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Constructing Bullying Perpetrators and Victims: How Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation Help Create Victims and Bullies in Media Discourses

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Constructing Bullying Perpetrators and Victims: How Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation  
Help Create Victims and Bullies in Media Discourses

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Criminology, Law and Society

by

Victoria Philice Foreman

Dissertation Committee:  
Assistant Professor Sora Han, Chair  
Professor Susan Coutin  
Assistant Professor Keramet Reiter

2015



## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my families of origin and choice. To my parents, Teddie and Paul Foreman, you have provided unwavering support to each and every one of my endeavors. Your hard work has given me the opportunity to explore, follow passions, and create without fear. I share this accomplishment with you and hope that it makes you proud.

To Sean Glas, thank you for your impeccable timing, your attempts to make me smile in the midst of a writing crisis, and for your endless encouragement. Kudzu, my love.

Paul Foreman-Glas, you were born only a month after I proposed this project. It is a funny thing to be consumed with a new child and a dissertation at the same time. Both require patience, the ability to silence your inner critic, and an incredible amount of caffeine. I've struggled with and loved both processes. Your existence has made me a better writer, and I hope this project will one day help you grow into the compassionate, sensitive human being I know you will become.

Finally, I'd like to share one of my father's oft recited "Southern-isms", which I wrote down on a note card and posted above my desk when I began working on this project. It provided comfort when I was unsure of myself and, like many of his other Southern-isms, is just plain old good advice.

"Don't worry about the mule going blind, just load the wagon."  
- Paul Foreman

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# CURRICULUM VITAE

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## FIELD OF STUDY

Media representations and constructions of deviance; bullying

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Foreman, V. (2015). Constructing the victim in the bullying narrative: How bullying discourses affirm rather than challenge discriminatory notions of gender and sexuality. *Crime, Media, Culture*.

## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

Constructing Bullying Perpetrators and Victims: How Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation  
Help Create Victims and Bullies in Media Discourses

By

Victoria Philice Foreman

Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology, Law and Society

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Assistant Professor Sora Han, Chair

To explain the categories of bully and victim in the bullying discourse I performed a qualitative form of content analysis, known as ethnographic content analysis, on three sets of news articles about bullying. The three data sets were compiled through a Lexis-Nexis search of the names “Tyler Clementi”, “Phoebe Prince”, and the term “racial bullying”. An analysis of the discourse shows that victims and bullies are constructed along gendered, racialized, and sexualized lines. The discourse on victims can be read as upholding discriminatory systems of patriarchy and heteronormativity based on the explanation of suicide as an expected or predictable response to homophobia and sexism. The discourse on bullies focuses primarily on gender distinctions in bullying (the mean girl or relational aggression discourse) and descriptions of bullying behavior as normative and correctable, and also as unalterably pathological. Finally, the bullying discourse contains evidence that less attention is paid to racial bullying incidents. When attention is directed at racial bullying, the media response tends to focus on the emotional and potentially unruly responses of the minority victims, and these victims are expected to take responsibility by moving on and not focusing on the bullying incident.

# INTRODUCTION

## Statement of the Problem

In recent years a new kind of deviance, or more accurately, an old behavior newly labeled as deviant has emerged as the focus of social, legislative, and criminological attention. Taking into account the media coverage, anti-bullying school programs, research projects, and new state laws it appears that the attention paid to bullying and its dangers are at an all time high. Some researchers describe bullying as the most predominant form of aggression in American schools (Sanders & Phye 2004). One study of US students in grades 6-10 found 29.9% of students were involved in moderate to frequent bullying (Nansel et al. 2001). Experts, school districts, prosecutors, and lay observers are in an ongoing process of defining and recognizing bullying behaviors, distinguishing juvenile incivility from more serious forms of peer victimization, and drawing boundaries around the ‘bully’ and ‘victim’ categories to make them socially and legally recognizable. Despite the availability of neutral definitions of bullies, bullying, and bullied victims from legal and academic sources, there are still questions about what cultural discourses on bullying are adding to these categories.

The purpose of this study is to begin to examine and analyze this discursively prolific category. As a first step in doing so, this work examines how the victim and bully are constructed in media representations along gendered, racialized, and sexualized lines. The bullying discourse produces a series of expectations and ways of understanding both bullies and victims that draws heavily on notions of sexuality, gender, and race. This project examines these productions and uncovers ways in which gender, sexuality, and race are used to create victims and bullies that have not yet been identified by other studies. To explain how the categories of bully and victim are constructed in the bullying discourse, I performed an ethnographic content

analysis (Altheide, 1987) on three sets of news articles about bullying: the Phoebe Prince case, the Tyler Clementi case, and articles about racial bullying.

Throughout this project I discuss and analyze information from news articles, anti-bullying laws, and the psychological literature on bullying. I examine law and psychological research to give the reader a context for understanding the ways in which bullying is described and treated by these expert discourses, and also to interrogate this literature. Recitations of the legal and psychological literature will, at times, give the impression that bullying is a discrete, objective category of behaviors and individuals with accompanying psychological profiles. I do not read the literature this way, but instead analyze these discourses from the perspective that bullying, as a category, is porous and far more fluid than the legal and psychological literatures would indicate. I include the psychology and legal literatures to help interrogate the bullying category and present it as a productive social construct.<sup>1</sup> After examining bullying laws and psychological studies it becomes clear that questions of what constitutes the behavior, consequences of the behavior, and what to do about the behavior are all unsettled. This presents the opportunity to take a step back from the bullying issue and examine the discursive work this category produces.

Media representations are a way of constructing and sharing cultural knowledge, expectations, experiences, and stereotypes (Collins, 2014; Campbell, 1995; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Kellner, 2015). They are described as primarily constituting what most people know about social life, history, and the rest of the world (Luhmann, 2000). Media studies are not simply interesting commentaries on culture or cultural representations; they can reveal particular representations of philosophy, ideology, or culture as ways of exercising power. Examining

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that bullying behaviors do not occur among children or adults, or that bullying only exists as a social construct and isn't "real" as a form of abuse or inappropriate behavior.

media representations is one way to examine how hegemony is created and maintained (Lull, 2015). As Kellner (2015) explains:

Radio television, film, popular music, the Internet and social networking, and other forms and products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identity, including our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female; our conception of class, ethnicity and race, nationality, sexuality, and division of the world into categories of “us” and “them.” Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. Media stories provide the symbols, myths, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture. Media spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence and who is not. They dramatize and legitimate the power of the forces that be and show the powerless that they may stay in their place or be oppressed (p. 7).

Mass media helps construct perceptions of reality and configurations of social relations. Rather than view mass media as a monolith, however, it should be understood as a complex institution of diverse organizations, people, and interests (Ericsson, 1991).

It is the media’s complexity and centrality in shaping social life that led to the decision to feature it as the primary discourse for analysis in this project. Furthermore, the bullying issue is well represented in the media, therefore media analysis offers a more productive opportunity to examine constructions of race, sexuality, and gender in the available case studies.<sup>2</sup> Law is also highly effective in producing the realities of the social order<sup>3</sup> and is similar to mass media in this respect (Ericsson, 1991). I intended to conduct a more in-depth examination of legal constructions of bullying victims and perpetrators and compare this to media constructions of these categories, but it proved too large an undertaking for this project. The analysis in this project does, however, offer novel insights about the nature of bullying victimization,

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the psychological studies on bullying and race did not offer a substantial amount of material to analyze, nor did studies on bullying and sexual orientation or homosexuality.

<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of law’s role in constituting social relations see Foucault (1975), Calvita (2005), Minow (1991), Haney-Lopez (2006), and Ewick & Silbey (1998).

perpetration, and how these categories are constructed along racialized, gendered, and sexualized lines.

Other examinations of media constructions have contributed to criminology and law and society scholarship primarily in the form of content analysis examining media constructions of legal events or types of crimes that either occupy a definitional grey space, or are difficult to identify using traditional crime indexes (Nobles & Schiff, 2004; Levi, 2006; Nelson & Nelson, 2013; Sullivan & Chermack, 2012).<sup>4</sup> Media analysis has also been used to compare representations of types of perpetrators (Yanich, 2005), and as a first step in systematically exploring under-researched crimes (Morris & Longmire, 2008). This project adds to these subfields within criminology, law and society by examining victim and perpetrator constructions in a new, amorphous, and contested legal category. The analysis of articles on racial bullying, Prince, and Clementi, combined with analysis of legal and psychological texts addressing bullying, is helpful in examining and interrogating the bullying category.

Bullying is not a new term or concept, but the focus on and concern over this category of behaviors has increased in recent years. According to the Television and News Archive, only one national network<sup>5</sup> ran a story about school bullying in the U.S. in the 1980s; a second story appeared in 1997, followed by two more in 1999 and 2000. Between 1968, the year the archive began, and 2000, there were a total of four national news stories on school bullying in the U.S. Between 2001 and 2014 there were 244 news reports with the majority of broadcasts (178) occurring between 2010 and 2013. Not surprisingly, this jump in public concern and interest

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<sup>4</sup> Nobles & Schiff (2004) compare how the media constructs meaning around various legal events with how this meaning is constructed within the law. Levi's (2006) work on media representations of white collar crimes as "infotainment" identifies themes of media construction and compares them between different types of media outputs. Nelson & Nelson (2013) examine how "art fraud", a debated and complicated legal term, is constructed in media reports. Sullivan & Chermack (2012) used a mix of qualitative and quantitative media analysis to analyze media constructions of financial crimes.

<sup>5</sup> Vanderbilt Television News Archive includes regularly scheduled news broadcasts from ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and Fox News.

was accompanied by a widespread proliferation of state anti-bullying laws, public service announcements such as the “It Gets Better” project, as well as a multitude of public policy interventions such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Between 1998 and 2012, just fourteen years, 49 states passed anti-bullying laws. Due to some highly publicized cases of bullying which resulted in teen suicide, and concerns that bullied youth will turn violent<sup>6</sup>, public concern over bullying and its effects is experiencing a unique historical moment of political attention and public concern (Klein, 2012; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2004).

Interest in bullying in psychological literature has increased recently as well. A search of the terms “bullying”, “bullying & suicide”, “bullying & depression”, “bullying & gender”, “bullying & sexual orientation or homosexuality”, and “bullying & race” in peer reviewed articles from the PsycInfo<sup>7</sup> database shows the trajectory of bullying research in psychology journals. Between 1926 and 1979 there were approximately 15 articles that included the term “bullying”, but after 2002 over 150 articles a year were published on bullying with 590 in 2013 alone. Each “bullying &” category grew from the 1990s to 2013 with “bullying & gender” and “bullying & depression” yielding close to 100 articles each in 2013. “Bullying & sexual orientation or homosexuality” and “bullying & suicide” climbed steadily, but at a much slower pace, reaching 27 and 32 articles, respectively, in 2013. “Bullying & race”, which is the subject of chapter 4 of this research, was by far the smallest category with only 11 articles in 2013.<sup>8</sup>

In a search of the ProQuest databases ERIC<sup>9</sup> and Criminal Justice<sup>10</sup> of “bullying”, “bullying & violence”, “bullying & crime”, “bullying & suicide”, and “bullying & race” there is

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<sup>6</sup> This was the original, but ultimately incorrect, assessment of the teenage shooters at Columbine High School in 1998 (Cullen, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> The PsycInfo database contains articles published by the American Psychological Association and includes international psychological research from 1800 to the present.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on term frequency within the articles see Appendix A.

<sup>9</sup> This database is sponsored by the Department of Education and includes journal articles, conferences, government documents, theses, dissertations, reports, and books on education.

a similar trajectory. The Criminal Justice database shows a steady climb of “bullying” beginning in 1995 that reached 100 articles per year by 2010 and 216 articles in 2013. “Bullying & violence” is the most prolific of the “bullying &” categories and reached 100 articles per year in 2011, and 139 articles in 2013. “Bullying & crime”, “bullying & suicide” and “bullying & race” produced fewer articles (98, 47, and 65 articles respectively in 2013) but all show an upward trajectory. A search of the same “bullying &” categories in the ERIC database also shows an upward trajectory until 2013, when the number of materials on all bullying categories dipped to their 2007 levels (about 150 materials on “bullying”, and about 30 for “bullying & violence”), although “bullying and suicide” remained constant.

### **A Critique of Psychological and Legal Understandings of Bullying**

The emergence of bullying research is widely attributed to Dan Olweus, a Norwegian researcher who began studying bullying after three Norwegian boys, who committed suicide in the late 1970s, left behind a note indicating that being bullied was the reason they took their lives (Berger, 2006).<sup>11</sup> There were few researchers outside of Scandinavia in the early years of this new research field, but in the late 1980s and early 1990s journal articles on bullying outside Scandinavia appeared. As the PsycInfo database shows, bullying became a more popular research field internationally through the 1990s and into the 2000s. Today, bullying research spans the globe and extends beyond schools to workplace bullying, family bullying, and prison bullying (Berger, 2006; Monks & Coyne, 2011).

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<sup>10</sup> This database includes scholarly journals, correctional and law enforcement trade publications, crime reports, and crime blogs.

<sup>11</sup> Olweus is credited with establishing the first bullying measurement questionnaire and developed a successful school based intervention program.



According to Olweus' classic and widely used definition, "a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. It is a negative action where someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another . . ." (1999, p. 10). Psychological researchers generally agree on the definitional elements of intentionality, repetition, and power imbalance (Vaillancourt, McDougall, Hymel, Krygsman, Miller, Stiver, & Davis, 2008). Bullying can occur in a variety of ways and the psychological literature on bullying encompasses a wide range of behaviors that fall between criminal assault and basic incivility. Bullying can be physical, verbal, relational, social or indirect, or can occur online or through text messages, also known as cyber bullying.

While definitions of bullying in the psychological literature are well settled around behavior that is intentional, repetitive, and reflecting an imbalance of power, legal definitions are far more varied. An analysis of state bullying laws in 2011 illustrates the legal integration of Olweus' definition. Only eight states require bullying behavior be defined as repetitive, systematic, or continuous, sixteen states define it as behavior that is intended to harm, and four states include the power differential component (Sacco, Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey, & Doherty, 2012). Some state laws focus on the intent of the bully, others on the victim's subjective experience of harm, and still others on the specific actions of the bully (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Massachusetts' and Nevada's anti-bullying laws exemplify the trend of variation in bullying statutes. While both statutes require repetitive behavior on the part of the bully, the Nevada statute requires a reasonable person to find the behavior highly offensive *and* that the bully intend to cause the other student harm or serious emotional distress. The Massachusetts statute requires physical harm or a reasonable fear of physical harm, a hostile

environment for the victim, infringement of the victim's rights, *or* a disruption of the education process in the school.

All forms of bullying come in a variety of behaviors ranging from relatively minor to serious. Physical bullying includes pushing, hitting, kicking, shoving, having one's belongings taken, or being rough, while verbal bullying includes being teased, laughed at, ridiculed, called names, or threatened (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Bullying's lesser known categories include social, indirect, and relational bullying. Social bullying, also called social aggression is "directed toward damaging another's self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as verbal rejection, negative facial expressions or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumors or social exclusion" (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Garipey, 1989 p. 589). Indirect bullying, also called indirect aggression is defined as behavior intentionally designed to inflict mental or physical pain in a way that appears as though the perpetrator had no intention to harm at all, thereby making it more likely that the perpetrator will avoid counter-aggression or identification (Bjoerkqvist, Lagerspertz, & Kaukiainen, 1992).

According to the psychological literature, relational bullying, also called relational aggression or the "mean girl" phenomenon, is a unique category of bullying. It is defined as an act or acts which harm others through intentional manipulation and damage (including threat of damage) to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion. It occurs when the harm suffered results in and is intended to damage relationships through rejection, exclusion, gossip, or other means. This behavior can manifest through either covert or overt acts, but is understood to exclude physical aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Simmons, 2002). Like social aggression, it is a more subtle form of bullying. Early psychological studies linked relational and social aggression primarily with females (Artz, 1998; Lagerspertz,

Björkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), which helped solidify the association of relational and social aggression as exclusive forms of female aggression. Despite these findings, more recent research does not necessarily confirm a stark gender difference in the use of relational and social aggression (Card, Sawalani, Stucky, & Little, 2008; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997). Boys are more likely than girls to bully and be bullied (Craig, Harel-Fisch, Fogel-Grinvald, Dastaler, Hetland, Simons-Morten et al., 2009; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001; Sanders & Phye, 2004) and exhibit physical forms of aggression (Boulton & Smith, 1994), but both boys and girls relationally aggress (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009).<sup>12</sup> Given the cultural assumption that covert aggression is the province of girls, and the fact that covert behaviors are often difficult for teachers and parents to detect, boys, teachers, researchers, and students may underreport instances of relational aggression in both observational and self-report studies (Card et al., 2008).

The psychological effects of being a relationally aggressive bully range from relatively minor to serious. Some studies find children who exhibit relationally aggressive behavior are more likely to be disliked and have less pro-social behavior than uninvolved children (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), while other studies find no negative effects (Wolke et al., 2000; Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002) or positive associations between relationally aggressive behavior and popularity (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004; LaFountana & Cillessen, 2002), and sophisticated social cognitive skills (Sutton & Smith, 1999). This is the case for both male and female relational aggressors (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, Lagerspetz, Landau, Caprara, & Fraczek, 2001; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). Conflicting information exists for general bullies as well. Although

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<sup>12</sup> In one study researchers found male bullies reported participating in relational aggression (measured as social exclusion and rumor spreading) only slightly less than the female bullies (26.8% of male bullies reported participating in relational aggression compared to 27.5% female bully respondents), although more female respondents claimed to be victims of relational aggression as compared to male respondents (Wang et al., 2009).

bullies are aggressive (Craig, 1998; Schwartz, 2000; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001, Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004; Veenstra, Lindenberg, Oldehinkel, De Winter, Verhulst, & Ormel, 2005), have low academic competence, self-esteem, and social acceptance (Hanish & Guerra, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001, 2004; Schwartz, 2000), they also make friends easily (Nansel et al., 2001, 2004) and enjoy high social standing among their classmates (Juvonen et al., 2003).

Victims of bullying have a more consistent negative prognosis in the literature as they are more likely to be depressed, anxious, shy, lonely (Drake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk 2003; Williams, Chambers, Logan, & Robinson, 1996), and more likely to develop psychosomatic problems (Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2009) as compared with non-involved peers. Bullying victims have lower self-esteem (Rigby, 2002), less developed social skills (Smith, 1999), and have few friends, friends who cannot be trusted, or low status friends (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997). Both victims and bullies have been found to be at risk for suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999), but risk factors other than involvement in bullying were linked more strongly with suicide attempts. Completing a suicide is relatively rare compared to the number of people who report thinking about it (Paris, 2006). Predicting who will commit suicide, even among individuals who are considered high risk, has yielded disappointing results (Paris, 2006).

Despite the numerous published studies on the effects of being a bully and a victim, there are conflicting findings about what actually constitutes bullying behaviors, what is at stake for both the bully and the victim, and how race, gender, and sexuality contribute to bullying and victimization. This opens up a number of questions for researchers interested in bullying, including how gender, race, and sexuality help shape notions of both the bully and the victim in

the bullying discourse. Findings indicate that gender and the performance of gender roles are key to understanding how bullying is recognized and sanctioned. What is defined as bullying tends to be behavior that transgresses normative gender performances. Non-overt relational aggression by girls is tolerated, particularly when it regulates standards of sexuality, appearance, and behavior in other girls. Open fighting, however, is not tolerated, primarily because it violates middle class norms of femininity as passive and nurturing (Ringrose & Renold, 2010). Similarly, although educators are beginning to recognize and protect students from homophobic bullying, they tend to be unaware of the ways in which heterosexuality and heteronormativity is upheld and reproduced by students and faculty alike in ways that fall short of, but still lead to bullying. While the immediate bullying action is identified, halted, and the bully punished, the larger culture that privileges heterosexuality and heteronormativity is left intact (Payne & Smith, 2013). In this way, homophobic bullying is isolated to an inappropriate behavior, rather than a symptom of a systematic cultural phenomenon.

Research on bullying and race is studied far less than gender and sexuality. While a few studies suggest racial minorities are less often victims and more often perpetrators in the bullying context (Wang et al., 2009; Spriggs et al., 2007; Nansel et al., 2001), other research shows that self-report methods used in bullying research may actually reflect racial stereotyping by teachers and other students (Noguera, 2003), and the tendency of some minority respondents to be less likely to identify as victims of bullying (Sawyer et al., 2008). The literature on bullying and race is consistent with media and political discourses that present the non-White offender more often as a perpetrator and less often as a victim (Campbell et al., 2012; Mann & Zatz, 2006; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Hall et al., 1978; Morrison, 2006; Haney-Lopez 2013; Cole, 2007).

