
8. You said 'shut up' to someone once, and it was a big deal for you. Who did you say that to and when, and what was the context?
9. Were you bullied on the bus frequently? Who did it besides your sibling, what would they say/do? Did the bus driver ever react?
10. Did you ever skip school or fake being sick to get out of school?

11. Did your school have a safe space you could go to if you felt upset or overwhelmed?
If not, do you think having a safe space would have made a difference?
12. Were class differences something you were aware of in junior high and high school?
13. Was there a hierarchy of cliques at your school, or was it more like different groups but no clear 'popular' clique?
14. Did the area where you socialized on school grounds reflect social status?
15. Compared to other girls in your school and grade, were they quieter than you and/or girlier? Did you feel 'typical' compared to other girls in your school, or did you feel that you were somehow different from them? For example, were other girls in your class into things like clothes and makeup, while you weren't interested?
16. Who were the girls that most guys liked and went out with? What were the popular girls like?
17. Were sports a big deal at your school?
18. Were D., F., and J. the most popular boys? Were the boys that did well academically less likely to bully? Were all the popular guys bullies, or only some?
19. Did you see the bullies as powerful? Did they have power in the school, and/or outside the school? (They came from a prominent family, etc.) Were they physically imposing?
20. Now you think some of the bullies were struggling to find themselves, or they chose to go along with it, did you ever see a sexist element in the bullying or gender policing? Do you consider yourself a feminist then or now?
21. Did the boys bully anyone else that you know of?

22. Did you ever see D. or anyone who bullied you after high school? What happened?
23. When you felt suicidal, what prevented you from acting on your feelings? Was it just a passing thought and you knew you'd never act on it?
24. Did you ever receive counseling from your pastor?
25. Was there anyone that you felt understood/supported you at that time?
26. You mentioned helping your brother, and helping a boy at a mall ("It's not a fair fight"). Do you see this behavior, reaching out to others, as a positive outcome that came from a negative experience?
27. Were you bullied by your sibling(s) before you went to school?
28. Would you say that you grew up in a conservative Christian home? Was turn the other cheek one of your beliefs, do you think the bullies may have picked up on that?
29. Do you think that maybe your father bullied your mother, or you and your siblings? If so, do you think that contributed to how you handled school bullying?
30. Do you think the term 'victim' applies to you? What do you think of that term in relation to bullying?
31. Do you see the bullying as something that you had to go through, or are you resentful that it happened, do you think it ultimately made you a better person?
32. Did you keep a diary or journal during that time? If so, do you think it helped you cope? Have you ever re-read it, what was your reaction?
33. How would you sum up your junior high/high school experience?
34. Did the first interview make you rethink your experience? Did it have any effect on you?

35. Is there anything you would like to add?

Follow-up Questions:

1. After you got (re)acquainted with Y., did the bullying subside any? Did you get any insight on what it was like to be popular?
2. How did Y. bully you in elementary school? Did she ever apologize?
3. What would you say to other girls going through a similar situation?
4. In your opinion, what could/should be done about school bullying?
5. Were physical fights (between boys, girls, or mixed) a common occurrence at your junior high/high school?

Chloe

1. You mentioned moving to [town], was it because your parents needed to move for work?
2. Was there any kind of anti-bullying program in your school?
3. Was there a lot of mixing between the genders in your school at the time you were bullied? Would it have been unusual to have a platonic opposite-gender friend?
4. You mentioned skipping school, did you ever fake being sick to get out of school?
5. Did you take a school bus to school? If so, were you ever bullied on the bus? (Or any other quasi-school area where the authority is hazy).
6. You had two (not best) friends during the time you were bullied, did they ever support you or stand up to your bullies? Are you in contact with them today?
7. You mentioned that you hung around the guidance counselor, but that he/she was ineffective, can you tell me more about that?