The literature leaves a number of questions about race, gender, and sexuality in the bullying context unanswered. Gender is central to determining whether bullying is recognized and how it is sanctioned, but what else does gender help to produce in the context of bullies and victims in the bullying discourse? Although research shows that identifying as non-heterosexual leads to increased victimization (Human Rights Watch, 2001), this research does not show how sexuality is central to recognizing victims in the bullying discourse, or what results from this dynamic. Finally, although bullying and race has not been studied extensively, there is some evidence to suggest that race may limit victim recognition and facilitate perpetrator designation in the bullying discourse.

### **Case Studies: Phoebe Prince, Tyler Clementi, and the SJSU Racial Bullying Incident**

Focusing on U.S. teen cases of bullying was important because it offered a way to situate criticism of legal attempts to address bullying in schools, and of the unsubstantiated link between bullying and violence. The focus on bullying in the U.S. emerged after the media incorrectly reported that the students who perpetrated the Columbine massacre had been bullied by classmates and sought revenge (Cullen, 2013).<sup>13</sup> While the link between bullying and violence did not end up being a focus in this project, I had the initial intention to examine how the link between bullying and potential school violence was discussed, even when school violence was not at issue. Finally, collecting articles on U.S. teen bullying was important because U.S. bullying laws are aimed at prohibiting and correcting youth behaviors in schools. As the vast majority of state anti-bullying laws are located in educational codes, a legal analysis of the bullying issue must focus on bullying among U.S. youth in schools.

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<sup>13</sup> A subsequent study on school shooters showed that there is no useable “profile” of school shooters and the researchers, despite their attempts, could not determine the exact proportion of school shooters who had been victims of bullying before the attacks (United States Secret Service and Department of Education, 2002).

While there were other bullying cases to choose from, I chose the Tyler Clementi and Phoebe Prince cases because the media covered these two bullying cases more than any other bullying case, ensuring a large enough sample to conduct meaningful and robust analysis. They also involved U.S. teens framed as the both bullying victims and perpetrators. Both the Clementi and Prince cases resulted in criminal charges for the accused bullies, which added additional legal commentary about the individual cases and the larger bullying issue. The Clementi case involved a male bully and male, non-heterosexual victim, while the Prince case involved both male and female bullies and a heterosexual female victim, providing the opportunity to examine potential differences in public reactions and media discourses based on gender differences and sexual orientation with both victims and the accused bullies. Furthermore, the media focus on “mean girls”, and Prince’s sexual activity provided opportunities to engage with relational aggression studies in the psych literature. The more indirect bullying in the Clementi case and the media focus on his sexuality allowed for questions to arise around definitional issues in state anti-bullying laws.

I included an analysis of articles based on a search of the term “racial bullying” after discovering that race was a relevant frame of analysis in the Clementi and Prince articles, but was not often discussed directly. Furthermore, race is specifically enumerated as a protected status in only a minority of bullying laws, and is included in only a handful of psychological studies on bullying. When it does appear in the psychological studies, however, race seems to be presented in the same problematic way it is presented in many crime and media discourses: the racial offender is highlighted and the racial victim minimized (Mann & Zatz, 2006; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Morrison, 2006). The racial bullying search produced a collection of articles on racial bullying and one independent case study, the San Jose State University bullying case. The

racial bullying search was performed to gather additional information on racial bullying to analyze how it is framed, assessed, and addressed in the articles.<sup>14</sup>

### *Phoebe Prince*

Phoebe Prince was a 15 year-old high school student who moved from Ireland to Massachusetts with her mother and sister in the fall of 2009. On the afternoon of January 14th, 2010, she hung herself in her home. The widely reported version of events in the U.S. media, much of which came from the local district attorney's press conference on the case, attributed Prince's suicide to a three-month campaign of bullying led by girls whose boyfriends had a sexual relationship with Prince. The bullying included in person and Facebook comments where Prince was repeatedly called an 'Irish slut' and told to stay away from other girls' boyfriends. It was also reported that one or more people defaced a Facebook memorial page after Prince's death, although subsequent searches for these comments could not be located (Bazelon 2013). Six teens, 4 girls and 2 boys, received charges ranging from violation of civil rights with bodily injury (a hate crime), criminal harassment, statutory rape, assault with a dangerous weapon (an empty soda can), stalking, to disturbance of a school assembly. The teens faced a possible prison term of 10 years if convicted. In the end, the charges against one of the students were dropped while the other 5 pled guilty to lesser charges and received probation or community service.

There is another version of events that was not widely reported and written by a single reporter who interviewed students from South Hadley High School, reviewed the police records on the case, spoke with and reviewed emails from people Prince knew back in Ireland, and spoke extensively with some of the students accused of bullying Prince. According to this version of events, Prince had a history of depression, cutting, was both a target and perpetrator of bullying

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<sup>14</sup> I go into more depth about the case selection in the methods section



before she moved to South Hadley, and was taking anti-depressants when she arrived in the U.S. According to emails sent to friends back in Ireland, she was hanging out with older kids, drinking, and smoking pot. On the Friday after Thanksgiving, 2009, about two months before her suicide, she swallowed an entire bottle of Seroquel, a drug used to treat mood and sleep disorders, after the boy she was seeing broke things off with her. She was also having difficulty coping with the absence of her father, who was still back in Ireland. In the week after Christmas, 2009, Prince became involved in a second romantic relationship. The day after this boy broke off their relationship (which also coincided with being called a slut repeatedly by girls and the boy she had dated at school), Prince committed suicide (Bazelon, 2013).

The point in including these details is not to blame or disparage the victim, but instead to point out other ways Prince's suicide could have been framed. One can point to the dangers of combining anti-depressants with alcohol and drugs, the loss of valued relationships, or family turmoil as "the" cause of her suicide. When these facts are read together with risk factors for youth suicide from the psychological literature, her history of depression, self-mutilation, previous suicide attempt, and relationship turmoil qualify her as "at risk" for suicidal ideations or actions, regardless of the bullying (Taliaferro and Muehlenjamp 2013; Gould, Munfakh, Lubell et al. 2002). The psychological literature suggests that suicide should be framed as resulting from many different factors, as multi-causal. Ultimately, my analysis of the Prince narrative does not rest on upholding or dismissing bullying or any other possible cause of Prince's suicide. What is important is that despite these other facts, Prince's suicide was overwhelmingly attributed to one cause by the print media: bullying.

The reported facts of the Prince case provided multiple possible frames for understanding Prince's suicide, including gendered and sexualized hierarchies and the enactment of patriarchal

control by both boys and girls against another girl. This potentially complex analysis is excluded, or overlooked in favor of the more simple “bullying” designation. This sets up the bullying category as a kind of red herring, a category that (conveniently) occludes larger structural issues of gender based equality.

### *Tyler Clementi*

Tyler Clementi was an 18 year-old freshman at Rutgers University who committed suicide on September 22, 2010, reportedly after being cyber bullied by his college roommate, Dharun Ravi. Shortly after moving into the dorms, Clementi requested private use of their shared room in order to entertain a guest, known in court documents as M.B. Ravi claimed he was concerned about the safety of his belongings in the room, so he disabled the light on his webcam, pointed it at Clementi’s side of the room, and turned on the video chat from a friend’s computer when he left the room. When he turned on the webcam he briefly observed Clementi kissing M.B. before terminating the connection. Ravi then sent out a tweet that he observed his roommate “kissing a dude, yah.” A few days later when Clementi requested private use of the room again Ravi agreed, but posted a message to his twitter account daring his followers to video chat him that evening during the time Clementi had requested the room. Clementi had already discovered that Ravi spied on him after reading his first tweet and turned off the power to Ravi’s computer before the second meeting with M.B. That same day, Clementi put in a room change request to the university and complained to a resident assistant about Ravi’s actions. The next day Clementi jumped off the George Washington Bridge and drowned in the Hudson River. Clementi had already come out to friends and family and was not outed by Ravi, nor did Ravi record a sexual encounter between Clementi and his guest and then post it online. Ravi was not

charged with Clementi's death but was prosecuted and found guilty of 15 counts of invasion of privacy, hindering prosecution, and bias intimidation, which is a hate crime. Despite facing the possibility of 10 years in prison, he was sentenced to 30 days in county jail.

What was not widely reported in the Clementi case was that Clementi had only recently come out. Just before he left for college he told his parents he was gay, and according to one report, he felt rejected by his Evangelical Christian mother. While his mother has publicly denied rejecting her son or demeaning his sexual orientation, she has since left her church that was not welcoming to gays and lesbians. Furthermore, Clementi left a suicide note that was excluded from evidence in Ravi's trial because it did not contain information relevant to the case, meaning that it did not reference Ravi's actions, or it did but was not relevant because Ravi was not on trial for causing Clementi's suicide. Again, this information is not intended to malign Clementi or his family, but it points out an alternative framing of the case, one that is multi-causal and stands in opposition to the dominant narrative that linked Clementi's suicide directly to Ravi's insensitive and invasive actions. Much like the Prince case, the presented facts of the Clementi case reduce all possible frames of the case to "bullying", even when the facts involved offer a more complex and nuanced framing. Furthermore, the gender difference between the bullies in the Prince and Clementi cases provides the opportunity to further interrogate the bully category.

### *San Jose State University Racial Bullying Incident*

In the fall of 2013, Logan Beaschler, Colin Warren, Joseph Bomgardner, and an unnamed minor at San Jose State University were charged with a misdemeanor hate crime and battery for racially bullying their roommate, Donald Williams Jr. The accused bullies and the victim were

assigned to live together in an on-campus suite, where the three White roommates hung a confederate flag and wrote the N-word on a dry erase board in the common area. They also blocked the victim's bedroom door on several occasions to prevent him from leaving and fastened a bike lock around his neck. The accused men denied allegations of racial harassment and assert they were pulling pranks and joking with Williams. Like the Prince bullies and Ravi, the SJSU students were charged with a hate crime. This case study is included here because it was also described as bullying in each of the articles that covered this incident. In fact, the case was described either as bullying and a hate crime, or as bullying alone, but never as a hate crime alone. Like Prince and Clementi, this case presents the opportunity to examine the relationship between bullying and hate crimes. It is also important in interrogating how race is constructed in the bullying context.

### **Organization of the Chapters**

In the chapters that follow I analyze how the victims and bullies are constructed along racialized, sexualized, and gendered lines in media, legal and psychological discourses. Each chapter contains a literature review specific to the content discussed in that chapter. As a result, there is no single literature review chapter in this dissertation. The chapters were written as independent articles derived from the same data sets, but focus on different aspects of victims and bullies. Chapter 1 begins with an explanation of the methodology used in chapters 2-4. Using a method that is not widely known required extensive explanation of its assumptions, history, and procedures, which is why methods is a separate chapter.

Chapter 2 analyzes representations of Tyler Clementi and Phoebe Prince, two teens whose suicides were framed as directly resulting from bullying. This chapter examines

assumptions and constructions of victims in the bullying context and shows how bullied victims are recognized and accorded victim status based on sexual and gendered factors. This chapter begins by explaining the legal history and symbolic importance of the victim category, including how certain crime victims become representative of “true” or “ideal” victims (Christie, 1986), and how the victim’s rights movement led to increased recognition of various kinds of victims through hate crime laws. In linking the “remoralization” (O’Malley, 1999) that hate crime laws help to accomplish in the context of changing perceptions of certain kinds of victims, i.e. gays and lesbians, to the negative responses of gender and sexually based bullying, I frame the bullying discourse as having a similar ‘remoralizing’ potential. While the discourse that emerges from these cases appears to do similar symbolic work as hate crime laws that condemn harassment based on sexual orientation, on closer examination the discourses can also be read as upholding discriminatory systems of patriarchy and heteronormativity in their attempts to explain the suicides as expected or predictable responses to homophobia and sexism. Framing Prince and Clementi as victims of bullying, rather than victims of poor mental health or family discord, creates a narrative that reifies rather than challenges repressive and discriminatory notions of sexuality and gender. The chapter presents an opportunity to examine some important taken for granted assumptions about who qualifies as a symbolic, or ideal victim, and what results from the conferral of victim status on particular individuals in the bullying context.

Chapter 3 is an analysis of how the category of race and events of racial bullying are framed and discussed in the news articles. Analysis of news reports reveals that not all victims of bullying receive the same level of public outcry, attention, or responses to address the problem. This chapter focuses on the centrality of race in constructing both offenders and victims in the bullying context. Unlike the previous chapter that analyzed how Prince and

Clementi were represented as bullied victims, and unlike Chapter 4 that examines representations of the Prince bullies and Dharun Ravi, this chapter takes a broader approach and looks at the ways race comes up in discussions of both bullied victims and perpetrators, and the bullying issue more generally. Cole's (2007) notion of the "victimist" as a dependent, manipulative, and potentially dangerous figure who uses their victim status to receive tangible benefits and victimize society, along with Haney-Lopez's (2013) description of racial politics as coded to only indirectly reference race, are used to theoretically frame discussions of race in the bullying context. While racial victimization tends to be minimized in the bullying context, racial perpetration seems to be subtly highlighted (despite a lack of evidence and cases) through discussions of the possibility of a racial perpetrator, and through discourse that presents victims of racial bullying as "victimists" who bully society with their claims of victimization.

Chapter 4 focuses on news media depictions of the bully. This chapter illustrates a discourse of heightened condemnation of gender-based bullying (which includes descriptions of "mean girls" and relationally aggressive girls), and a tacking between envisioning bullies as kids who engage in mean but normative and correctable behavior, or as unalterably pathological future criminals. Borrowing from Hier's (2002, 2008, 2011) moral regulation/moral panic framework, I refer to this tacking as the normative/pathological distinction. The focus on gender in the Prince and Clementi articles is explored along with the normative/pathological distinction, and used to make the case that Hier's conceptualization of moral regulation processes and moral panics should account for gender and other characteristics that carry a discriminatory potential. I end the chapter by claiming that gender triggers the moral panic because the "mean girl" discourse has the potential to, and the Prince case actually does, expose patriarchy as a cruel and dangerous system of oppression. McRobbie's (2008) vision of a neo-liberal, self-imposed

patriarchy that replaces patriarchy enacted by gendered group policing of sexual behavior (Kehily, Mac an Ghail, Epstein, & Redman, 2002; Youdell, 2006) is offered as a theoretical frame for future analysis.

Chapter 5 concludes with a brief summary of the findings and an extensive discussion of the significance and impact of this project, including the theories and theorists this work engages. Future research options for this topic are also discussed.

## **CHAPTER 1: METHODS**

### **Aim of the Study**

To explain how the categories of bully and victim are constructed in the bullying discourse, I performed a qualitative form of content analysis, known as ethnographic content analysis, on three sets of news articles about bullying. The three data sets were compiled through a Lexis-Nexis search of the names “Tyler Clementi”, “Phoebe Prince”, and the term “racial bullying”.

### **Research Approach**

Ethnographic content analysis is an approach to analyzing materials, such as news articles, that involves constant discovery and comparison to allow themes, meanings, and nuance to emerge from a text or set of texts. It was first developed and applied to television news coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis in a 1987 article by David Altheide. In contrast to more quantitative kinds of content analysis, ethnographic content analysis brings a qualitative, ethnographic approach to content analysis. This approach examines the meaningful products of social interaction through a “reflexive analysis of documents” (Altheide, 1987, p. 65). It borrows aspects from ethnography and combines it with content analysis to collect numerical and narrative data, providing both a tabulation of themes and descriptive information (Altheide, 1987).

Content analysis accounts for the presence and absence of certain pieces of information as well as how events are described and which aspects or characters in the report or story are highlighted, demonized, or glorified. A content analysis may reveal multiple political and social messages, which at times may contradict one another (Valverde, 2006). In the data collection



stage, quantitative content analysis proceeds linearly, moving from category construction to sampling to data collection to data analysis. Once the researcher sets up the protocol for data collection, the coding process can be conducted by multiple individuals using the same criteria to select and tabulate the data. This allows quantitative content analysis to claim intercoder reliability, which increases the validity of this methodological approach (Krippendorff, 1980). Quantitative content analysis uses the frequency of particular themes to make judgments about the content of the discourse.

Ethnographic content analysis is distinguished from quantitative content analysis with regards to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In ethnographic content analysis there is less rigidity in moving from the stages of concept development, data gathering, and analysis, allowing the researcher to loop back to investigate new themes that emerge from the texts during the research. The data collection protocol is very basic as the researcher is expected to make multiple passes through the material to repeatedly study the content and narratives. This type of research does not rely solely on the frequency of themes in the data. Because constant comparison and discovery occurs throughout the data collection process and there is less rigidity in the data collection protocol than in quantitative content analysis, the researcher is more central in the data collection stage. During the data collection process the researcher collects numerical data and simultaneously analyzes narrative data contained in the texts. Setting up a system to establish intercoder reliability through strict coding protocols and multiple coders, therefore, is not possible when performing ethnographic content analysis. While both quantitative and ethnographic content analyses are used to verify hypothesized or theoretical relationships, ethnographic content analysis is also used to “document and understand the communication of

meaning” by combining structured data collection with ethnographic field notes about the texts (Altheide, 1989, p. 68)

Studies employing ethnographic content analysis cover a variety of topics that span various time periods (both long and short), and examine multiple textual forms including news stories, television episodes, social movement literature, and magazines. Ethnographic content analysis was used to examine the wide variety of textual materials used in the anti-gambling social movements framing of the gambler to show how his characterization changed from villain to victim between the early 19th to late 20th centuries (Bernhard, Futrell, and Harper, 2010). It was also used to show how Islam was framed as a threat to America and Christianity on a popular evangelical television program after the September 11th attacks (Gormly, 2004), and to examine the advice given to couples about their relationships in wedding planning books (Besel, Zimmerman, Fruhauf, Pepin, and Banning, 2009). Ethnographic content analysis is also used to test theory, as was the case in analysis of news media coverage of the Columbine shootings to test the salience of the myth of the juvenile super predator (Muschert, 2007).

While there are a variety of ways to assess how the bully and victims of bullying are discursively framed, ethnographic content analysis of news articles is an ideal methodological strategy because it offers the researcher the rich, descriptive investigation of ethnography and, through the quantification of the data, a way to check the researcher’s interpretations against the numerical presence or absence of various themes. Simply tabulating various types of frames is insufficient to explain the complexity and richness of how some frames emerge in narrative form. The process of consistently going between the narratives in the texts and the tabulation of types of themes allows for a close, deep readings and interpretations of the texts as well as a way to step away from the material and compare qualitatively derived conclusions against the

numerical presence of certain themes. Furthermore, ethnographic content analysis allows the researcher to circle back through the data when other questions arise (Altheide, 1989).

Ethnographic content analysis is a process that anticipates constant discovery of new themes in the data so that the data analysis phase of research is not linear, but involves looping back through the data once new themes are discovered. Although particular variables initially guide the study, others are expected to emerge through the research process. This was especially helpful for this project because I expected both the victim and bully to be framed only along gendered and sexualized lines based on my cursory review of the bullying issue in the news media. I did not expect to see or address issues of race in the bullying discourse, most likely because race does not appear much in the bullying discourse, and when it does, it is not discussed extensively. The format of qualitative content analysis allowed me to add the theme of race into my analysis, even though it was not part of my predefined coding process. The inclusion of race in this study reflects the constant discovery and lack of rigidity that is a hallmark of ethnographic content analysis.

### **Case Study Selection**

As I stated in the introduction, I chose Clementi and Prince as case studies because they were reported on more than any other U.S. bullying case, and they included the opportunity to analyze gender, sexuality, and legal approaches to bullying among U.S. teens. According to the Vanderbilt Television News Archives, the Prince and Clementi cases were covered in more major U.S. television news programs than any other bullying case with 18 and 17 news stories respectively. Three other bullying cases, those of Jamey Rodemeyer, Megan Meier, and Rebecca Sedwick, received national television news media attention. These cases were covered

by six, one, and six news reports respectively. A subsequent Google search of each of these names confirmed the distribution of attention between the cases.<sup>15</sup> The lower television and internet exposures of the Rodemeyer, Meier, and Sedwick cases, along with the facts that the Rodemeyer case did not include criminal charges, and the Meier case involved an adult female bully, led to their exclusion as case studies.

I used the Clementi and Prince cases as frames for the research rather than a search of “bullying” or “bullying & sex and gender” because it confined what could have been a very broad search to information that included U.S. teens, gender, and sexuality. Simply searching for the term “bullying” would produce tens of thousands of results in a variety of settings and contexts,<sup>16</sup> and searching for “bullying & sexuality or gender” may have excluded other potentially relevant, but unknown themes. Using the Prince and Clementi cases to search for bullying articles was a way to capture relevant themes, and not exclude others.