8. What do you think about the adults who didn't help? Do you think teachers were modeling behavior for the bullies? Showing the bullies how they should treat you, essentially?
9. Was there anyone you felt understood/supported you during that time?
10. Did your school have a safe space you could go to if you felt upset or overwhelmed? If not, do you think having a safe space would have made a difference?
11. Do you think being bullied affected your attitude toward education and learning in general?
12. Class was a main division at your junior high, was that ever something you were bullied about, or was it more like something that you felt made you different from other kids?
13. Was there a hierarchy of cliques at your school, or was it more like different groups but no clear 'popular' clique?
14. Did the area where you socialized on school grounds reflect social status?
15. What were the popular girls like? (Appearance, demeanor, etc.).
16. Did you feel 'typical' compared to other girls at your junior high, or did you feel that you were somehow different from them? For example, were other girls in your class into things like clothes and makeup, while you weren't interested?
17. Were all the popular guys bullies, or only some? (Were the ones that did well academically less likely to bully?)
18. Were all the popular guys into sports? Were sports a big deal at your school?

19. How popular was the main bully? Did girls like him, did he have a girlfriend? Did he do well academically?
20. Did you see the bullies as powerful? Did they have power in the school, and/or outside the school? (They came from a prominent family, etc.) Were they physically imposing?
21. You mentioned the bullies picked on your looks, in what way(s)? Is there anything that stands out? Did the bullying affect the way you saw yourself (didn't care what you wore, etc.)?
22. When you stood up for yourself against P. and his friends, did you worry about getting into trouble? How did you feel about standing up for yourself in that way? Do you feel differently about it now?
23. You mentioned that at the time you didn't recognize it was bullying. When did you realize it was bullying, and how did you come to that realization?
24. You said that you were generally a quiet type of person during that time. Was that related to the bullying at all? Did you become more outgoing later on? If so, what precipitated the change?
25. You mentioned in the first interview that you and your family are soldiers to the bone. You said you didn't really tell your parents what was going on, that it wasn't worth it. Is stoicism admired in your family, would you be seen as weak if you told them how the bullying was affecting you?
26. Do you think that anything positive came out of your bullying experience? For example, did it make you more empathetic?

27. Do you consider yourself a feminist then or now? Do you see an element of sexism in your bullying experience?
28. Do you think the term 'victim' applied/applies to your bullying experience? What do you think of that term in relation to bullying?
29. You mentioned a book called *Speak* that helped you cope. Could you tell me what it's about and how it helped you?
30. Did you keep a diary or journal during that time? If so, do you think it helped you cope? Have you ever re-read it, what was your reaction?
31. How would you sum up your junior high experience?
32. Did the first interview make you rethink your experience? Did it have any effect on you?
33. Is there anything you would like to add?

Follow-up Questions

1. Why did you not want to take a bus to school?
2. The teacher who made you stand in the corner and clean out your desk, what class was this, was she older, younger, anything that stood out?
3. If there had been an official or unofficial safe space you could go to at school, do you think it would have made a difference? Did you get in trouble when teachers/administrators found where you had been staying, or did they just close it and that was that?
4. Did the bullying make you care less about your appearance, for example, you wore baggy clothes to blend in?

5. Was homophobic bullying (bullying kids that were thought to be gay, using the word 'fag,' etc.) a problem at your junior high school?
6. Were fights common at your school (between boys, girls, boys and girls)? If they were, who engaged in most of the fighting?
7. What would you say to girls going through a similar situation?
8. In your opinion, what should be done about school bullying?

Anne

1. You've done research on bullying. Where did you get your information, and what did you find? Do you think the research is an accurate reflection of what actually happens?
2. Can you talk about your time volunteering at [organization]? How did that come about? Can you expand on how it helped you with your own bullying experience? Can you talk about your experience?
3. Did you take a school bus to school? If so, were you ever bullied on the bus? (Or any other quasi-school area where the authority is hazy).
4. Was there a lot of mixing between the genders in your school(s) at the time you were bullied? Would it have been unusual to have a platonic opposite-gender friend?
5. Did the area where you socialized on school grounds reflect social status?
6. Were a lot the popular guys into sports? Were sports a big deal at your school?
7. Was it mostly boys who teased you for looking like a boy, and your hair? Were they popular boys? Did the bullying affect the way you saw yourself (didn't care what you wore, etc.)?

8. Were all the popular guys bullies, or only some? (Were the ones that did well academically less likely to bully?)
9. Did you see the bullies as powerful? Did they have power in the school, and/or outside the school? (They came from a prominent family, etc.) Were they physically imposing?
10. You mentioned that “boys are stupid at that age.” Is that how you explained the bullying to yourself at the time, or did you see it differently? How do you explain it now?
11. Did the boys bully anyone else that you know of?
12. When you decided not to take the bullying from friends anymore, did that apply to boy bullying as well?
13. Did any of the boy bullies ever apologize to you?
14. You had your first boyfriend when you were 21, how did it feel when you saw other girls with boyfriends in junior high and high school? Did you attend your prom?
15. Did you ever skip school or fake being sick to get out of school?
17. Did your school have a safe space you could go to if you felt upset or overwhelmed? If not, do you think having a safe space would have made a difference?
18. What do you think about the adults who didn’t help (the guidance counselor)? Do you think teachers were modeling behavior for the bullies? Showing the bullies how they should treat you, essentially?
19. Do you think being bullied affected your attitude toward education and learning in general?
20. Do you consider yourself a feminist then or now? Do you see an element of sexism in your bullying experience?

21. Would you say that as a result of the bullying you feel anxiety in certain situations?
22. Do you think the term ‘victim’ applied/applies to your bullying experience? What do you think of that term in relation to bullying?
23. Did you keep a diary or journal during that time? If so, do you think it helped you cope? Have you ever re-read it, what was your reaction?
24. How would you sum up your junior high/high school experience?
25. Did the first interview make you rethink your experience? Did it have any effect on you?
26. Is there anything you would like to add?

Follow-up Questions:

1. Can you talk more about this popular girl you befriended? Did you get any insight on what it was like to be popular (you mentioned that she ‘busted her butt,’ but did knowing a popular girl change your opinion of popularity or anything like that)?
2. Was homophobic bullying (bullying kids that were thought to be gay, using the word ‘fag’ etc.) a problem at your junior/high schools?
3. What would you say to other girls going through a similar situation?
4. In your opinion, what could/should be done about school bullying?
5. You mentioned telling your nephews not to take bullying, is bullying something you talk to them a lot about?
6. Were physical fights (between boys, girls, or mixed) a common occurrence at your junior high/high school?

Jackie

1. You mentioned cyber/text bullying, you wrote about it in the e-mail, but can you describe it to me now?
2. In the e-mail, when you were describing your friend C., you used quotation marks around the word “friend.” Why is that, and what was the nature of your relationship? Did you ever confront her/them about the cyber/text bullying?
3. Did you take a school bus to school? If so, were you ever bullied on the bus? (Or any other quasi-school area where the authority is hazy).
4. Did you ever skip school or fake being sick to get out of school?
5. When you first moved to [place] you went to a public school and you hated it, why is that? What was it like?
6. Was there a lot of mixing between the genders in your school at the time you were bullied? Would it have been unusual to have a platonic opposite-gender friend?
7. Did your school have a safe space you could go to if you felt upset or overwhelmed? If not, do you think having a safe space would have made a difference?
8. What do you think about the adults who didn’t help? Do you think teachers were modeling behavior for the bullies? Showing the bullies how they should treat you, essentially?
9. Do you think being bullied affected your attitude toward education and learning in general?
10. Were other kids in your class also members of the country club? Did they treat you differently at the club? Was the club a big part of your social life?