I chose to examine racial bullying after analyzing the Clementi and Prince data sets and discovering that race was a relevant aspect of the bullying discourse, but was not often directly discussed. This type of data gathering shift after the project is underway is anticipated as a possibility in ethnographic content analysis. After researching this general category and attempting a number of specific search terms, I settled on the term “racial bullying” because it seemed to be the dominant term used for race-based victimization in the bullying literature. “Racial harassment” is also used, but this term encompasses a much broader category of offenses not necessarily related to bullying. “Race & bullying” was another possibility, but in this search the majority of the articles did not place these terms together, and thus did not capture

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<sup>15</sup> A google search of names produced the following results: “Tyler Clementi” produced 251,000 results, “Pheobe Prince” produced 132,000, Rebecca Sedwick produced 43,700, and Jamey Rodemeyer produced 103,000.

<sup>16</sup> Today, bullying encompasses prison abuse, sibling abuse, elder abuse, as well as teen violence and rudeness (Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland, & Coyne, 2009).

commentary or stories about race based bullying. I also searched for “race based bullying”, but it only included a handful of results.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Analysis of the numerical and narrative data in the news articles began with a sampling scheme for Lexis-Nexis searches of the terms “Phoebe Prince”, “Tyler Clementi”, and “racial bullying”. A Lexis-Nexis database search of the terms “Phoebe Prince” and “Tyler Clementi” in the fall of 2013 yielded approximately 2,000 articles from local and national newspapers, web based publications, magazines, and journals. These two samples were limited to non-duplicate articles from U.S. newspapers<sup>17</sup> with ten or more stories on each case with at least 200 words in the article. The database provides a sidebar with a list of the publications and includes the number of news stories per publication. On the main screen the title and word count for the article appears. These features assisted in sampling the articles according to the set criteria. The word count threshold was imposed to weed out short updates on the two cases that contained few facts or analysis. The ten article threshold was imposed on the samples as both a way to limit the number of articles and to draw from papers with an interest in the cases, increasing the likelihood of detailed coverage. In order to avoid oversampling, or including too many articles from one newspaper (and thus one political or legal perspective), no more than 40 articles from any one newspaper were included in the samples. Only approximately 10% of the entire sample consisted of web based publications, magazine articles, and journal articles, so every article from

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<sup>17</sup> The only exception to this rule is when the newspaper with the most articles on the case was a foreign paper. This occurred in the Phoebe Prince set. A paper in the United Kingdom covered the case quite extensively because Prince was Irish. I wanted to sample from the newspaper with the most articles on the case regardless of nationality because it shows the paper took an interest in the case. These papers covered every development in the case and included a number of opinion editorials and letters to the editor, which were helpful in uncovering narratives about the cases.

those sources was included in the sample. The sampling scheme yielded 213 articles for the Prince data set and 152 articles from the Clementi set drawn from thirteen different newspapers and a variety of web based publications, journals, and magazine articles.

The racial bullying set was gathered in the winter of 2014, after sampling, reading, and analyzing the Prince and Clementi data sets. Analysis of the Prince and Clementi sets made it apparent that race was a relevant but less discussed aspect of the bullying issue. A Lexis-Nexis search of the term “racial bullying” yielded approximately 350 articles from local and national newspapers, web based publications, magazines, and journals. When the set was narrowed to non-duplicate articles from all U.S. papers with at least 200 words, the set totaled 35 articles. I used Google searches of papers to exclude non-U.S. sources. There were a variety of stories that came out of this search that were divided into general bullying articles (or non-SJSU articles) and the bullying incident at the San Jose State University (SJSU) campus. This incident produced a small but noticeable category within the racial bullying data set, which is why it was recorded as a separate case study.

## **Data Analysis**

Once the sample for each search was collected, I performed an ethnographic content analysis on each article set that began with an open coding scheme. I read a sample of articles from each set to come up with frequently occurring themes. Once a few themes became apparent I reread all the articles to look at how these themes were portrayed, discussed, developed, or dismissed. Each time a theme came up in the articles I recorded it in an excel file in the appropriate thematic category and made a note about which article it came from and, if applicable, whether there was anything unusual about the way the theme was discussed or

presented in the article. The excel spreadsheet was divided into two sections with one page devoted to themes on bullying (or racial bullying) in general and the other to themes that were specific to Phoebe Prince, Tyler Clementi, or the SJSU cases.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to tabulating the various themes, I also used a separate word document to record additional details about the articles, including my impressions of how prominent themes in the articles were presented. I highlighted passages of articles and noted how the themes were discussed and the way in which certain themes were presented together. This included information that could not simply be tabulated, and provided rich insights into both the general bullying phenomenon and its individual themes. In addition to the reflexivity of the coding protocol, this process accounted for the ‘ethnographic’ portion of the ethnographic content analysis. In closely examining the content of the various articles, I gathered information on the “cultural products of social interaction”, which do not necessarily require participant observation or intensive interviewing, but is one of the hallmarks of ethnography (Loftland, Snow, Anderson, & Loftland, 2006, pg. 16). After reading, coding, analyzing, re-readings, and re-analyzing the Clementi and Prince data sets, I compared the information gathered from both data sets. Analysis of the bullying discourse was accomplished by examining one case study at a time, and also by reading the case studies against one another to examine similarities and differences in the way racial, gender, and sexual categories are constructed and presented.

In using ethnographic content analysis to gather and analyze the data across the different article sets, I gathered both qualitative and quantitative materials. Some themes are supported with more qualitative material and others with more quantitative material. In chapter 2, for example, the argument that the suicides resulted directly from being bullied based on the non-traditional sexual activity of the victims relied primarily on quantitative data. The qualitative

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<sup>18</sup> A table of the themes coded for in each data set can be found in Appendix C

data helped make this connection clear, but the analysis in this chapter includes fewer references to the narrative material because that material was not central to the analysis or ultimate conclusion. In chapters 3, however, the analysis relies primarily on the qualitative ethnographic material because there was so little quantitative data on race. Finally, chapter 4 represents the most balanced combination of analysis that relies on both the qualitative and quantitative data.

### **Trustworthiness**

The drawback to using an inductive design is that it has lower reliability and generalizability than a deductive design (Abbott, 2004). The major reliability concern in this research is the reliability of the instrument: the researcher. All the information is filtered through the researcher, so another researcher looking at the same material may come up with very different observations and analyses. These methodological drawbacks are tempered by the design's ability to consider the numerical presence of themes, the higher validity that inductive approaches offer, and the fact that this method answers the type of research question posed.

What this inductive design lacks in reliability it makes up for in validity. Although this data could lead another researcher to different or additional conclusions, the close reading of the narrative required in ethnographic content analysis provides compelling evidence that the results are accurate or can claim a measure of truth (Krippendorff, 2004). To bolster the validity of the findings, I also examine discourse that emerges from legal and psychological literature on bullying. This information helps confirm the presence of particular themes and provides additional details not present in the articles. The use of ethnographic content analysis bolsters the reliability of the study because it includes not only a narrative analysis, but also a systematic tabulation of themes that can act as a check on the researcher's subjective reading of the



material. Finally, the inductive design offers a contextual explanation of why or how the phenomenon of interest occurs, making explanations of causality less of a concern. My research question asks how victims and bullies are constructed in media discourses along gendered, racialized, and sexualized lines. For this type of “how” questions, an inductive methodological approach is the best way to provide an answer (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007).

### **Potential Research Bias**

In qualitative research the instrument of measurement is the researcher, so researcher bias is a potential issue. One of the benefits of using ethnographic content analysis is that the process of using numerical along with narrative analysis helps limit the potential for bias. For example, when I want to see the data in one way or another to make a cohesive argument, I can check the numerical data to determine if it could support my analysis. This limits the bias in the study under the assumption that researcher biases did not influence thematic coding of the articles, which would bias the numerical data. In the coding phase of the project I attempted to limit researcher bias by including many categories to allow for multiple frames of analysis to emerge as possible themes in the data.

### **Limitations**

Ethnographic content analysis is one of many ways to answer the question of how the victim and bully are framed in the bullying discourse. This dissertation illustrates a set of themes in the bullying discourse, but is by no means exhaustive in terms of explaining all possible frames of the bully and victim. To date, no study has attempted to answer this question, so this dissertation is a first step into this area of inquiry.

## **CHAPTER 2: CONSTRUCTING THE VICTIM IN THE BULLYING DISCOURSE**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the term ‘victim’ from ideological and empirical perspectives and, through an analysis of news articles covering Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi, shows how bullied victims are recognized and accorded victim status based on sexual and gendered factors. Prince and Clementi’s suicides were attributed to sexual and gender based bullying by their peers in the vast majority of news reports on the incidents. A cursory examination of anti-bullying laws and news articles suggests that the larger bullying discourse condemns bullying based on repressive and discriminatory notions of sexuality and gender. A closer examination of both the reported characteristics of the victims and aspects of their stories that the media highlighted or deemphasized, however, suggests that framing the two teens as victims of bullying creates a narrative that reifies rather than challenges patriarchal and heteronormative notions of male and female sexual behavior.

### **Literature Review**

In order to discuss contemporary constructions of a bullied victim, it is helpful to review literature explaining how the category of ‘victim’ became socially and legally relevant. Three related bodies of literature help situate a discussion of bullied victims’ media representations: social and legal constructions of the victim category, anti-hate crime laws, and the psychological literature on bullied victims. The crime victim is a symbolic category which contains ideas and ideologies about what it means to be a victim, who can most easily claim victim status, and who tends to be denied this status. It is also a political category that rose to prominence with the help

of the victim's rights movement, which helped facilitate the proliferation of anti-hate crime statutes. Anti-hate crime statutes are particularly important to understanding constructions of bullied victims because they are part of a broad legal history of victim recognition, they show how recognizing certain victims and not others is a political process not always based on the likelihood of victimization, and they have been used by prosecutors as a legal bridge linking a predominantly non criminal behavior (bullying) to serious criminal charges and penalties. The legal seriousness of bullying charges, therefore, depends almost exclusively on the use of hate crime statutes.

When we talk about crime victims, there is both a history of recognizing different types of victims as well as notions of who we expect a victim to be or who can become a symbol of different kinds of victimization (Christie, 1986; Cavender, Bond-Maupin, & Jurik, 1999; Madriz, 1997; Jenness, 1998). Notions of victimhood are not fixed, and expectations of who is a true crime victim depend on the type of crime, perpetrator, and victim involved. This is an important point to consider in the bullied victim narrative. If the notion of true or "ideal" victims (Christie, 1986) does not extend to all crime victims generally, what else helps confer victim status on particular individuals, what narrative work must be done to turn an individual into a symbolic victim of a particular kind of crime, and importantly, what results from that symbolic work?

### *The Legal History and Symbolic Importance of the Victim*

Using the term 'victim' to describe an individual or group can create a number of possible ramifications. It can galvanize support for causes (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001), direct sympathy towards certain groups (Loseke, 2003), trigger responses from the public and the criminal justice system (Best, 1997), or even lead the so-called victim to resist this label

altogether (Cole, 2007). Victims, particularly crime victims, are a politically powerful interest group (Mawby & Walklate, 1994), and a category of people who carry a highly influential symbolic quality (Garland, 2000, 2001). Victims are defined as individuals or groups suffering harm beyond their control for which they are not personally responsible (Karmen, 1990), but not all who suffer harm beyond their control are afforded victim status. The victim category is constructed, in part, through media representations and discourses, academic movements, criminal cases, and laws (Greer, 2007). Recognizing different victims involves a process of symbolic interaction that requires an exchange between the people claiming victim status and a concerned audience willing to confer that status (Rock, 2002). Certain victims receive less attention and resources than others, or are not recognized as victims at all. For example, those who have somehow placed themselves in harms way, or are perceived to contribute to their victimization in any way occupy the lowest rung on the victim hierarchy (Carrabine, Cox, Lee, Plummer, & South, 2004; Greer, 2007).

There are common expectations of the characteristics and scenarios that accompany the victim category, and certain meanings people attach to the term ‘victim’. Individuals are afforded or denied victim status based on whether their characteristics, behaviors, or circumstances line up with an accepted victim narrative. In his classic explanation, Christie (1986) distills widely held beliefs to construct his notion of an ‘ideal victim’ which is an individual or group of people who are easily given victim status based on their individual characteristics and circumstances. The ideal victim is innocent, vulnerable, without blame, morally justified in being in the location where the crime occurred, and lacks a relationship with the victimizer. Christie (1986) uses the example of an old woman returning home after caring for her sick sister who is mugged by a large man who uses her money to buy alcohol or drugs.

The notion of an ideal victim is heavily influenced by gender in Christie's model, but research shows inclusions and exclusions from this symbolic victim category are highly contingent on conceptions of race, class, sex, age, and sexuality (Christie, 1986; Cavender, Bond-Maupin, & Jurik, 1999; Madriz, 1997).

Other research identifies ideal victims as women who are young, attractive, white, virgins or mothers with young children (Cavender et al., 1999)<sup>19</sup>, and white middle-class women who are innocent, submissive, and vulnerable (Madriz, 1997)<sup>20</sup>. Importantly, those regarded as non-ideal victims or those seen as undeserving of victim status include women who dress provocatively, or who otherwise do not conform to proper gendered codes of behavior (Madriz, 1997; Frohmann, 1997; Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002). In one study, the white, middle-class elderly female respondents characterized non-ideal victims as poor, young, Black and Latina women who do not behave in a gender appropriate manner (Madriz, 1997). Other studies have found that traditional gender roles as well as ideologies held about specific races and classes are highly influential in constructing an image of victims as blameless or as responsible for their victimization (Frohmann, 1997; Ardovini-Brooker & Caringella-MacDonald, 2002).

Young men, drug users, and the homeless are others who are not afforded ideal victim status (Carrabine et al., 2004) despite these groups suffering criminal victimization at a higher rate than those in the general population (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013; Lee & Schreck, 2005; McElrath, Chitwood, & Comerford, 1997). Comparing research on ideal victims with national data on actual crime victimization<sup>21</sup> shows that expectations of who is a crime victim are

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<sup>19</sup> Cavender, et al.'s (2004) findings were based on an examination of victims in reality crime shows.

<sup>20</sup> These findings came from a racially and socio-economically diverse sample of female respondents.

<sup>21</sup> As measured by the Crime Victimization Survey.

not informed by the reality of criminal victimization.<sup>22</sup> For example, U.S. data on criminal victimization shows that victims of violent crimes are most often African American males between the ages of 12-24 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013).

There are limits on using the ideal victim model to explain expectations of victimization. Notions of victimhood are not fixed, but shift in different contexts so that expectations of who is a crime victim are highly dependent on the type of crime under consideration. For example, children and the elderly are considered to be ideal victims in general but are often excluded from hate crime statutes, despite evidence that these two groups are often targeted because of their vulnerability (Grattet, Jenness, & Curry, 1998).<sup>23</sup> The ideal victim model illustrates the symbolic nature of the victim category, but cannot be used in all crime contexts to predict reactions to victimization.

Those included in the victim category occupy a powerful symbolic role in society's imagination (Rock, 2002), so much so that the crime victim in particular is not simply conceptualized as one individual who suffers, or who is believed to suffer crime at the hands of a criminal. Instead the crime victim stands for everyone, with their experience framed as common rather than unusual, what Garland (2000) calls a "representative individual" or "Everyman". The imagined impending threat of crime unites citizens in the U.S. and elsewhere such that the crime victim is the central figure of concern in American politics, what Simon (2007) refers to as the

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<sup>22</sup> Location, or the public private distinction heavily influences conceptions of where victimization is most likely to occur. Although women experience more violence in the home (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007), individual conceptualizations and media representations place ideal victimization in public (Madriz, 1997). Reporting and news media representations of crime support these perceptions by highlighting victimization in the public sphere occurring between strangers with the perpetrator acting as an evil, unknown outsider (Ferrell, 2005; Stanko & Lee, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Grattet and Jenness (2001) allude to an explanation of why groups like the elderly and children are left out of many hate crime statutes. Responding to the history of the U.S. civil rights movement, many states include race, religion, color, and national origin in their hate crime statutes. Other "second wave" groups seeking equal rights, such as gays, lesbians, women, and the disabled are included in fewer state hate crime statutes. We can, perhaps, think of children and the elderly as groups who have not established a large enough movement to achieve recognition in hate crime laws.

“idealized citizen subject” used to represent the ever-present threat of crime to all citizens, making everyone a potential victim, whether or not the criminological data confirms this threat (Simon, 2007).

The symbolism of the victim is accompanied by an ideology of how victimization should be conceptualized and treated (Best, 1997). According to this ideology, victimization has seven tenants, which includes being widespread, consequential, morally unambiguous, widely unrecognized yet demanding of recognition, having lasting effects, and containing terminology to avoid the negative connotations of victim status. That victimization is widespread and consequential means it occurs quite frequently to a variety of individuals, should be broadly defined, and is an important psychological event that can have reverberating effects many years to come. Under this logic, even seemingly minor incidents can have long reaching consequences on the individual. Relationships between victims and victimizers are unambiguous; victimizers know what they are doing, are responsible for their actions, and take advantage of the victim. Although victimization is common, has lasting effects, and is unambiguous, it often goes unacknowledged by both the victim and the larger society, so the victim and society must be taught to properly recognize victimization. Given the difficulty of both victims and society to acknowledge these claims, claims made by victims should not be challenged as it takes courage to bring a charge of victimization forward. Finally, the term victim is undesirable as it marks the person as somewhat powerless. Terms like “survivor” or “recovering” are preferred. These seven tenants help construct an ideology of victimization that finds support in law, medicine, psychotherapy, media, and the recovery movement (Best, 1997).

The modern visibility of victims and focus on the suffering of victims and their families as it relates to criminal violations is relatively new. Victims gained social as well as legal

relevance in the latter half of the twentieth century by virtue of their centrality to the crime narrative (Reiner, Livingstone, & Allen, 2000). The civil rights movement brought public awareness and legal responses to the violence and victimization suffered by the Black community, made the rhetoric of equal rights legally and socially cognizable, and set the stage for its use by future rights seekers suffering oppression and victimization. Equality later became the legal and social remedy for women, and gays and lesbians who addressed their victimization and oppression through legal reforms (Best, 1997). These groups shared not only a common rhetoric of equal rights, but also an understanding that violence was central to maintaining racist, sexist, and gender biased systems of discrimination. They understood that in addition to gaining formal equality under the law, they would also have to address and combat the pervasive violence aimed at their groups, helping to perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and practices (Jenness, 2001). Roughly coterminous with the activities of the civil rights movement, the Warren court issued a number of landmark decisions limiting police power in favor of protecting the 4th amendment and due process rights of the accused. Some saw these protections not as appropriate articulations of constitutionally guaranteed due process and privacy rights, but as limits on the state's ability to effectively prosecute criminals. As a reaction, law and order conservatives began to advocate for more attention to be paid to victims by using the historically successful rhetoric of rights, in this case, the right to be free from violent crime. This new interest group advocated for the recognition of the rights of crime victims resulting in changes to criminal trial procedures (e.g. the inclusion of victim impact statements and victim compensation funds).

The victim's rights movement was in part an outgrowth of various rights based movements, starting with the civil rights movement and continuing with the women's movement,



but also a reaction against the civil rights movement itself. The victim's rights movement borrowed strategies from the civil rights movement by using the language of "rights" to frame their claims, and by using statistical reports on violent victimization to lobby for legal action.<sup>24</sup> But the victim's rights movement was also a reaction against civil rights activity (Maroney, 1998). With the combination of a rising crime rate, the American perception that violent street crime was often perpetrated by racial minorities (Silberman, 1978), and increased protection of criminal defendant's rights awarded by the Warren Court, conditions were ripe for conservatives to popularize claims that the criminal justice system was lenient with violent offenders and ignored the suffering of crime victims and their families (Henderson, 1985). The crime victim's movement sought to draw attention away from systematic and institutionalized racial discrimination (which still existed in the criminal justice system and other institutions) and instead focus attention on the crime victim as the primary sufferer of systematic victimization in society (Maroney, 1998).

Through their respective focuses on equality and victims of violence, the rights seeking movements and the victim's rights movement laid the groundwork for the anti-hate crime movement to emerge in the 1980s. Hate crime laws vary state by state, but generally these statutes create a new criminal law, amend an existing law, or increase consequences for certain crimes when it can be proven that the perpetrator committed the crime or chose the victim because of his/her bias against the victim's race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, national origin, or disability (Jeness, 2001).<sup>25</sup> Hate crime legislation is a recognition that crimes motivated by discrimination or bigotry deserve additional punishment or should be treated as a

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<sup>24</sup> Maroney (1998) shows how the use of reports on violent victimization was first used by the NAACP (annual report on lynching and racial violence) and later taken up by the Anti-Defamation League (report on anti-Semitic crimes) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (report on crimes against gays and lesbians).

<sup>25</sup> This list of protected statuses is not exhaustive and some states include more than others, but the majority of states include the previously mentioned categories.

distinct category of offenses, and that crimes involving bias against an aspect of the victim's identity reflect a heightened animus compared to a "normal" crime. In their campaign to publicize and rectify the injustices that come with a minority status, the civil rights, gay and lesbian, and women's movements drew public attention to the violence that is central to the maintenance of discriminatory systems. According to these groups, violence should not be thought of as incidental to systems and institutions of discrimination, but rather as a tool used to maintain discriminatory systems (Jenness & Broad, 1994). Not only can one point to the underlying aggression and harassment inherent in the underlying crime (whether it is harassment, robbery, murder, rape, vandalism or another crime), but also to the violence inherent in the larger system of discrimination by which the crime was motivated. This perspective, in essence, explains a crime motivated by the victim's protected group membership as a crime against the individual and against their group, expanding the pool of victims of hate crimes.

Hate crime laws do not only protect those belonging to 'suspect classifications' and groups of people who have historically faced discrimination and persecution. Instead, hate crime law includes both "across-category sameness" and "within-category sameness" (Jenness, 2003). All hate crimes, regardless of whether they are based on gender, race, or sexual orientation, are treated the same. Assuming the protected status is included in a particular hate crime law, the law does not rank crimes based on gender bias, for example, higher or lower, more or less deserving of punishment, than crimes based on racial bias. Similarly, victims chosen because they are heterosexual or homosexual, white or black, American born or foreign born, will be treated the same by the law. Hate crime laws, therefore, ignore histories of discrimination by not making a distinction between within category groups who have historically faced discrimination and violence and those who have not. African Americans and Whites are protected equally,

despite one group lacking a history of discrimination and violent victimization, based on race (Jenness, 2003).

Perry (2001) describes hate crimes as a “mechanism of power and oppression...[that] attempts to re-create simultaneously the threatened (real or imagined) hegemony of the perpetrator’s group and the ‘appropriate’ subordinate identity of the victim’s group. It is a means of marking both the Self and the Other in such a way as to re-establish their ‘proper’ relative positions, as given and reproduced by broader ideologies and patterns of social and political inequality” (10). Perry’s definition helps illustrate the symbolic gains of the anti-hate crime movements. Hate crime laws help challenge discriminatory attitudes by identifying potential hate crime victims as vulnerable people in need of additional state protection. This helps alter the identities of historically maligned groups, such as gays and lesbians, as something other than dangerous, illegitimate, and deviant (Brown, 2004). Instead of being feared or rejected as ‘others’, gays and lesbians are accorded a degree of sympathy and compassion by virtue of being included in the victim category under hate crime statutes (Mason, 2013). Hate crime laws do symbolic work by changing perceptions of certain groups, what O’Malley (1999) calls a remoralization.

As research on ideal victims and some hate crime victims illustrates, victims are part of a symbolic category that is not equally inclusive of all who suffer harm at the hands of others, nor does it accurately reflect the reality of harm. Being recognized as part of this politically and symbolically significant group can have profound effects on individuals and groups, including altered perceptions of a previously maligned group of people. Like hate crime laws, bullying laws may also perform a similar symbolic function through the process of conferring victim status on bullied victims. Although bullying laws may challenge discriminatory attitudes in

some contexts by eliciting a sense of compassion for victims, my analysis of the bullying discourse suggests that identifying certain teens who commit suicide as victims of bullying requires an appeal to conservative, discriminatory narratives about gender and sexuality.

### *The Bullying Victim in Psychological Literature*

So far I have discussed the social and legal evolutions that led to recognizing the victim as central to the criminal justice narrative and reviewed the literature on the symbolic importance of victims. In the next section I will explain the effects of being a bullied victim, and some of the methodological issues that exist or have existed in the psychological literature on bullying. Research on bullying has increased dramatically in the last 15 years, but researchers have only recently started to distinguish between various types of bullying and their discrete effects on bullying victims. Similarly, one of the most alarming reported effects of bullying, suicide, has a relatively recent association with bullying victimization. Furthermore, the relationship between bullying and suicide is not overwhelmingly supported in the psychological literature. I conclude this section with a discussion of some of the methodological issues in the research to date to show that the psychological literature is limited in its ability to accurately characterize the bullying victim.

According to the psychological literature, the effects of bullying on adolescents can be very serious. Victims of bullying are more likely to be depressed, anxious, shy, and lonely (Drake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk 2003; Williams, Chambers, Logan, & Robinson, 1996), although victimization is more strongly correlated with depression than with anxiety (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Being a victim negatively affects the health and well-being of vulnerable students (Rigby, 1999), and being a bully or a victim or a bully-victim makes one more likely to

develop psychosomatic problems<sup>26</sup> as compared with non-involved peers (Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2009). Bullying victims have lower self esteem (Rigby, 2002), play with other children less and so have less developed social skills<sup>27</sup> (Smith, 1999), and have few friends, friends who cannot be trusted, or low status friends (Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997). One meta analysis found a small but significant negative correlation between being bullied by a peer group and academic achievement, but the study could not separate out this effect on types of bullying (relational versus more overt forms of bullying) because only four studies in the analysis made this distinction (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009).

One of the most serious reported effects of bullying is the connection between being bullied and committing suicide. Studies found higher instances of suicidal ideation<sup>28</sup> in victims of bullying as compared to non-victims (van der Wal, de Wit, & Hirasing, 2003; Kaminski & Fang, 2009), while others found this increase includes victims as well as bullies (Roland, 2002). When suicidal ideation and attempts are examined among victims, bullies, and bully-victims (those who are both victims and perpetrators of bullying), frequent exposure to being bullied and acting as a bully were related to higher instances of depression and suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts than those students not involved (Brunstein Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007).

When the research lens on bullying and suicide is widened, however, the link between bullying and suicide becomes more complex. The risk and protective factors for suicidality in youth involved in bullying mirrors the risk and protective factors found in the general population of youth (Wagman Borowsky, Taliaferro, & McMorris, 2013). Furthermore, when reports of

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<sup>26</sup> Psychosomatic problems include headaches, stomach aches, back pain, abdominal pain, dizziness, sleeping problems, bedwetting, poor appetite, skin problems, vomiting, and feeling tired or tense (Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> According to Smith (1999) having less developed social skills isolates bullied victims and makes them targets for more bullying.

<sup>28</sup> Suicidal ideation is defined as thoughts about or an unusual preoccupation with suicide.

suicidal ideation are distinguished from reports of suicide attempts, a different picture of risk factors emerges. When risk factors for suicide attempts are analyzed, the most prominent risks are difficulty coping with significant psychological distress, problems in intimate partner relationships, and issues at home (Taliaferro & Muehlenjamp, 2013), but not necessarily being bullied.<sup>29</sup> Other risk factors include a history of psychopathology, prior suicide attempt, life stressors (which can include by are not limited to bullying) and abuse (Gould, Munfakh, Lubell, Kleinman, & Parker, 2002). While being involved in bullying (as a bully, victim, and particularly as a bully-victim) is a risk factor for suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999), risk factors other than involvement in bullying were linked more strongly with suicide attempts. Furthermore, in their study linking bullying (sometimes termed “peer victimization”) with suicidal ideation, Kaminski & Feng (2009) point out that the operationalization of “victimization” included more than just bullying, which can capture more serious forms of victimization as well as non-systematic forms of peer victimization. Furthermore, completing a suicide is relatively rare compared to the number of people who report thinking about it (completion versus ideation) (Paris, 2006). Predicting who will commit suicide, even among individuals who are considered high risk<sup>30</sup>, has yielded disappointing results (Paris, 2006).

In a recent meta-analysis of 37 studies examining the link between bullying and adolescent suicide, Kim & Leventhal (2008) found positive associations between all bullying types and suicidal risk, with the bully-victim being the most at risk. The studies used in the meta-analysis, however, had some methodological problems. Like many studies on the psychological effects of bullying, all 37 studies in the meta-analysis were cross sectional, making

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<sup>29</sup> Both the Borowsky et al., 2013 and Taliaferro & Muehlenjamp, 2013 studies used the same data sample: Minnesota Student Survey 2010.

<sup>30</sup> High risk in this instance included a sample of patients admitted to hospitals for mental illness (Paris, 2006).

it impossible to establish evidence of causation between bullying and suicide. Second, 35 of the 37 studies used self-reports to identify being bullied and/or bullying behavior and suicidal ideations and behaviors. Both of these assessments are based on the informant's own perceptions of social situations, making it possible for the informant's psychopathological characteristics to lead to a misinterpretation of social situations, i.e. whether bullying or victimization occurred (Kim et al., 2008). Finally, and most importantly, most of the studies failed to control for other well established risk factors for suicide (gender, depression or aggressive-impulsive behaviors, history of suicide). Some studies controlled for one or two of the well-known risk factors, but only one controlled for all three. That study found a negative association between bullying and suicide (Kim & Leventhal, 2008).

Looking more closely at sexual orientation and suicide, gay adolescents do have higher rates of suicide risk factors (Remafedi, French, Story, Resnick, & Blum, 1998; Faulker & Cranston, 1998). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth report higher levels of harassment (Russell, Franz, & Driscoll, 2001), and higher levels of harassment are correlated with reports of higher levels of risky behaviors, which include suicide attempts (Russell & Joyner, 2001). Most youth who reported a same sex orientation, however, did not report any kind of suicidality (Russell & Joyner, 2001)<sup>31</sup>. After adjusting for well-known risk factors the link between identifying as gay and suicidal behaviors remained, but it was substantially mediated by the effects of depression, alcohol abuse, family history of suicide attempts, and victimization (Russell & Joyner, 2001). Similarly, internalized homophobia did not predict suicide independently from depression, but suicidal ideation and attempts are at the greatest risk of occurring around the time when the

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<sup>31</sup> According to Russell & Joyner (2001) 15.4% of males and 28.3% of females who identified as gay reported some kind of suicidality (thoughts, actions, or plans to commit suicide). Compare this with high school students generally, 19% of whom report seriously considering suicide, 15% who planned a suicide, 8.8% who attempted suicide, and 2.6% who made a medically serious attempt (Grunbaum, Kann, & Kinchen, Williams, Ross, Lowry, & Kolbe, 2002).

individual discloses their sexual orientation to their immediate family (Igartua, Gill, & Montoro, 2003).

Some bullying research occludes the real impact of bullying victimization by overemphasizing the connection between bullying and its effects. Findings that present a clear picture of the impact on bullying victims is further blurred by some of the methodological problems endemic to the psychological research on bullying until recently. These methodological problems include measuring bullying effects, the prevalence of cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal research designs, the differences in the definition of bullying between researchers and their subjects, and distinguishing between types of bullying.

There are a number of ways to measure bullying and its effects, not all of which are equal in methodological rigor. The most common measure of bullying victimization and perpetration is through questionnaires, which include peer nominations (students list persons they believe are either bullies or bullied victims), self-reports (persons who identify themselves as either a bully or a bullied victim), or teacher or parent nominations (parents and teachers identify who they believe is a bully or a bullied victim) (Smith, 2011). A less common method is direct observations of the children's or adolescent's interactions by researchers to identify who is bullying and being bullied. Most bullying studies use cross sectional methods to evaluate the effects of being bullied on negative psychological states, school performance, or suicide (Kaminski & Fang, 2009; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2009; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010; Wang et al., 2009).

A number of studies point out methodological problems with measuring bullying and its effects, including the wide use of cross sectional studies as opposed to longitudinal designs, variation in definitions of bullying across studies (Kaminski & Fang, 2009; Hawker & Boulton



2000; Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2009; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009; Reijntjes et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2009), a lack of distinction between types of bullying behaviors (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, Sadek, 2010; Hawker & Boulton, 2000), differences in definitions of bullying between researchers and students' self-reports (Vaillancourt et al., 2008), and shared method variance when self-reports are relied on exclusively (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). The problem with cross sectional studies is they do not indicate the direction of effects, so researchers cannot tell if the measured negative effects of bullying are actually antecedents of bullying. When self-reports are exclusively relied upon for both identifying oneself as a bullied victim and for reporting on psychosocial maladjustment, the effects sizes were larger, creating a shared method variance problem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). In other words, bullying was more strongly correlated with psychosocial maladjustment when the students were both nominating themselves as victims and reporting on the effects of that victimization.

Definitional problems of various sorts are also rampant in the psychological bullying literature. In most studies, different types of bullying or peer victimization are not separately studied, and some studies do not specify how the term victimization is defined (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Some studies do not clarify distinctions between serious violence, general aggression, and bullying (Cook et al., 2010). This definitional problem is further complicated when researchers rely on students' definitions of bullying in self-report and peer nomination studies. Although students almost universally cite negative behaviors in their definitions of bullying, they very rarely include the common bullying descriptors researchers use (intentionality, repetition, and power imbalance) in their definitions. When students are given a definition of bullying from researchers that includes the three elements, they report being victims of bullying less than students who are not provided with a definition (Vaillancourt et al., 2008).

Finally, it is a relatively recent development that researchers make distinctions between types of bullying when measuring their effects. Throughout the 1990s and for most of the 2000s studies on the effects of bullying did not distinguish between types of bullying (e.g. relational or social aggression, physical bullying, verbal bullying, or cyber bullying), occluding findings on the distinct categories. More recent studies make the distinction between physical, verbal, or relational bullying, which results in a more comprehensive understanding of the number of victims of various types of bullying, and the effect each discrete type of bullying has on victims.<sup>32</sup>

In the preceding literature review I included research on what it means to be a victim in general and a bully victim in particular, paying attention to both the emergence of social attention to victims and the ideology that emerged around this criminological and social category. In the next section I explain the methods and results of my investigation into the Prince and Clementi cases and explain how the narrative of victimization in these two cases supports as well as challenges heteronormativity and patriarchy.

## **Results**

### *Phoebe Prince Results*

The 213 articles in the Phoebe Prince data set were divided into two large groups: articles that primarily cover the Prince story and the resulting legal case, and articles that cover bullying more generally and use the Prince case as a starting point for a larger discussion about bullying.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For example, in a 2005 self-report survey on both bullying behaviors and victimization from bullying of 6th through 10th grade U.S. students (approximately 7,000 students), 20.8% reported being bullied or bullying physically, 53.6% verbally, 51.4% socially, and 13.6% electronically (Wang et al., 2009).

<sup>33</sup> A number of articles used the Prince case to begin a discussion of even broader issues than general bullying, including violence against women, free speech, teenage depression, child abuse, life without parole for juveniles, and Obama's mishandling of the growing nuclear threat in Iran. More interesting and relevant were some of the varied explanations of why bullying is occurring with such frequency. These explanations ranged from gangster

Some of the articles are part of both groups because they discuss both the Prince case and bullying in general at length. In the Prince specific group, four prominent themes emerged: reports of Phoebe being called an “Irish slut” or “whore” by the teens accused of bullying her (30 articles, 14%), the assertion that she was bullied because she engaged in a sexual relationship (40 articles 19%), the link between being bullied and Prince’s suicide<sup>34</sup> (50 articles, 23%), and her foreign born status<sup>35</sup> (25 articles, 12%). In the articles that discuss bullying more generally, six prominent themes were discussed. They include the seriousness of the bullying problem or “epidemic”<sup>36</sup> (16 articles, 8%), the use of technology in bullying<sup>37</sup> (23 articles, 11%), the link between bullying and violence (25 articles, 12%) and suicide (11 articles, 5%), support for law enforcement involvement in bullying, the need for increased parental involvement as a form of bullying prevention<sup>38</sup> (17 articles, 8%), and the description of Prince’s bullies as “mean girls” or where a distinction is made between female and male bullying (23 articles, 11%). Although not a prominent theme in the general bullying articles, sex, sexuality, sexual activity, and race were brought up with varying degrees of frequency as an explanation for why someone is bullied.<sup>39</sup> A

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culture, social hierarchy and competition, students having too much free time, school climate, a general culture of meanness, to a lack of unstructured play time among kids that allows the weak and the strong to intermingle, teaching them how to responsibly respond to differences in ability.

<sup>34</sup> Only 2 articles that mentioned Prince’s suicide did not link the bullying with the suicide and two others described the link as “alleged” and “claimed.”

<sup>35</sup> In many instances, the name calling, foreignness, and sexual relationship themes appeared together in the same article.

<sup>36</sup> Only 1 article expresses the contrary point that bullying is not as serious as many make it out to be. The seriousness of the bullying problem is often communicated in the description of the Prince case or bullying in general, but only articles that specifically described bullying as a serious problem were included in this category.

<sup>37</sup> Many articles note that the trouble with bullying today could be due to the fact that kids are so technologically connected that the bullying moves from the schoolyard to home, erasing home as a place of respite from bullying. None of the articles defended technology or tried to argue that without malicious intent on the part of the user it ceases to be a problem.

<sup>38</sup> This theme appeared both in terms of policing children who are potential bullies and in recognizing victims of bullying. These articles warned parents of online dangers and advised parents how to monitor for signs of bullying and victimization in their children. One article assigned blame for the bullying problem to working parents.

<sup>39</sup> 13 articles (6%) point to sex or sexuality, which includes explanations of bullying based on being gay, female, or sexually active. Despite the focus on Phoebe Prince’s Irish nationality, there was not a single article discussing bullying in general that pointed to national origin as an explanation for why someone is bullied.

few of these categories, including suicide, violence and its relation to bullying, legal interventions, and sexual and racial issues in bullying, require additional explanation.

Linking bullying with suicide is a major theme in both the Prince specific articles and the general bullying articles. When suicide was discussed in either the Prince specific or general bullying articles, only six articles (3%) did not make the direct link between being bullied and committing suicide. 18 articles (8%) mention Prince's pre-existing trouble with depression, or her previous suicide attempt. Most of these articles were written by the same author or referenced this particular author's investigation and resulting information. For the bullying and violence theme, general bullying articles link bullying with the Columbine shootings, girl fighting, "deadly harm", child abuse (either beliefs that the bully was abused in the past or that the victim may become an abuser in the future as a result of being bullied), and described bullying as a unique form of violence. Only two articles (1%) attempt to counter the description of bullying as a form of violence or as a predictor of future violence.

In coding for the approval of official legal intervention, I divided this category into 'criminal justice involvement in bullying prevention or punishment' and 'general legal responses to bullying prevention or punishment'. I also coded for approval and disapproval for school liability in general and school liability specific to the Prince case. The first category (law enforcement) consists of instances when an article discusses police or district attorney involvement in bullying prevention in schools or punishment for teen bullying generally. Approval for general legal versus criminal intervention in the Prince case was recorded separately. The 'legal responses needed or viewed favorably' category accounted for reports of a general approval for legal interventions but not necessarily criminal interventions. Most articles approved of legal interventions, but the handful that did not support these kinds of interventions

primarily discussed problems with the Massachusetts anti-bullying law or claimed the law goes too far. In total, there were 53 instances of articles expressing approval for some kind of legal response in both the Prince case and in bullying cases generally.<sup>40</sup>

Table 2.1: Prince Data Set Themes

Theme	Prince Specific		General Bullying		Total (213 articles)	
	Affirmative	Negative	Affirmative	Negative	Affirmative	Negative
“Irish slut” or “whore”	30 (14%)	0	NA	NA	30 (14%)	0
Bullied because of sexual relationship	40 (19%)	0	NA	NA	40 (19%)	0
Link between bullying and suicide	50 (23%)	4 (2%)	11 (5%)	2 (1%)	61 (28%)	6 (3%)
Foreign born status	25 (12%)	0	0	0	25 (12%)	0
Seriousness of bullying problem	NA	NA	16 (8%)	1 (.5%)	16 (8%)	1 (.5%)
Technology	NA	NA	23 (11%)	0	23 (11%)	0
Link between bullying and violence	NA	NA	25 (12%)	2 (1%)	25 (12%)	2 (1%)
Parental involvement as bully prevention	NA	NA	17 (8%)	0	17 (8%)	0
“Mean girl” bullies	NA	NA	23 (11%)	0	23 (11%)	0
General legal response	NA	NA	21 (10%)	4 (2%)	21 (10%)	4 (2%)
Criminal response	6 (3%)	3 (1%)	13 (6%)	2 (1%)	19 (9%)	5 (2%)
Charges against or legal accountability for school	16 (8%)	1 (.5%)	10 (5%)	1 (.5%)	26 (12%)	2 (1%)

<sup>40</sup> Most of these occurred in separate articles, but there were a small handful of articles that expressed approval for legal intervention both in general and specifically in the Prince case.