11. Some of the basic patterns of the bullying included exclusion, was it both girls and boys (the boys that sat with you that time)? Would you ask to be included and they said no, or did you just know if you asked you wouldn't be included, it was more implied?
12. You were on the volleyball team, what was that like? Did you have friends there or did you feel excluded? Did you socialize with your teammates after games?
13. You mentioned a guy you liked who danced with you on a dare, what year did that happened, were there any other incidents like that one?
14. Did the bullying affect the way you saw yourself (didn't care what you wore, etc.)?
15. The Crew was a group of popular kids at your junior high, who was in The Crew? Did they do the bulk of the bullying or was it mostly J.J.?
16. Were most of the popular guys bullies, or only some? Were the ones that did well academically less likely to bully?
17. Did you see the bullies as powerful? Did they have power in the school, and/or outside the school? (They came from a prominent family, etc.) Were they physically imposing?
18. You mentioned a boy named D.W. who used to pick on you, can you talk about him? What did he do to you? Was he popular?
19. You were friendly with a few boys, such as J.F. Was he in your grade/school? Did you know him from the country club? One time a group of girls left your table at the cafeteria and some boys sat with you. What kind of boys were they? Where were they in the hierarchy, were they your friends all through junior high?

20. When you were experiencing destructive feelings (thinking about smashing a glass) did you feel despair, or did you think it was just a phase? You thought life would never open up, what kept you going?
21. Did the boys bully anyone else that you know of?
22. Would you say that as a result of the bullying you feel anxiety in certain situations?
23. Have you ever re-read your journals, what are your reflections now, looking back?
24. Do you think the term 'victim' applied/applies to your bullying experience? What do you think of that term in relation to bullying?
25. Do you consider yourself a feminist then or now? Do you see an element of sexism in your bullying experience?
26. How would you sum up your junior high experience?
27. Did the first interview make you rethink your experience? Did it have any effect on you?
28. Is there anything you would like to add?

Follow-up Questions:

1. There is this idea in feminist literature of the 'Super girl,' that girls today have to be pretty and nurturing, but also embody traditionally masculine qualities like athleticism, aggression, and leadership, all while making it look effortless. Were the popular girls (or most of the girls) at your school 'Super girls'? Did you feel like you didn't measure up?
2. Did the area where you socialized on school grounds (junior and/or high school) reflect social status?
3. Did the bullying affect the way you saw yourself (didn't care what you wore, etc.)?

4. Were fights common at your school (between boys, girls, boys and girls) who engaged in most of the fighting?
5. What would you say to girls going through a similar situation?
6. In your opinion, what should be done about school bullying?

Appendix C: Sample of Participant Consent Form



Dear ,

This letter is to introduce myself to you and invite you to participate in my research study entitled: *Girls, Bullying and School Violence*. My name is Marnina Gonick and I am a professor of Education and Women's Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax.

The purpose of the research project is to understand more about the ways in which girls conceptualize their own experiences of bullying and being bullied. The research will seek to answer the following questions: How does culture, race, class and (hetero)sexism shape girls' experience of bullying and being bullied? How do interpersonal relations, spaces and contexts of schooling mediate girls' experiences of bullying? How might alternative and innovative methodological approaches studying school violence provide new understandings and strategies for dealing with bullying?

As a participant in this research study you will be asked for an interview that will take approximately one to two hours to complete. At the interview you will be asked if you are interested in further participation in the study. If you agree you may be contacted to participate on a focus group discussion about your experiences. Participants will also have the option of participating in dramatic performances and biographic writing workshops. These performances will be video-recorded. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Your anonymity will be protected by ensuring that only coded identifiers will be used on the tapes, transcripts and all other material collected. The tapes will be kept in a locked file that will be accessible only to me. Your name will not appear in any published material that ensues from this project. I will use pseudonyms. Any potentially identifying features will be changed to protect your anonymity.

Benefits of participating in this study include sharing your experiences and having those experiences shape what is known and understood about bullying. You may find that in the interview process that discomfoting memories are stirred up. If this occurs, or if for any other reason, at any point during the research project you may decide to withdraw from the study.

If you have any questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair

of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at (902) 457-6350 or e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Sincerely,
Marnina Gonick
Dept of Education/Women's Studies

166 Bedford Hwy Halifax Nova Scotia B3M 2J6 Canada
Tel 902 457 6178 • Fax 902 457 4911
www.msvu.ca

Mount Saint Vincent University
166 Bedford Highway
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3M 2J6

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Email: _____

Postal Address: _____