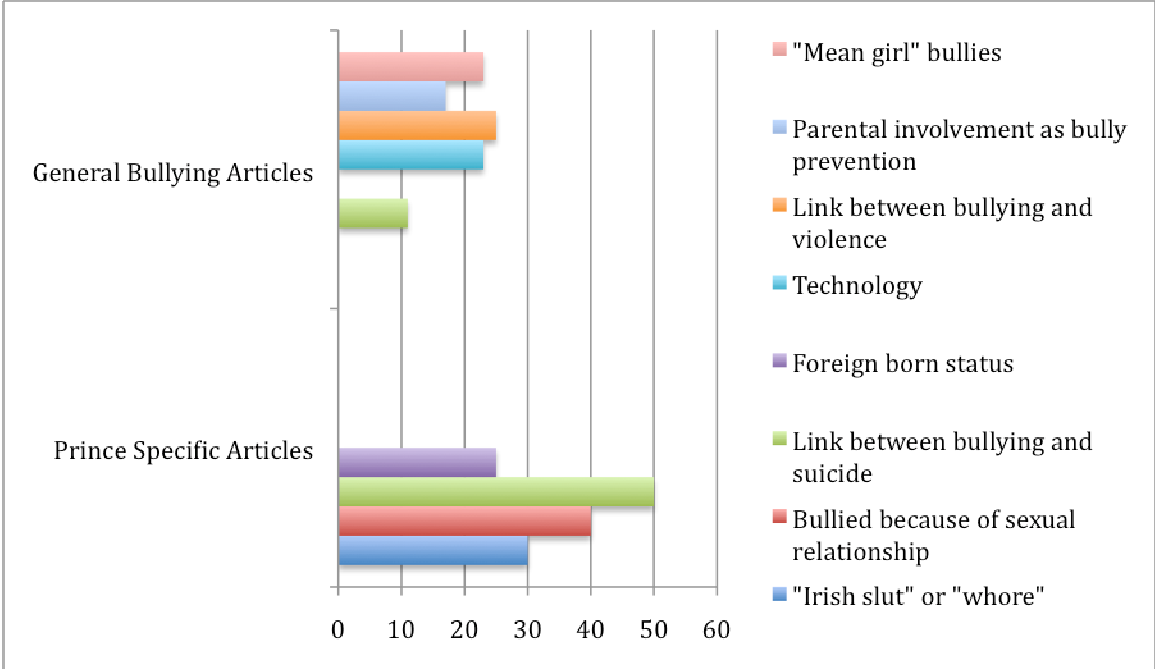


Figure 2.1: Prince Data Set Themes (1)

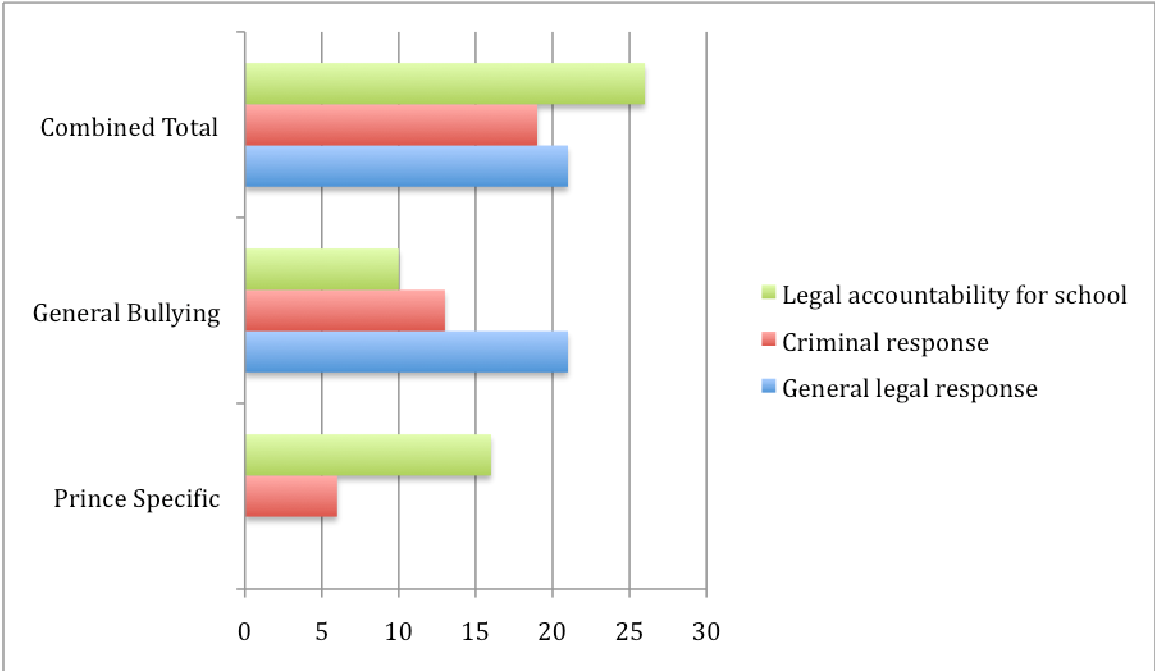


Figure 2.2: Prince Data Set Themes (2)

### *Tyler Clementi Results*

Like the Phoebe Prince set, the 152 article Clementi data set was divided into case specific references and those that referenced bullying more generally. Again, some articles included both types of themes in a single article while others focused solely on the Clementi case, or briefly mentioned the case as a starting point to engage in a larger discussion on bullying. There were four main themes in the articles on bullying in general: the link between bullying and violence (14 articles, 9%), the link between bullying and suicide (10 articles in support, 7%, one article in opposition), explanations of bullying as a larger cultural problem (14 articles, 9%), and technology's role in bullying<sup>41</sup> (24 articles, 16%). There were three main themes for the Clementi specific articles: the link between the webcam and Clementi's suicide (50 articles in support, 33%, 11 articles in opposition, 7%), various opinions on the severity of Ravi's proposed or actual punishment, and specific mentions of the gender of Clementi's partner in the webcam images (58 articles mention gender, 38%, 17 articles do not, 11%).

A number of the Clementi specific articles grapple with the extent of punishment and whether Dharun Ravi deserves leniency. This theme appears in the time period before the criminal sentence was handed down, and after Ravi was sentenced. Before the sentence, many articles reflected the view that Ravi should not be punished harshly (10 articles in favor, 7%, 2 opposed, 1%). After the sentence, the punishment was described as too light (10 articles, 7%), too severe (3 articles, 2%), just right (4 articles, 3%), and some articles reflected ambivalence (11 articles, 7%).

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<sup>41</sup> 21 articles (14%) claim technology assists in bullying and four articles (3%) suggest technology could be a tool to combat bullying. One article suggests that bullying is made worse by modern technology and that technology can be a useful tool to combat bullying when cyberbullying bystanders shame cyberbullying behavior. This explains the apparent discrepancy between the total number of articles and the articles blaming or praising technology.

The focus on the gender of Clementi's partner in the webcam images was extensive. I coded for the number of times the articles made a point of mentioning the gender of the person with which Clementi was filmed having a sexual encounter. Of these articles, 17 articles make no reference to the gender of Clementi's sexual partner, while 58 articles specifically state the partner was male but did not include a discussion of anti-gay animus, or an explanation of the hate crime charges against Ravi. Mention of either would have made discussing the sex of Clementi's partner relevant in a larger discussion about gay bias or the reason for the bias intimidation charges.

Some additional themes that appeared frequently in the Prince data but infrequently in the Clementi data were the distinction between male and female bullying (3 articles, 2%), law enforcement as a response to bullying (3 articles for, 2%, 1 against, less than 1%), general legal responses to bullying (2 articles for, 1%, 8 against, 5%), parental involvement (4 articles, 3%), and the claim that bullying is a serious problem (4 articles, 3%). One similarity in the general bullying themes in both sets was the lack of attention to race. Most instances of any kind of mention of race came from recitations of the New Jersey anti-bullying law (which contains a provision for racial bullying). Only seven articles mention the possibility of bullying based on race, but no articles engaged in a discussion that focused exclusively on race or racial bullying.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> I will discuss racial bullying at length in the next chapter.



Table 2.2: Clementi Data Set Themes

Theme	Clementi Specific		General Bullying		Total	
	Affirmative	Negative	Affirmative	Negative	Affirmative	Negative
Link between bullying and violence	NA	NA	10 (7%)	0	10 (7%)	0
Technology to blame for bullying	NA	NA	21 (14%)	4 (3%)	21 (14%)	4 (3%)
Culture to blame for bullying	NA	NA	14 (9%)	0	14 (9%)	0
Link between bullying and suicide	50 (33%)	11 (7%)	10 (7%)	1 (.6%)	60 (40%)	12 (8%)
Ravi should be punished harshly	12 (8%)	13 (9%)	NA	NA	12 (8%)	13 (9%)
Mixed results on punishment	11 (7%)	NA	NA	NA	11 (7%)	NA
Distinguishes sex of Clementi's partner	58 (38%)	17 (11%)	NA	NA	58 (38%)	17 (11%)

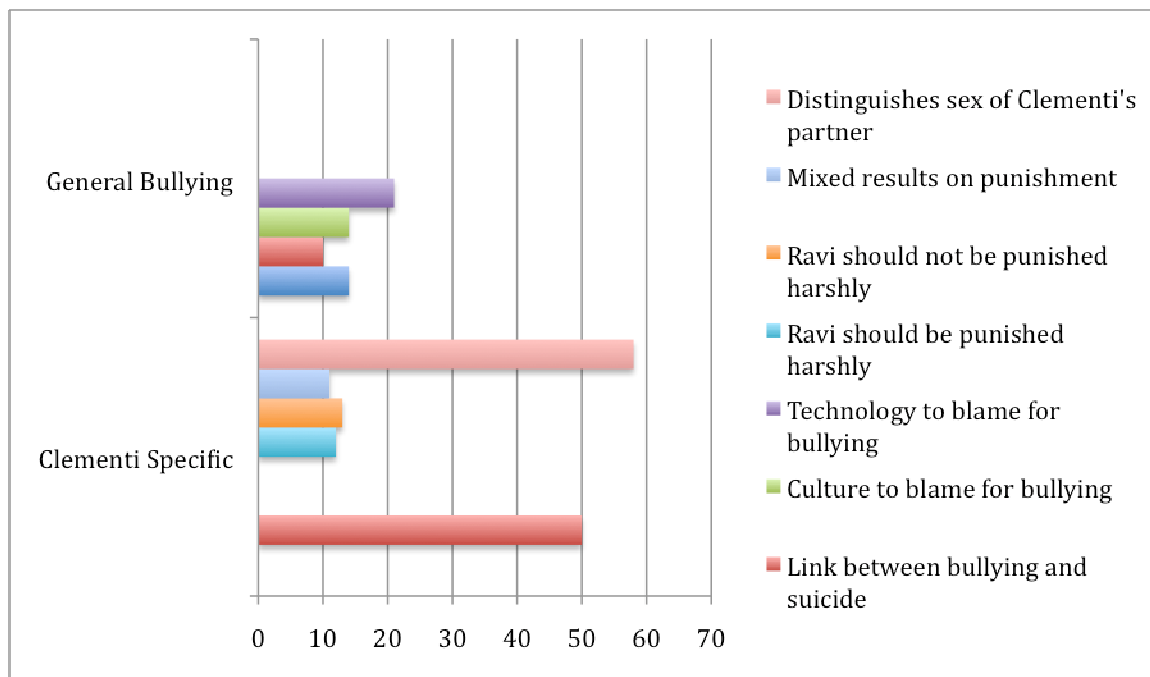


Figure 2.3: Clementi Data Set Themes

Table 2.3: Comparison of Clementi and Prince Data Set Themes

Theme	Entire Prince Data Set %	Entire Clementi Data Set %	Difference
Link between bullying and suicide	28	40	12 Clementi >
Link between bullying and violence	12	7	5 Prince >
Technology	11	14	3 Clementi >
Approval for general legal responses	10	1	9 Prince >
Approval for criminal specific legal responses	9	2	7 Prince >
Sex (“slut” in Prince, or sex of partner in Clementi)	14	38	24 Clementi >

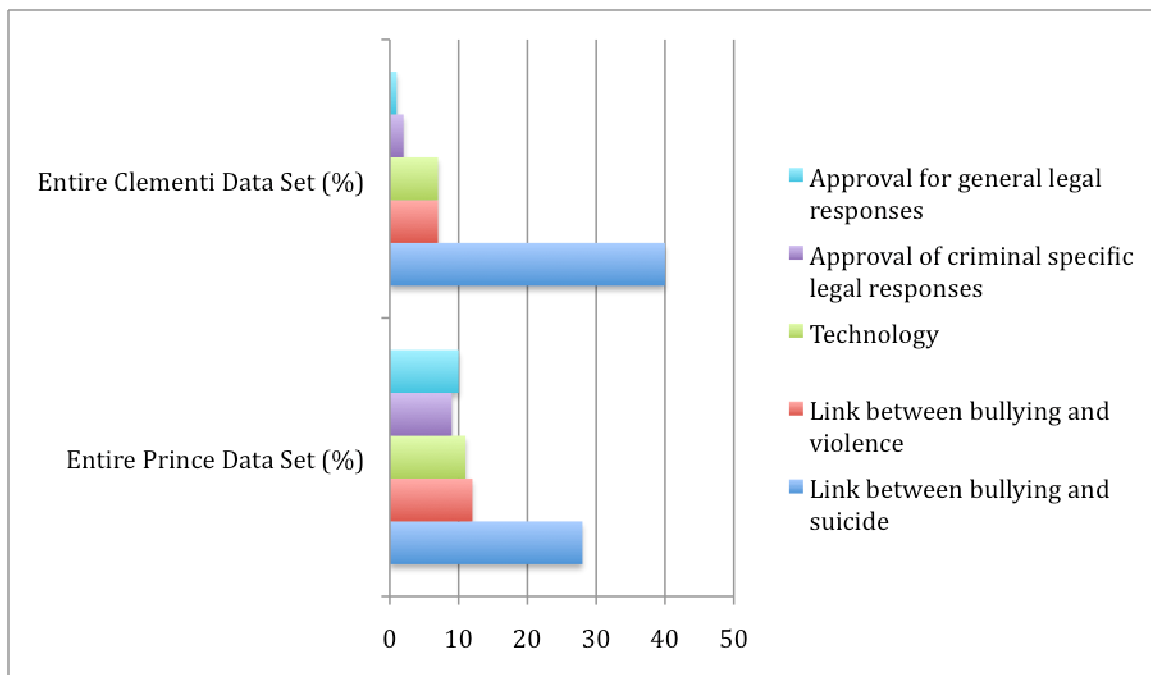


Figure 2.4: Comparison of Clementi and Prince Data Set Themes

## **Discussion**

The most prominent themes on victim construction from the two data sets are the focus on the dangers of bullying, sexual activity of the victim, gendered descriptions of the victim, a distinction between female and male bullying, and the high approval of the criminal law to deal with Prince's bullies but not necessarily Clementi's.

### *Dangers of Bullying*

The dangers of bullying in both the Clementi and Prince articles appear in two closely related themes linking bullying with violence and suicide. The articles describe bullying as a form of torture, a reign of terror, child abuse, a harbinger of Columbine type mass violence, and in some articles the presence of violence is required to establish a claim of "real bullying". A handful of opinion pieces include desires to see the bullies suffer and comprise a sub-category of articles that seem to advocate for bullying the bully.<sup>43</sup> It is not simply an explanation of bullying as violence, but also a concern that the bully will become more violent, and more prominently, that the victim will snap and become violent. As one article notes, "...there are a small number of kids, who when repeatedly targeted, will turn the other page into contempt for themselves and everyone else, and they become our school shooters" (Garrett, 2010). We will deal with this theme more in the chapter on the bully, but it points to how violence is relevant in making a claim of "real" victimization, and how it is a concern not only for the victim of bullying, but also for other students at whom the bullying victim could lash out.

The most common way the articles communicated the danger of bullying was by linking bullying and suicide. The link between bullying and suicide was prevalent in both data sets and

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<sup>43</sup> Some of these articles are reports on death threats the Prince bullies received while others are calls for the bullies to suffer in some way beyond criminal punishment.

in most instances the link was simply assumed and reported with little to no supporting data, other than the fact that victims were bullied and subsequently committed suicide. Even when there was no evidence or reason to suggest bullying occurred in another Massachusetts youth's suicide, the writer posed the question of whether bullying was involved but ultimately had to dismiss it.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, when other bullied victims share their stories in the articles they often highlight their own thoughts of suicide as a response to the bullying. This suggests not only that bullying and suicide are strongly linked in this narrative, but also that suicide or discussions of suicide make bullying victimization recognizable, or help confer the status of victim on a particular individual or group.

### *Sex and Sexuality*

The Prince articles included extensive references to Prince's sexual relationship with two boys in school and pointed to this as the event that precipitated the bullying. Although the term "mean girls" only appeared in approximately 11% of the articles, the focus on the sexual relationship and the use of the "Irish slut" epithet paint a picture that focuses on sexual jealousy and competition among girls. The articles did not ignore the boy's roles in Prince's bullying completely, but by focusing so extensively on the "Irish slut" comments and the sexual relationships, the articles communicate a subtle message of who is really to blame for Prince's suicide. In so far as the girls allegedly responsible for the bullying were the girlfriends (and friends of the girlfriends) of the two boys who engaged in a sexual relationship with Prince, the narrative paints a familiar picture of female behavior as jealous and catty. As one article describes, "Before long, she had a brief romance with a popular football player (a senior). This

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<sup>44</sup> In an article about another teenage suicide in Massachusetts school officials were questioned about whether bullying was involved but both officials and friends of the teen said there was no evidence to support this assertion (Meyers, 2010, October 29).

allegedly incensed a clique of "popular" students called the Mean Girls, who stalked her, knocked her books out of her hands, sent her incessant text messages, and constantly called Prince an "Irish slut"" (Del Signore, 2010, March 30). As another article characterized the bullying, "...she was the new girl at a South Hadley high school who endured months of taunting and harassment because, as everyone knows, new girls have no right to date the captain of the football team" (Yingst, 2010, October 11).

The behavior, however, is not characterized as typical, ordinary, or condonable in the articles. Their actions were almost universally condemned and only seven articles expressed any kind of sympathy for the bullies, argued for leniency from the courts, or pointed out that name-calling is somewhat normative for teenagers. Although there was very little sympathy for the teens in the Prince case, despite the fact they were facing serious prison terms if convicted of the charges brought against them, the punitiveness theme did not carry through into the Clementi articles.

In many instances, the name-calling theme, Prince's foreignness, and sexual relationship appeared together in the same article. The focus on her foreignness may serve to draw attention to her vulnerability, being a new student in a new country. It can also be interpreted as contributing to a narrative in which the bullies were brutally policing gender norms against an outsider who, perhaps, wouldn't have been aware of the dating rules at South Hadley High School. If this is the case it makes the bullies seem all the more sinister. It is curious, however, that so many articles chose to construct Prince's vulnerability through her outsider status rather than through a discussion of her pre-existing depression, cutting, or previous suicide attempt. By focusing on obvious external characteristics rather than a mental health condition that is often not apparent to others, the teens in the case become punishable bullies and Prince becomes a victim

of bullying, as opposed to a victim of poor mental health. These facts still contribute to a picture of the bullies as mean, but perhaps not totally culpable for Prince's suicide.

It is also possible to account for the frequency of the "Irish slut" epithet as a way of explaining why the teens accused of bullying Prince were charged with bias intimidation by the district attorney. Calling someone a slut, by itself, would not support those charges, but because they reportedly called her an Irish slut, implicating a bias against her country of origin, the charges were much more serious. The severity of the charges wouldn't make sense without mentioning the Irish slut phrase in reporting on the case. But most of the articles did not explain that the "Irish" part of the Irish slut comments made the hate crime statute available for the prosecutor. Similarly, when one considers the other themes that occurred with the highest frequency in the news articles were also related to Prince's sexual activity, her vulnerability by virtue of being a recent immigrant, and that girls were responsible for tormenting her, the articles begin to reveal an interesting and complicated gender discourse.

Curiously, the underage sex<sup>45</sup> itself was not condemned in any of the articles, nor was it accounted for as contributing to Prince's suicide. According to many articles, the sexual relationships caused the bullying, but not the suicide. This way of constructing the facts takes the boys somewhat out of the equation<sup>46</sup> by highlighting that it was the way in which sexual behavior was policed by the girls, but not the sexual behavior itself, that was the problem. At no time in the news articles was there a suggestion that the underage sex Prince engaged in was problematic or contributed to her suicide. It was used only in the context of explaining the

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<sup>45</sup> Prince was 15 when she engaged in these two sexual relationships.

<sup>46</sup> The two boys were not entirely left out of the bullying story. Both were charged with statutory rape because Prince was 15 and they were 17 at the time of the encounter. One of the two boys involved in the case was charged with bias intimidation because of his encouragement of the bullying by other girls.

aggression coming from the girls. This frames gender policing by the girls, but not the patriarchal norms that underlie that policing, as the problem in the bullying context.

Some would argue that gender policing is too light a term to describe what Prince endured. Despite the harshness of using the term “Irish slut” to intimidate an individual or describe them to other people with the purpose of tarnishing their reputation, the girls who bullied Prince apparently did so because she engaged in behavior they felt violated their norms. By aggressing against Prince, they were communicating a message to her and other girls about appropriate female behavior as it relates to sexual relations. However inappropriate, cruel, or harmful their methods, they were upholding a gendered double standard that assigns blame to girls as opposed to boys for sexual transgressions, a standard these girls did not create themselves. Although surveillance and punishment for female sexual activity was historically sanctioned by state institutions,<sup>47</sup> the articles reflect wide disapproval for the female bullies’ behaviors, and strong support for interventions from the criminal justice system to punish this kind of harsh gender policing.

The Clementi articles associated Clementi’s victimization with his sexual activity as well. When the sexual encounter that was briefly captured on the webcam in the shared dorm room is reported, the gender of Clementi’s partner is specifically mentioned as male in an overwhelming number of articles (58 articles versus 17 articles that do not mention the gender of the sexual partner). As in the attention to national origin in the Prince articles, the attention to Clementi’s partner’s gender can be explained as making sense of the hate crime charges which would not have resulted if Ravi had set up his webcam to peek in on and publicize a heterosexual encounter. This can also be explained as providing a context for a larger discussion of bullying

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<sup>47</sup> Early 20th Century justifications for adolescent female institutionalization were based on “immorality”, “incorrigibility”, or “waywardness”, all of which implicate the concern for uncontrolled girls and their potential or actual sexual behaviors (Chesney-Lind & Palko, 2004).

based on sexual orientation. When an article explained the criminal charges or discussed bullying based on sexual orientation, however, it was not counted in this category. An alternative explanation for the focus on the gender of Clementi's partner is that this fact makes Clementi's victimization recognizable in the articles. Like Prince's widely reported "Irish slut" taunts, the publicizing of Clementi's partner as male links up with an recognizable history of violent responses to transgressions against a patriarchal, hetero-normative standard.

### *Punishment*

The Prince articles showed an overwhelming approval for legal interventions as a solution to bullying, with 24% (53 articles) approving of some kind of legal intervention. The number of articles in favor of using a criminal justice specific response to bullying was not excessively high at 9% (19 articles), but it is important to note that only 1% (3 articles) opposed a criminal response. Given the rate at which themes emerged as prominent in this data set (only a few themes appeared more than 20 times), the criminal justice system has substantial support as a solution to bullying in the Prince articles. Not surprisingly, consensus that bullying is a serious problem accompanied the harsh approach to bullying in the Prince articles.

In contrast, the Clementi articles reflect far fewer assertions that the bullying problem is serious and point to a different solution to dealing with bullying other than the criminal justice system and the law in general. The theme emerges through articles suggesting leniency for Ravi, a concern with the anti-bullying law, and a lack of general bullying articles that support criminal justice solutions. There is much less approval for the criminal justice system's involvement in the bullying problem in the Clementi articles, and there are more articles expressing concern over harsh punishment for Ravi. Unlike the Prince articles, where there was hardly any push



back against the charges or use of the criminal justice system against the teens involved, negative sentiment about the use of the criminal justice system in bullying cases generally, and in the Clementi case specifically, emerged as a major theme in the Clementi data set. This is not to say that Ravi's actions received overwhelming support in the articles. Although there was less condemnation of Ravi's actions (or, perhaps, more concern over the extreme charges he was facing) than there was with the Prince bullies, a substantial number of articles (50, 23%) linked Ravi's actions with Clementi's suicide (although 11 articles, 7% question this link).

### *Reading the Themes Together*

So far, the articles have revealed a subtle narrative about what it means to be a victim of bullying, but this narrative does not align with classic characterizations of "ideal victims" (Christie, 1989). For example, Prince's behavior seems to be more akin to that of historically deviant as opposed to victimized females. Prince used marijuana and engaged in teenage sex with multiple partners, whereas an ideal victim her age would remain virginal and engage in exclusively wholesome activities. Although the marijuana use was not widely reported, the sexual relationships were, and this way of describing a victim would have precluded her victim status according to the existing literature on ideal victims. One can easily imagine a narrative that vilifies Prince's behavior rather than one that overwhelmingly disapproves of the South Hadley girls who policed it. Similarly, 30 years ago Clementi's sexuality and sexual activity would have been described and portrayed as deviant. By virtue of its inclusion in numerous hate crime statutes, sexual orientation is recognized as a characteristic that makes one uniquely vulnerable to certain types of victimization, which requires the law's protection. Returning to Perry's (2001) description of hate crimes as an act of oppression that recreates discriminatory

power relations of social orders, we can understand how the moralizing force of law through hate crime statutes helps combat not only crime, but also oppressive views of non-heterosexuals as inferior, dangerous or illegitimate (Brown, 2004; Mason, 2013).

Is it possible, then, to read the news narratives as eschewing traditional notions of appropriate female sexual behavior and anti-gay sentiment? Is it possible these are progressive narratives calling for an end to the enforcement of gendered double standards, and heterosexual encounters as normative? Do the themes from the two sets of articles assist in a re-moralization (O'Malley, 1999) surrounding female sexuality and same sex relationships? One reading of the material suggests this answer is no; in the bullying context the rhetorical strategy employed to frame suicides as directly resulting from bullying uses the discriminatory hierarchies hate crime laws attempt to eradicate. This is apparent when we take a closer look at how Prince and Clementi were constructed as victims, which requires linkage between bullying and suicide and an affirmation of patriarchal norms of control over female sexuality and heteronormative expectations of young men.

Although research suggests that suicide is multi-causal (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002), the bullying discourse that emerges from the Prince and Clementi articles suggests a direct causal link between bullying and suicide. This is accomplished through a cursory nod to psychological literature and the basic assumption that suicide is a natural result of meanness or cruelty. This link is essential in creating a victim status for Prince and Clementi. Each becomes a victim when the story of their suicide is about how they were compelled to kill themselves due to the bully's torments. In this way, the victims themselves cannot be fully blamed for their choice to end their lives. If the narratives introduced intervening factors, ones that offer alternative interpretations of the reason for the suicide, there is no longer a clear

victim-victimizer dynamic, and no longer a direct, uncomplicated link between the bullying and suicide.

To assert that Prince killed herself because she was repeatedly called a slut, and Clementi killed himself because he was observed in an intimate encounter with another man communicates something important about the imagined meaning of being a sexually active female or gay male. Prince's and Clementi's victim statuses depend on a backdrop of anti-gay sentiment and condemnation of female sexual behavior outside of patriarchal control. If the narrative was that they committed suicide over an innocent comment or because they were clinically depressed it would be hard, if not impossible, to garner acceptance for their status as bullying victims. They might be viewed as uniquely vulnerable individuals who met the wrong comment at the wrong time, but certainly there would be no calls for harsh punishment against their uncivil peers. While the narratives in the two cases appear to be quite progressive by calling for (albeit varying degrees of) punishment for bullying that reflects traditional and outmoded sexual norms, it relies on these same traditional notions of prejudice to confer victim status on Prince and Clementi.

This is different than simply recognizing the existence of animus against gays, or hysteria surrounding uncontrolled female sexuality. Hate crime laws provided heightened punishment for crimes targeting protected groups of people because the law recognizes the tradition of discrimination against certain groups of people. This is different from what happens in the construction of victims in the bullying context. The bullying narrative does not simply recognize the existence of animus, it lends credibility to it. It does this by strengthening the causal link between the actions of the bullies and the victims' ultimate suicides. When this link is strengthened, the suicide can no longer be read as irrational, impulsive, or as the product of

depression or other circumstances. Connecting the bullying so directly to the suicides and ignoring the multi-causal nature of suicide sends a subtle message that one of the worst taunts one could hurl at a girl is to be called a slut, and one of the worst things that could happen to a young man is to have his sexual encounter with another man made public. In order to lay fault for their suicides at the feet of the bullies and recognize Prince and Clementi as victims, the narrative has to not only reference, but affirm the historic shame associated with being a sexually active female or a non-heterosexually active male.

There are a number of case studies on women or girls who have been denied victim status because their behavior did not conform to traditional feminine expectations<sup>48</sup>, but there are very few examples where women achieve victim status despite violating these expectations, or *because* they violated these expectations. While patriarchy can often limit women in their ability to capture legitimate victim status, in this case patriarchy assisted in labeling Phoebe Prince as a victim by linking the torment based on her non-gender conforming behavior to her suicide. But instead of interrogating the patriarchal system that makes it possible to interpret the taunt ‘slut’ as abusive, the articles overwhelmingly indict the teen girls in the case, further supporting, or perhaps occluding, the system of patriarchy. By focusing on punishment for the teen bullies through the criminal justice system, our attention is diverted from the oppressive nature of the social order, what Reiman (1995) refers to as the magic of criminal justice.<sup>49</sup> By laying the blame on bullying, and teenage bullies in particular, the systems of patriarchy and

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<sup>48</sup> See Moore, C. (2013), ‘Beguiling Eve and Her Innocent Counterpart: Victim-Offender Identities in the Criminal Justice Process’, in K. Jaishankar, and N. Ronel, eds., *Global Criminology: Crime and Victimization in a Globalized Era*, 289--313. Taylor and Francis Group. See also Chesney-Lind, M., & Palko, L. (2004), *The Female Offender: Girls, Women, and Crime*. Sage.

<sup>49</sup> Reiman (1995) was concerned with the criminal justice system’s focus on the criminal offender as a way to divert attention from structural inequality that creates the conditions under which offending is likely to occur, but his point is applicable here.

heteronormativity are absolved of their primary roles in contributing to homophobic and sexist abuse, but to different degrees.

Clementi's sexual deviance offered him victim status as well, but with one important distinction. The Clementi articles contain more references to culture, and specifically a culture of homophobia, that is partially blamed for bullying. The articles also contain far fewer calls for the criminal justice system to intervene in future cases of bullying, and more ambivalence on whether and how harshly Ravi should be punished. The Prince articles, on the other hand, contain no references to a culture of patriarchy, or a culture of attacking girls on the basis of their sexuality. The Prince articles contain more calls for criminal justice interventions to deal with the problem of bullying generally, and contain very little sympathy for the teens accused of bullying Prince.

The Prince and Clementi cases differ markedly in the degree to which the criminal justice system is favored as an appropriate response to bullying, and in the degree to which each set of articles acknowledges a larger culture of oppression that reinforces types of bullying. While I am not suggesting a causal relationship between the levels of criminal intervention advocated for and acknowledgment of a larger system of discrimination, the research suggests that these two factors may be correlated. In other words, criminal justice solutions will be less popular in dealing with social issues when there is greater acknowledgement that a system of discrimination is at work in creating the problem. I am not prepared to make this claim, but my findings and analysis open up a question of whether this relationship exists and should be addressed in future research.

Instead of reading the emphasis placed on Clementi's sexuality and Prince's sexual activity as a comment on the "natural" link between suicide and being filmed in an intimate

encounter with another man or labeled as a slut, one might interpret it instead as condemnation of Ravi's and the Prince bullies' actions. This is another valid interpretation of the data, and my argument does not rest on disproving this interpretation. My argument is that the way Clementi and Prince are characterized as victims of homophobic and sexist bullying that resulted in suicide is incomplete, if not incorrect, and ignores the multi-causal nature of suicide. I would also point out that the Prince and Clementi articles differ markedly in the degree to which the criminal justice system is favored as an appropriate response to bullying, with the Prince articles being more supportive of punitive measures than the Clementi articles. If they were equally punitive, the argument that punitiveness indicates condemnation of the bullying behavior would be stronger.

## **Conclusion**

This research presents an opportunity to examine some important taken-for-granted assumptions about who qualifies as a symbolic victim and what results from the conferral of victim status on particular victims. I have argued that the effort to frame Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi as victims of bullying supports in addition to critiques the underlying ideologies responsible for their victimization. In contrast to hate crime laws that have helped reconfigure negative conceptions of gays and lesbians (Mason, 2013; Brown, 2004), the bullying narrative that I document works in the opposite direction by lending credibility to the heteronormativity and patriarchal limitations on 'appropriate' male and female sexuality.

I do not argue that hate crime laws carry a similar potential for oppression in recognizing historic and contemporary animus, although one could make that argument. My argument focuses on affirming historic shame associated with non-heterosexual and female sexual

behavior by framing suicide as a predictable response to being publicly recognized as sexually non-conforming. There is a difference between recognizing a history of animus that occurs in hate crime legislation versus framing suicide as an expected or not irrational response to having one's non-conforming sexuality made public. It is not simply the conferral of victimhood that lends credibility to the animus, it is the way victimhood is conferred in the articles, which is through the bullying-to-suicide link.

There are two primary and related findings of this research. First, while the bullying discourse that comes out of the Prince and Clementi cases appear to do similar symbolic work of re-moralization (O'Malley, 1999) as hate crime laws because they condemn harassment based on sexuality and gender, on closer examination the discourse actually upholds discriminatory systems of patriarchy and heteronormativity in its attempt to explain the suicides as directly linked to bullying. When suicide is framed as an expected or predictable response to homophobia and sexism, the shame associated with deviating from historically appropriate sex and gender roles is reaffirmed rather than repudiated. Second, this research suggests there may be a negative correlation between acknowledgement of discriminatory ideology and support for harsh punishment for individuals whose behavior is driven, at least in part, by these ideologies.

These findings open up some questions about the roles patriarchy and heteronormativity play in the process of recognizing victims, especially non-ideal victims. While this is not at work in all cases where new victims are recognized, it is perhaps a model for cases where there is a gap in causation between a perpetrators actions and harm to the victim (e.g. bullying and subsequent suicide), or cases where the victim is believed to forfeit their innocent status in some way. Future research should consider the role of patriarchy and heteronormativity in conferring

victim status on non-ideal victims and what relation, if any, this has on support for criminal justice responses.



## CHAPTER 3: SEARCHING FOR RACE IN THE BULLYING DISCOURSE

*“All too often, American legal and political culture seems to suggest the...principle that there are two varieties of people who are involved in criminal activity, black people and victims. So perhaps when victims happen to be black, the culture rationalizes the seeming contradiction by denying that there has been a crime.”*

-Stephen Carter, *When Victims Happen to be Black*<sup>50</sup>

### Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of how the category of race and events of racial bullying are framed and discussed in three sets of news articles on bullying obtained from Lexis-Nexis searches of “Phoebe Prince”, “Tyler Clementi”, and the term “racial bullying”. The racial bullying search produced two sets of articles, one about racial bullying in general, and another about a specific racial bullying incident on the San Jose State University campus. Analysis of news reports reveals that not all victims of bullying receive the same level of public outcry, attention, or responses to address the problem. Findings suggest that victims of racial bullying tend to not be recognized as victims, responses to racial bullying are dramatically different from other non-racial bullying incidents, and that in some instances the victims of racial bullying are portrayed as the real bullies. This chapter goes beyond revealing unconscious or semi-conscious racism in various bullying discourses to illustrate the centrality of race to constructing both offenders and victims in the bullying context.

Race is rarely used as a frame in bullying cases. A search of the terms “race & bully” on PsychInfo<sup>51</sup> produced 26 published articles on race and bullying between 2000-2013. Compare this with a search of “sexual orientation or homosexual\* & bully”, which produced 136 articles

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<sup>50</sup> Carter, S.L. (1988). When victims happen to be Black. *97 Yale Law Journal*, pp. 420-447.

<sup>51</sup> The PsychInfo database contains articles published by the American Psychological Association and includes international psychological research from 1800 to the present.

between 2000-2013, or the terms “bully & depression”, which yielded 363 articles between 2000-2013.<sup>52</sup> A search of the term “racial bullying” on google scholar returned only 444 results, while a search of “homophobic bullying” produced 2,440 results.

Bullying cases that are specifically framed by race do not receive much media attention and contain additional descriptive elements that suggest reactions and responses to racial bullying incidents be tempered or minimized. This is the case despite race appearing as one of the protected characteristics in every bullying law that lists protected characteristics. At the very least, this suggests a gap between the legal anticipation, or acknowledgement of the possibility of racial bullying, and what the discourse on bullying includes and highlights. The gap between what the law promises and the protections it delivers has been a focus of socio-legal scholars (Galanter, 1974; Reiman & Leighton, 2010; Harris, 1993; MacKinnon, 1993; Crenshaw, 1991), and this work adds to that body of scholarship by illustrating a racial gap between codified law and popular legal discourses on bullying. This chapter, however, goes beyond pointing out a gap between official legal protections and popular discourses of who is imagined as needing or deserving of protection, and beyond advising this gap be narrowed. Instead, this chapter suggests that when race is minimized in the context of victimization and overemphasized in the context of perpetration in the bullying discourse, there is evidence of racial bias in the discursive framing of the bullying problem. This bias, which appears in other news media contexts as well, has the potential to make its way into the practice of identifying and responding to actual incidents of racial bullying.

Evidence from the articles supports the claims that less attention is paid to racial bullying even when race could have been a relevant frame for the story; when racial bullying is discussed

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<sup>52</sup> In each of these searches the database saw an uptick in the number of articles for each search term between the years 2010-2013.

the reaction is more focused on emotional responses to the case-including potentially unruly responses-and on changing culture as opposed to using the criminal justice system to respond to racial bullying; victims of racial bullying are given less direct attention and are expected to take responsibility by moving on and not focusing on the bullying incident; finally, racial minorities are assigned blame or implicated in responsibility for the bullying problem. These claims are supported by information in news articles on Phoebe Prince, Tyler Clementi, and a general search of the term “racial bullying”, which produced a number of articles on the bullying incident at San Jose State University, along with other cases.

## **Literature Review**

Analysis of depictions of race have figured prominently in media studies, particularly in presentations of victimization and deviance in crime media. Examination and analysis of media discourses often focus on differences in racial representations (Shome, 2014; Matheson, 2005; Campbell, 1995; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Hall, 2000). Media representations of race are particularly important because they help construct definitions of race, including the meanings of its imagery, and how the “problem of race” is understood (Hall, 2000). Similarly, many people who may not come into frequent contact with various minority groups will depend more on media images in forming their opinions and impressions of minority group members (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Larson, 2006). Finally, racial representations in news media help establish and maintain “a hegemonic consensus about race” that can be inaccurate, perpetuating negative stereotypes about racial minorities (Campbell, 1995, pp.132).

In his work on representations of African Americans in local news outlets, Campbell (1995) identified three cultural myths: the myth of marginality, the myth of difference, and the

myth of assimilation. His findings and analysis show how local television news ignores people of color in the news by providing minimal coverage of minority communities and perspectives, or marginalizes people of color through subtle forms of racism and racial insensitivities in reporting. Local news also contributes to the myth that people of color are fundamentally different from White people by reporting stories that highlight both positive and negative stereotypes of racial groups. This includes representations of successful African American athletes and entertainers as well as African American and Latino men as criminals. Finally, the myth of assimilation is supported by local news with stories that suggest African Americans have overcome racism and are fully assimilated into American society (Campbell, 1995). This last myth is particularly dangerous because if racism is framed in the past tense, as no longer active, the indicators of both past and present racism cannot be attributed to racism. For example, the relative underrepresentation of African Americans as corporate leaders or in high socioeconomic positions and relative overrepresentation as the incarcerated and persons in poverty cannot be understood as the result of ongoing forms of institutional and individual racism. Instead, it is framed as evidence of the lack of ability and motivation of African Americans as a group (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Rome, 2006).

Racial differences in media representation are particularly salient when the focus is on criminal victimization and offending (Campbell et al., 2012; Mann & Zatz, 2006; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Hall et al., 1978; Morrison, 2006). Some have argued that criminal offenders have become synonymous with young, African American males (Rome, 2006; Miller et al., 2006), a notion which is used to justify more punitive treatment of African Americans (Rome, 2006). African Americans are overrepresented as perpetrators of crime in news media (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Larson, 2006), or are more likely to appear in the media as criminal suspects

than as victims or positive role models (Chiricos, & Eschholz, 2002). Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) found that even when the suspect's race was not reported, the public generally assumed the suspect was not white. Furthermore, important but subtle elements of reporting demarcate the racial divide between types of offenders.

Unlike presentations of White criminals, which are accompanied by a focus on why the offender committed the crime, his remorse, or rationalizations for offending, there is little context presented for non-White criminal offending, contributing to the notion that non-White criminals are normal, while White criminals are aberrations that require additional explanation (Miller et al., 2006; Collins, 2014). Additionally, White criminals are portrayed as individuals in crime reporting more often than people of color (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). For example, Entman and Rojecki (2000) found that local news programs were more likely to list the names on screen of Whites accused of violence than for Blacks or Latinos, which they explain as highlighting the individuality of White offenders while contributing to the notion that people of color, as an undifferentiated group, are violent offenders. Both the content and style of reporting strengthens the link between minorities (particularly African Americans and Latinos) and crime.

The racial disparity in media portrayals extends to crime victims as well, resulting in what Miller et al. (2006) calls a "hierarchy of victims", where White victims are depicted as more deserving of sympathy and assistance while other racial minorities are not. Local news tends to overrepresent White victims and underrepresent Black victims in their coverage, even in cities where Blacks are more likely to be victimized (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). Similarly, White homicide victims receive significantly more attention in the news than Black homicide victims (Gruenewald, Pizzaro, Chermak, 2009). In one Canadian study, when non-White victims were reported on the story quickly turned to a discussion of the social pathologies

surrounding gang life (drugs, alcohol, and poverty), while stories on White victims included language of fear and risk (Collins, 2014). Other research has found that the newsworthiness of a homicide is determined by long-standing myths of race, gender, and crime rather than the rarity of the offender-victim combination, which should, in theory, make the story more newsworthy (Lundman, 2003). For example, Black on White homicides are more likely to be reported than White on Black homicides, even though White on Black homicides are more uncommon. Similarly, male on female homicide, and particularly Black male on White female homicides will be given more attention. It is the intersection of race and gender, and particularly the myths and stereotypes that exist about race, gender, and crime that helps determine whether and how much a story will be covered (Lundman, 2003).

Racially biased representations of victims and perpetrators reach beyond crime media to political discourse as well, stoking fears of threatening non-whites in victimized white voters (Haney-Lopez, 2013). But because politicians cannot openly appeal to race-based solidarity with a white voting audience without appearing bigoted, they use thinly veiled references to racialized victimizers, such as illegal aliens or welfare cheats. In what is termed “dog whistle politics” or “dog whistle racism”, this new way of talking about race does not directly reference race, but is understood by listeners to contain racial references (Haney-Lopez, 2013). The three steps described in dog whistle politics involve an initial racial/racist appeal that does not technically mention race, an assertion that the statement is not based on a racial appeal in the face of racial pandering accusations, and finally, a counter offensive accusation that the accuser is guilty of falsely alleging racial victimization. This political tap dance ends with the original speaker, who made the thinly veiled, but technically race-free race-based appeal, accusing his critics of opportunistically alleging racial victimization and casting himself as the victim of racism from

those critics. Using technically race-free terms and claiming to be colorblind is essential to dog whistle racism, and allows White speakers and audiences to access claims of racial victimization (Haney-Lopez, 2013).

Although Haney-Lopez explains the racial victim category as politically valuable, other research suggests that the victim category carries potential negative connotations as well. In her explanation of the rejection of the term victim, Cole (2007) characterizes American society as in some ways more responsive to suffering, but at the same time vilifying those who identify with their victim status or use their victim status to receive tangible or intangible benefits. The “victimist”, as Cole describes, is a bogus victim who is weak, passive, dependent, effeminate, and conversely manipulative, aggressive, potentially criminal, and dangerous. In contrast, the “true victim” is one who endures his suffering without complaining or displaying weakness, accepts his victim status reluctantly or rejects it, does not participate in victim politics or frame his victimization as a collective group injury, and did not contribute to his victimization in any way (Cole, 2007). The consequences of viewing victims in this way extends beyond individual victim status. As Cole explains,

By investing victimhood with new meanings and rendering it a badge of shame, anti-victimism has made it extremely difficult to address pervasive forms of social injustice that advantage some by subordinating others; instructing us that if we each were self-determining, then no one need be a victim. At the same time, anti-victimists depict a world in which a dominating victim politics victimizes society (pp.19).

Although Cole’s (2010) research references race, she does not make race central to her argument. It seems, however, that race could be central to the anti-victimist explanation. According to Cole, the difference between the manipulative and dangerous victimist and the true victim is that the true victim rejects their victim status or does not engage in victim politics or frame their victimization as a collective group injury. If the true victim is someone who does not

claim collective group victimization, in a racial context the true victim must always be White, or a non-White victim who totally rejects that they were victimized because of their race. Claiming racial victimization requires a claim that membership in your race precipitated the victimization. Claims of racial discrimination are inherently claims of collective group injury.

Reading Haney-Lopez and Cole together, we can see how some claims of racial victimization, when made by non-Whites, are framed as examples of racial pandering and attacks on the ethic of self-determination and on society itself. Haney-Lopez's (2013) research suggests that when looking for representations or discussions of race in bullying victimization and perpetration, race may be just below the surface, discussed in code, and made less obvious. It also provides a model for turning the victims of racial remarks into the perpetrators when they respond to racial victimization. Furthermore, it gives context for understanding language that appears to be colorblind as anything but. Cole's research also shows how claims of racial bullying could be minimized, but more importantly, how the victims of racial bullying could be framed as the real bullies, victimizing society with claims of collective group injury and participation in victim politics.

Race is far less central to the psychological research on bullying, and although race appears in every state bullying law that enumerates protected characteristics, enumerated characteristics appear in only a minority of states. Despite being less central to both state bullying laws and the psychological literature on bullying, race appears in each of these two literatures in familiar ways. The psychological research on bullying tends to underrepresent racial bullying victims and overrepresent minority bullying offenders. While some bullying laws include race as a possible target of bullies, the majority of bullying laws are characteristic-blind,



meaning that they focus more on the prohibited behavior and do not take into account the characteristics of the victim that may have precipitated the behavior.

Bullying laws make up a unique, often confusing legal category of prohibited behavior. The vast majority of laws against bullying are located in state educational codes, not criminal codes, and either define bullying in the statute or leave it up to individual school districts to define the behavior. Unless the bullying violates an existing criminal statute, it is often left up to individual school districts to identify sanctions, decide which cases warrant intervention, and punish bullies. Although the definition of bullying is relatively uniform across states, its scope varies widely and can include anything from physical violence to a dirty look.

Similarly varied, and often muddled, is whether or not the bullying law is victim-specific. In a brief analysis of the legislative histories in states that had not yet enacted bullying legislation as of 2010, opponents of enumerating victim characteristics argue that the focus should be on the bully's behavior, and not the victim (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Although the majority of state bullying laws focus on the type of conduct prohibited, regardless of why it was initiated or against whom it was perpetrated, many bullying laws are modeled after existing civil rights legislation and harassment statutes (Green & Ross, 2005). Harassment is a specific legal term that prohibits behavior motivated by the characteristics of the victim. It is a victim specific crime, yet it is often used interchangeably in state laws with the term "bullying", which is not necessarily a victim specific offense (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The behaviors involved in both harassment and bullying may be very similar, but the important distinction between these two terms is who is victimized by the behavior, and whether the bully/harasser chose the victim based on the victim's protected characteristics. Unchecked school bullying that targets an individual based on race, color, national origin, disability, or sex could be construed as

a violation of federal civil rights law<sup>53</sup>, although the widespread conflation of the terms “bullying” and “harassment” in state laws contributes to confusion about how incidents should be handled (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

According to a 2010 assessment of state bullying laws conducted by the Department of Education, of the 17 states that list a variety of protected characteristics in their bullying statutes, race appears in all 17 state laws. Race was closely followed by disability (16 states), religion (16 states), sex or gender (16 states), national origin (14 states), sexual orientation (14 states), ancestry/ethnicity (12 states), and gender identity or expression (12 states). A minority of states included obesity/weight (2 states), academic status (2 states), physical appearance (4 states), family status (4 states), socio-economic status (5 states), marital status (5 states), association with groups or individuals (5 states), and age (5 states) (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The protected characteristics most often included in the anti-bullying statutes that list specific characteristics mirror the suspect classifications that are given special judicial scrutiny as well as federal legislative protection. Still, only 17 states, a minority, enumerate specific characteristics such as race in their bullying laws. Some states, such as Alabama, leave it up to local school districts to define protected categories, while others, like Mississippi, do not list protected groups but define bullying as behavior motivated by the actual or perceived characteristics of the victim (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Rather than omit a list of specific characteristics, some states ban the use of specifically protected characteristics in their statutes. Missouri, for example, specifically forbids special consideration of different characteristics of the victims, and

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<sup>53</sup> The school could be in violation of federal civil rights law by ignoring the bullying or not adequately addressing it. There have been a couple of instances where the U.S. Justice Department has investigated schools for either participating in or ignoring harassment (although it was referred to as bullying) that violates civil rights law.

six other states require equal treatment for all students regardless of actual or perceived characteristics (Sacco et al., 2012)<sup>54</sup>.

Similar to anti-bullying legislation, the psychological bullying studies do not provide clear, straightforward guidance on how race figures into the bullying context. To date only a few studies have focused on racial differences in offending and victimization. Of the studies that have examined bullying perpetration and victimization based on race, findings are mixed and there are methodological reasons to interpret the results cautiously. Some studies show Black students are more involved in bullying perpetration than White students (Wang et al., 2009) and more likely to be characterized as bullies (Lovegrove et al., 2012). In terms of victimization, some studies show no racial or ethnic differences in bullying victimization between Black and White youth (Seals & Young, 2003), and lower victimization for Black youth compared to their White and Latino counterparts (Spriggs et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2008).<sup>55</sup> Only 8% of the bullied respondents in one large U.S. study thought that race or religion was the reason for their victimization (Nansel et al., 2001). Other studies show higher victimization for Asian youth (Juvonen et al., 2003) and Black youth<sup>56</sup> (Goldweber et al., 2013; Peguero et al., 2013).

There are methodological reasons to interpret results on both bullying and victimization based on race cautiously, particularly in terms of Black bullies and victims. Most studies in bullying research use self-report methods. Teachers and peers tend to label older African American males as more aggressive than other racial or ethnic groups (Noguera, 2003). The finding that Black students are more involved in bullying perpetration may be more reflective of racial stereotyping or racism rather than of reality. Furthermore, African American respondents

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<sup>54</sup> Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Utah are the six other states (Sacco, et al., 2012).

<sup>55</sup> Less victimization was measured in terms of verbal or relational types of bullying.

<sup>56</sup> Bullying was more frequent among Blacks who were high achievers.

are less likely to identify themselves as victims of bullying when a definitional model is used in the survey as opposed to a behavior based measure (Sawyer et al., 2008), which could account for the underrepresentation of African American victims in some studies.

In both media and political discourses, discussions of race take similar, often consistent forms. In terms of offending and victimization, both the psychological literature on bullying and crime media studies present the non-White offender as more often a perpetrator and less often as a victim (Campbell et al., 2012; Mann & Zatz, 2006; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Hall et al., 1978; Morrison, 2006; Wang et al., 2009; Lovegrove et al., 2012; Spriggs et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2008). The political discourse is slightly more nuanced, but research shows claims of racism and racial victimization can be met with hostility and counter arguments that the (often White) accused is the real victim of racial targeting (Haney-Lopez, 2013; Cole, 2007). Finally, while some state laws on bullying include race as a protected characteristic, only a minority of states include protected characteristics such as race, and the laws often confuse important legally distinct terms that delineate general bullying from racially based bullying that violates civil rights statutes (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). These characteristics of racial discourses in law, politics, bullying research, and crime media combine to show how non-White victimization is often difficult to claim, while non-White perpetration tends to gain more traction. While the non-white category includes multiple races, this theme is particularly salient with Black and Latino victims and perpetrators. The following analysis will show similar patterns that emphasize offending and minimize victimization for non-Whites in the racial bullying discourse, even when the data sets contain only a couple of non-White offenders, and racial bullying directed at people of color is, at times, egregious. Furthermore, when non-Whites

respond to racial victimization, as in the SJSU bullying case, the bullying discourse reveals how the victims of racial discrimination are subtly turned into the perpetrators.

## **Results**

Unlike the analysis of the Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi data sets, which produced a number of obvious and prominent themes on the link between bullying and suicide, sexuality, and gender, information about race appeared less frequently and was more subtle. For example, the theme of suicide occurring as a result of bullying appeared in 23% of the Phoebe Prince articles and over 30% of the Tyler Clementi articles. This is an easily identifiable and quantifiable theme. Evidence for the existence and development of themes dealing with race and bullying in the Phoebe Prince, and Tyler Clementi sets were less conspicuous. Even in the racial bullying data set the themes were less obvious, requiring a careful, in-depth reading of each source. All of the themes discussed in this chapter appeared in all three data sets. Although the evidence for particular themes is not as repetitive and numerous as the evidence for themes in the victim chapter, when three independent data sets corroborate the same or similar themes (even though they may appear in only a handful of articles) their presence in the data is hard to ignore and worthy of closer examination. This kind of close textual reading that focuses more on nuance than numbers is the essence of qualitative content analysis generally (Krippendorff, 2004), and Altheide's (1987) ethnographic content analysis specifically. I paid careful attention to how racial bullying incidents are framed, the solutions offered to address them, and how much or how little the criminal justice system was discussed as a solution to these kinds of incidents. I also noted impressions I came away with after reading each of the article sets. This information may be more valuable than the coded information because it is difficult to see patterns through

the coding with so few articles in each set. My recorded impressions of each of the sets, like a series of interviews, will shed light on the overall tone of each of the article sets.

Unlike my previous work that analyzed how Prince and Clementi were represented as bullied victims, this study takes a broader approach and looks at the ways in which race comes up in discussions of bullied victims and perpetrators, and the bullying issue more generally. The Prince and Clementi victim chapter focused exclusively on representations of those two victims, but in the ethnographic content analysis that follows I do not focus exclusively on the racial victim or the racial bully. Instead, I analyze how race is presented in the bullying discourse and include instances of racial bullying and racial victimization.

### *Prince and Clementi Results*

In the last chapter I analyzed the Prince and Clementi articles with the intention of addressing how the bullying victim is constructed, paying particular attention to the factors from the Prince and Clementi stories that were highlighted in order to establish Prince and Clementi as “true”, “deserving”, or “ideal” victims. The Prince and Clementi sets were divided into two large groups: articles that primarily cover the Prince or Clementi stories and resulting legal cases, and articles that cover bullying more generally and use the Prince and Clementi cases as starting points for a larger discussion about bullying. The most prominent themes on victim construction from the two data sets are the focus of sexual activity of the victim, gendered descriptions of the victim, the dangers of bullying, a distinction between female and male bullying, and the high approval of the criminal law to deal with Prince’s bullies but not necessarily Clementi’s. Both Prince and Clementi were constructed as deserving and

sympathetic victims in the face of bullying that targeted their sexuality, sexual behavior, and gender.

There is very little discussion of race in the Prince and Clementi articles. Of the seven Prince articles (3%) that mention race, none specifically focus on race as a cause of bullying. Two articles begin by mentioning a school in Philadelphia investigated by the justice department for ignoring complaints of racial bullying but go on to discuss other issues related to bullying. Another article mentions a Facebook post containing an ethnic slur and another mentions the possibility of race being a reason why someone could be bullied. The final 3 articles do not feature race as the central issue of the article but mention the possibility of legal protection at the federal level if racial bullying were to occur.

Like the Prince data set, only seven articles discuss race in the Clementi data set. One article discusses the likelihood of certain groups being bullied based on race and another briefly mentions the writer's children as both bullies and victims (her daughter was teased because she is Asian and her son because he wore a Spiderman sweatshirt), but the article was primarily about bullying by politicians. A separate article asks whether race played a role in the focus on Dharun Ravi because the author of this article asserts, incorrectly<sup>57</sup>, that in other bullying cases the perpetrators are not as scrutinized as Indian born Ravi. The other four articles in the set only recite a state bullying law or list race as one of a number of factors to protect in potential bullying policies at the school district level.

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<sup>57</sup> My findings in the previous chapter show that media coverage was not sympathetic, and many articles judged the girls and boys who were accused of bullying Phoebe Prince very harshly. Similarly, some of Prince's accused bullies faced hate crime charges that exposed them to lengthy prison terms like Dharun Ravi.

### *Racial Bullying Set Results*

To perform a more extensive analysis on the racial bullying discourse, I created an additional data set comprised of Lexis-Nexis articles drawn from a search of the term “racial bullying”. The racial bullying set was divided into SJSU articles and general racial bullying articles (non-SJSU stories). In the 29 non-SJSU articles there were six SJSU articles, and 13 articles on individual racial bullying cases. There were three articles about Black on White racial bullying which prompted the mother of the victims to drive her car into the school in protest, an act for which she was subsequently arrested and her children placed in foster care. Four articles described a White on Black racial bullying incident at a high school football game. Finally, there were six individual articles about racial bullying in school covered in some depth. They include an article reporting Black and Native American victimization by bullies comprised of students, teachers, and administrators, two articles about a Black middle school girl victimized by bullies who targeted her because of her race, an article that mentioned an incident where anti-Semitic remarks were made, an article on a bi-racial bullying victim (the specific racial makeup of the victim was not reported), and an article that presented an in-depth look at a Native American victim of bullying. None of the six individual stories mention the race of the bullies. These six stories were given special attention in addressing how racial bullying is discussed and presented in the non-SJSU articles and will be examined in the following section.

### **Discussion**

Racial bullying is bullying that includes racial epithets or slurs, or general bullying behavior that is directed at a particular victim because of their race. When I talk about race in the bullying context I am also referring to the ways in which race appears or disappears from the



larger bullying discourse. Of particular importance are instances where race appears to have nothing to do with the issue at hand, i.e. explaining Prince's bullying and subsequent suicide as a product of gangster culture (read: non-white culture); or where race could be a relevant discussion but is left out, i.e. when the vast majority of articles are silent on a victim's racial minority status. Each victim and bully have multiple identifiers that can be used to frame why the bullying occurred. For example, the dominant frames in the Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi cases were sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender. As my analysis will show, race is rarely used as a frame in bullying cases, and bullying cases that are specifically framed by race do not receive much media attention and contain additional descriptive elements that suggest reactions and responses to racial bullying incidents are victimizing others.

Evidence from the three data sets supports the following claims: less attention is paid to racial bullying even when race could have been a relevant frame for the story; when racial bullying is discussed the reaction is more focused on the emotional response to the case and on changing culture as a response as opposed to using the criminal justice system; victims of racial bullying are given less direct attention and are expected to take responsibility by moving on and not focusing on the bullying incident; and finally racial minorities are assigned blame or implicated in responsibility for the bullying problem. The next section analyzes the first claim, that racial bullying receives little attention in the articles or is obscured by the articles, by presenting the following evidence: the dearth of articles in all three data sets; not discussing race when it was relevant or could have been a relevant discussion; and grouping race with other identifiers that have not historically been associated with both legally and socially sanctioned forms of discrimination.

*Less attention to race in the bullying discourse*

Bullying based on race does not appear to be a salient dimension of the bullying problem, or it is not being framed as a prominent concern in U.S. news sources. Extensive searches yielded few results on racial bullying in the Tyler Clementi and Phoebe Prince data sets, even among the articles that were not focused on the two victims and contained a more general discussion of the bullying issue. The articles in the Prince and Clementi data sets pay little attention to race, and none of the 14 articles that mention race in those sets discuss racial bullying cases in depth. Most of those articles list race as one of many characteristics to protect in bullying legislation. Even when racial bullying was searched for specifically, the results were underwhelming. There were approximately 350 articles total in the racial bullying search, and only 35 useable articles (non-duplicate, U.S. articles with at least 200 words). Contrast this with a Lexis-Nexis search of “gay bullying” that yielded approximately 850 articles, most of which were non-duplicate articles and from U.S. print media.<sup>58</sup>

One might expect race to come up infrequently in the Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi cases because they were generally described as bullying based on gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation, but these cases could have included a racial component. While it was not widely reported, there was a small racial component to the facts in the Tyler Clementi case that could have justified a different frame in the case. In the lead up to moving into the same dorm room, both Dharun Ravi and Tyler Clementi performed brief online investigations of one another. Ravi discovered that his roommate was probably gay, poorer than Ravi, and used an “uncool” email

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<sup>58</sup> I did not collect a sample from this search, so I do not know precisely how many would have been usable articles, but the vast majority were non-duplicate, over 200 word articles from U.S. media sources. Given this observation, the “gay bullying” set would have yielded a higher sampling percentage than the 10% found in the racial bullying set.

provider. Clementi discovered Ravi's race and commented to a friend via text message that he "got an azn!" and that Ravi's parents "defs own a Dunkin' Donuts" (Peysner, 2012, March 1).

Clementi's text could justify framing the roommates' interaction as an insensitive, uninformed, and clumsy exchange of discriminatory stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class. This frame casts both Clementi and Ravi as products of a heteronormative and racialized culture, placing the focus more on culture and less on the individual actions of these two young men. In this way, larger systems of discrimination are implicated and condemned, rather than the immature actions of two college freshmen. Many of the Clementi articles implicated a larger culture of homophobia in lieu of unmitigated vitriol for Ravi, but Clementi's use of racial stereotypes was only reported on in three articles, eliminating the possibility of a larger dialogue about insensitive, but perhaps not malicious exchanges of racial and sexual stereotypes.<sup>59</sup> It also eliminates a dialogue about the presence of race-based offenses in the bullying discourse.

The racial component in the Prince case is more subtle. 12% of the articles describe Prince as Irish, which could serve to frame her as a vulnerable outsider (a non-American new girl), making her a more sympathetic victim. Alternatively, nationality could be code for 'more than likely white', making the frequent nationality references a covert racial identification which avoids the appearance of blatant racial references. Being identified as White places Prince on a higher rung in the "hierarchy of victims" (Miller et al., 2006) and also helps her to become an

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<sup>59</sup> The difference, and perhaps the resistance to framing the case as an exchange of stereotypes is that Ravi did not know about the texts and thus suffered no harm, while Clementi read Ravi's tweets and discovered that his roommate spied on him and invited others to watch a future encounter. Given the time frame between Ravi's spying and Clementi's suicide, there is a temptation to ascribe fault for the suicide to Ravi, which many news articles do. Clementi's suicide makes it difficult to frame the story as an equal exchange of stereotypes because of the difference in outcome for both Clementi and Ravi. But this assumes that the webcam spying precipitated the suicide, which is not fully supported by the facts in the case or the research on suicide. The literature on suicide shows that suicide cannot be predicted by one single factor or event (Paris, 2006), and it often results from a conflation of risk factors (Gould, Munfakh, Lubell, Kleinman, & Parker, 2002).

“ideal victim”<sup>60</sup> with which many readers can sympathize. Consistent with Haney-Lopez’s (2013) explanation of the new way of discussing race, the nationality reference avoids a direct reference to race, keeping the possibility of victimization based on minority racial status technically out of the bullying discourse.

Within the Prince data set there were a few references to another Massachusetts bullying victim who had killed himself less than a year before Prince. His name was Carl Walker-Hoover and his story was not reported on nearly as much as Prince’s or Clementi’s. In assessing why Carl Walker-Hoover did not receive as much attention as Phoebe Prince, one writer points to the intersection of race and gender (specifically representations of desirable/attractive femininity and masculinity) by highlighting the difference between the pretty, white, female Prince and the gangly, lonely, African American Walker-Hoover (Bergman, 2010, June 7). This was the only article that reported on Walker-Hoover’s race. Upon further investigation into the Walker-Hoover case there was no evidence to suggest it was a case of racial bullying. It was instead framed as bullying based on sexual orientation, although Walker-Hoover’s mother stated that her son did not identify as gay.<sup>61</sup>

Reporting on the characteristics of the victim allows for the question to be asked of which characteristics were targeted by the accused bullies. Given the willingness to offer sexuality and gender as justifications for the bullying in the Prince and Clementi cases, the fact that race was missing from the discussion of Carl Walker-Hoover’s bullying is notable. Furthermore, reporting in a way that allows readers to reasonably assume that one victim is White, while leaving out the race of another victim who was Black poses questions about racial highlighting

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<sup>60</sup> Christie’s (1989) notion of an ideal victim is heavily influenced by gender, but other research shows inclusions and exclusions from this highly symbolic category are contingent on conceptions of race, class, sex, and sexuality (Christie 1989; Cavender, Bond-Maupin, and Jurik 1999; Madriz 1997).

<sup>61</sup> I did not include Carl Walker-Hoover as a separate case study because his Lexis-Nexis search yielded 30 articles total, many of which were less than 200 words and only a handful of articles that included details about his case.

and deemphasizing in the bullying context. Can this difference be explained by something other than the races of Prince and Walker-Hoover, or does it indicate a more pervasive deemphasizing of race in the bullying context? Research on crime victims suggests that a more heavily reported female white victim and a less reported male black victim is not surprising given the racialized nature of reporting in crime media (Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Miller et al., 2006; Gruenewald, Pizzaro, & Chermak, 2009), so we might expect this to occur in the bullying context as well. Providing additional support that there is less emphasis on or attention paid to race in the bullying discourse, we now turn to evidence suggesting that race tends to be more overtly minimized or obscured in the bullying discourse.

A closer reading of the Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi articles, along with other articles on racial bullying, reveals that race is often listed with other non-suspect classifications in discussions of why bullying occurs. For example, articles cited to bullying based on “race, intelligence, height” (Fanto, 2010, February 28), “faith, clothing, race, weight” (Spaulding, 2010, September 30), or claimed that there is more bullying based on weight than race or sexual orientation (Charleston Gazette Editorial, 2010, November 21). A suspect classification is an enumerated characteristic that is given special legal protection based on a history of discrimination or bias.<sup>62</sup> For example, when laws make distinctions based on characteristics like race, national origin, and religion there must be compelling state interest in doing so, otherwise the law runs afoul of the equal protection clause. These links between suspect and non-suspect classifications are problematic because they suggest that bullying based on race is similar to or can be equated with bullying based on clothing, weight, height, or intelligence. This link ignores

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<sup>62</sup> Although it has a longer legal history, suspect classifications were first mentioned by the Supreme Court in *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944). In that case the court upheld the constitutionality of internment Japanese Americans living on the west coast during World War II, but stated that laws which deprive the civil rights of a single group should be judicially reviewed under the most rigid scrutiny.

racism's violent history and its modern pervasiveness. Certainly negative comments about clothing, weight, height, or intelligence can be hurtful, but they do not reference a history of oppression, violence, inequality, or the struggle to end both privately held and institutionally supported racisms. Not all characteristics are protected equally by the equal protection clause of the U.S. constitution or other bias mitigating statutes such as civil rights legislation and hate crime laws because lawmakers and justices recognize that some characteristics are more likely than others to make someone a target of violence, discrimination, or unequal treatment. Hate crime laws account for this difference in potential for harm by recognizing that crimes motivated by race (or another protected status) are not only harmful to the victim, but also help maintain systems of discrimination against various groups (Jenness & Broad, 1994).

Why should it matter that the bullying discourse mixes groups who have experienced pervasive violence and discrimination with those who have not? After all, a similar phenomenon is present in civil rights legislation and hate crime laws. Hate crime laws protect those belonging to suspect classifications, groups of people who have historically faced discrimination and persecution, as well as those who have not faced discrimination in the past. If a victim is chosen based on race, whether it is a historically oppressed race or not, they will receive the same protections from hate crime statutes and civil rights laws as someone whose racial group has not been discriminated against. This puts all race based discrimination victims on equal footing (Jenness, 2003). Both the history of equally protecting all within the enumerated categories of civil rights laws, despite differences within the categories of discrimination vulnerability, and hate crime laws that do the same, are evidence that the bullying issue, writ large, will follow American jurisprudential inertia and protect equally. Furthermore, given the close legal connection between hate crime laws and bullying one might expect to see an extension of color

blind treatment in hate crime and civil rights legislation to “characteristic blind” treatment in bullying discourses. After all, bullying laws often conflate bullying with harassment, confusing the difference between inappropriate treatment based on protected characteristics with inappropriate treatment that does not target a specific type of victim. It appears that bullying laws will therefore go beyond a color-blind model to a characteristic-blind model of victim protection.

The problem with a characteristic-blind protection model, which includes color-blindness, is two-fold. The first problem concerns the more limited color-blind element of the characteristic-blind protection model. The color-blind model cannot consider differences between the historically subordinated racial minority and the historically dominant racial majority. It ignores the fact that some types of bullying have deep roots, and a long, violent history of discrimination. Simply stated, taunts based on weight, intelligence, and height do not communicate the same message or carry the same impact as taunts based on race or other historically oppressed group characteristics. To suggest that racial bullying can be included in the same category as characteristics that lack a history of violence and oppression minimizes the impact, prevalence, and institutional support that upholds racism. The second problem is that the characteristic-blind model, while seemingly fair, is not actually what seems to be occurring according to analysis of the bullying discourse. Evidence from the Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi data sets indicate that the bullying discourse privileges representations of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender. Recalling information from the PsycInfo database between 2000-2013, published articles on bullying and sexual orientation occurred with seven times more frequency than articles on race and bullying.

This section attempts to use the absence of information on race and examples of how sexuality and gender are frequently utilized in the bullying discourses as evidence that bullying discourses tends to privilege representations of bullying based on sexual orientation and gender and minimize race. Despite the lack of traction race has in the bullying discourse, it does at times appear in specific, identifiable ways. When race does appear in the articles it tends to be minimized in the victim context or used to turn victims into perpetrators. The following sections discuss those themes in detail.

*Focus on emotions and culture, criticism of victim responses*

The following section examines responses to racial bullying cases and compares and contrasts racial bullying responses to responses in the Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi cases. In every bullying case there are discussions of how those connected to the case and others are affected by the incident (emotional responses), as well as discussions of how to effectively deal with bullying (practical responses). The articles that feature racial bullying depart from the articles on Tyler Clementi and Phoebe Prince in terms of both emotional and practical responses. First, the SJSU articles contain a focus on localized, emotional responses of the students to the racial bullying incident rather than more generalized emotional responses from the larger community. Additionally, the SJSU articles and other racial bullying articles contain subtle criticism for how victims of racial bullying respond to their victimization, including messages that students and others affected by racial bullying should temper their reactions to these incidents, or even reject their victim status. The SJSU and other racial bullying articles also suggest changing culture, although not a specific culture of racism, in response to racial bullying more often than they suggest utilizing the criminal justice system.



### *Emotional Focus*

While the focus on emotional responses to bullying incidents can be interpreted as fairly routine because reports of shock and sadness from communities where tragedy occurs are quite common in the initial stages of reporting, the focus on the emotional response of the students at SJSU shows a marked difference between the racial bullying data set and the Prince and Clementi sets. The SJSU articles focus considerable attention on how the bullying incident emotionally affects students on campus. Four of the six SJSU articles use highly descriptive emotional language when describing the reactions of students to news of the racial bullying incident. This includes descriptions of students feeling depressed or “having a muted sense of being”, while the incident itself was described multiple times as shocking, heartbreaking, and one that prompted soul searching (Early & Murphy, 2013, March 1). One article asked how a university which contains a statue depicting the 1968 Olympic Black Power salute by two SJSU alums could also leave so many students feeling “isolated and lost inside” (Early & Murphy, 2013, March 1). In the Prince and Clementi cases there was more focus on the community’s shock, or a collective cultural shock that extended far beyond the Rutgers’ campus or South Hadley High School. The reactions to Tyler Clementi and Phoebe Prince were more universal rather than localized, whereas the response to the SJSU incident is presented as though it is confined to the university students.

Accompanying this localized focus on the SJSU student’s emotional response to the incident is their expression of these emotions in the form of protest. Coverage of the student protests in response to the SJSU incident tends to subtly suggest that the emotional response to the event may be out of control. Half of the SJSU articles devoted time to the protests in response to the bullying incident, with all three reporting the chant, “no justice, no peace”,

suggesting that outrage over the incident could translate into prolonged campus disruptions or additional escalations. One article described the subsequent protests over the incident as “anger boiling over” (Murphy, Kaplan, & Early, 2013, November 21). A similar example occurred in an article on the task force set up to address the racial bullying at SJSU. The article reported that the task force advised members to be respectful and advised the public that they would not be permitted to vent during the meeting. It went on to describe the meeting as a “restless recitation of matters the panel's 18 members want to discuss” giving the impression that the panel is disorganized, its members at times uncivil, and the public attendees as potentially or actually unruly (Early, 2014, February 7).

The concern over emotions boiling over extends to the general bullying articles as well. In an article from the general racial bullying set where a middle school girl was racially bullied, the school administration was quoted as saying, “ The biggest mistake we could make is going around hating the hater. It serves no purpose, especially if you understand all of us are ignorant on some issues...It's about being patient until everybody gets on board” (Smith Dedam, 2010, August 6). It is unclear whether the quote was aimed at changing children’s ignorance and being patient while they get on board, or whether this comment was directed at the adults in the administration.

In contrast, there was not a concern that the responses of those angered or affected by Prince’s and Clementi’s bullying would get out of hand, even when those responses did get out of hand. One of the Prince articles reported that anonymous online posters advocated for gang raping and murdering the girls accused of bullying Prince (Clark-Flory, 2010, April 8). A book written about the Prince case reported that one of the accused bullies was verbally accosted by her neighbor when she left the house and had a brick thrown through her window (Bazelon,

2013). Other than these reports, there were very few concerns over curbing emotional responses to the Prince and Clementi incidents, even those these reports would support a public call for resisting emotionally laden, potentially violent responses.

Focusing on the emotional response to the SJSU bullying incident can be explained as recognizing the uniquely disturbing impact racism has, making the student's emotional responses a newsworthy point to highlight. Similarly, the highly descriptive emotional language in the articles may go along with a sense of shock that a racial bullying incident occurred on the SJSU campus. Several articles suggest as much given SJSU's civil rights history as reflected in the Olympic Black Power statue on campus. In fact, 5 of the 6 SJSU articles mention the statue, suggesting that SJSU is a university where racial bullying might be especially unexpected. Alternatively, rather than evaluating this evidence as reflecting a comparatively high level of attention on student emotions in the SJSU articles, an equally valid interpretation is that there is an almost complete lack of attention to the emotional responses of students in the Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clementi cases. After all, it is not hard to imagine young gay men on the Rutgers' campus experiencing similar feelings of disappointment and alienation after Clementi's suicide, yet this was not reported in the Clementi data set articles. Finally, the difference in focus on emotion between the Prince and Clementi articles and the SJSU articles could come down to differences in population size. The Prince and Clementi sets contain hundreds of articles, with multiple opinion pieces and letters to the editor. The high number of articles in these sets allows for the collective shock of the community to emerge through the various articles. While this point may explain the abundance of collective community response in the Prince and Clementi articles and the relative lack of such a response in the racial bullying articles, it cannot account

for the presence of the SJSU student's emotional response and lack of the same localized type of information from students at Rutgers or South Hadley.

The way that emotion is focused on in SJSU articles has the potential to limit the framing of the incident to the emotions of the students, occluding the emotional response of the larger community. The SJSU students protesting the racial bullying incident are not depicted as individuals or a group who can represent a universal victim that could gain national concern or attention. Instead, the bullying is framed as an event that affected a group of students at SJSU, rather than one that most students, or most parents of students should concern themselves with. This difference, along with others between the data sets, allows the reader to interpret the victims and incidents differently based on how the stories are framed. The SJSU bullying incident could have been framed, and arguably should have been framed, as a problem that extends well beyond the SJSU campus to the Cal State system, or to universities across the country. But in lieu of discussing the broader issue of racism on college campuses, or framing the story in a way that indicates a collective injury occurred as a result of the racial bullying, the response is localized and limited.

Perhaps more troubling is the suggestion in the racial bullying data set that individual and group responses to the bullying could be problematic or out of control. This tends to paint the victims of racial bullying, or those concerned about racial bullying, as having the potential to bully others. The concern over responses was almost totally absent in the Prince and Clementi sets, even though the bullies in the Prince case were being bullied in person and in cyberspace. Representations such as these tend to support familiar, racist tropes where people of color cannot control their own passionate responses and are thus potential perpetrators of unruly reactions to victimizations. Recalling Haney-Lopez's analysis of political discourse about race, where

accusations of racism are easily flipped onto the critic, the individual who claims to be victimized by racist bullying can easily be reframed as the bully rather than the victim. In the bullying context this occurs by describing responses to racial bullying as highly emotional, and then claiming that these responses are potentially or actually out of control.

### *Appropriate responses to victimization*

In addition to suggesting patience and pointing out unruly responses to racial bullying at SJSU, the articles also criticize some victims' responses to racial bullying and suggest more appropriate reactions to victimization. While four of the six SJSU articles criticize the response to the incident by the university, the same number of articles allude to or directly criticize the way the victim handled the incident. Two articles reported that the SJSU victim did not speak up or go to campus police to stop the abuse and two additional articles reported that it was the parents who brought the issue to the university's attention.<sup>63</sup> When this information is read together with other descriptions of victims in the aftermath of racial bullying, a picture emerges of how racial bullying victims are expected to react.

In the non-SJSU articles of the racial bullying set, there were examples of young people dealing with racial bullying that highlighted how they were attempting to deal with the issue themselves, and move past it. One article covered a community event that initiated a dialogue about racial bullying and race relations. The article focused on the activism of students and the work they are doing to help other students who experience racial bullying (Buschena, 2013, May 16). The article was squarely focused on the work of students, but not teachers or administrators. Another article focused on a young Native American women and her goal to "leave a legacy of

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<sup>63</sup> These facts can be read as emphasizing the importance of bystanders because a victim may be too traumatized to speak up, that the victim shares in some of the responsibility for not speaking up, or that it took outside adults, not university RAs or other personnel, to notice that very blatant harassment was occurring.

cultural acceptance at her school” (Shire, 2001, June 24). The article detailed the prejudice she had to overcome and celebrated her focus on looking beyond racial discrimination. As the article reports, “Smoke's job now is to focus on the future. She’s been through years of anger over the abuse her ancestors suffered. Now she's looking ahead, and she wants to teach people about the Indians of today. ‘I don't want to teach about the past,’ she said. ‘I want to teach about now. We are here now’” (Shire, 2001, June 24). The article focused entirely on the young woman and praised her repeatedly for looking beyond historical racism directed at her ancestors and the racism directed at her in school. Framing Smoke’s response to racism begs the question of why one should look beyond racism “of the past” if it is still ongoing and experienced by individuals today. Notably, the article did not mention the school’s response to the racial incident. Focusing on student’s responses rather than administrative responses helps frame the issue as one that requires attention or action from students and victims rather than administration or other formal enforcement agencies.

As part of properly responding to victimization, the SJSU articles point to changing culture as the primary way to deal with racial bullying, albeit in general, non-specific ways. One SJSU article reported an undergraduate student advising other students to “take most of the responsibility for the campus climate” along with elder faculty advice to “sacrifice, protest, and work for the future of the campus community” (Early & Murphy, 2014, March 1). This article also discusses the history of civil rights activism on the SJSU campus and calls on students to work for the future of the campus community. This information does not, by itself, blame the victim or campus community for his and their victimization, but it highlights expectations for how the students should respond to racism in their community. This theme of changing culture continued when individual or collective victims of racial bullying are described in the articles.

Notably, while calls to change culture occurred frequently in reference to racial bullying, most instances of racial bullying did not contain information about criminal justice responses to the bullying. Even though the SJSU articles reported on the freshmen bullies being charged with a hate crime, the articles lacked extensive reporting on the criminal elements of the case. While three of the six articles discussed the criminal element of the case, these discussions were brief and not the focus of the article. One of the SJSU articles, in its brief discussion of the criminal element of the case, quoted a program coordinator for a local anti-hate group who suggested that the bullies may benefit from court ordered prejudice reduction classes, reflecting a preference for changing attitudes rather than criminal punishment (Murphy, Kaplan & Early, 2013, November 22). Furthermore, in the general racial bullying articles, it was rare to see incidents of racial bullying handled by law enforcement. One article reported that there was not enough evidence to make an arrest in a case of racial bullying at a middle school, but there were attempts to educate and change attitudes about biases at the administrative level.

The admonishment to avoid indulgence in victimhood and to take responsibility for a racist (or sexist or homophobic) culture were not present in the Clementi and Prince data sets and seems to only exist in the racial bullying context.<sup>64</sup> Read together, articles that place expectations on the victim's reactions to racial bullying and those that praise victims for looking past racism, like Smoke, send a message about how future racial bullying victims should respond to victimization. Victims of racial bullying should quickly report the events, not dwell on them, and instead use their efforts to change the racist culture than surrounds them in an organized, calm, and effective manner that avoids overt displays of emotion during protests or committee meetings.

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<sup>64</sup> One would not expect it to appear in discussions of Prince or Clementi because neither could indulge in victimhood in death.

While it is not inherently problematic to suggest changing culture in response to racial bullying, there are a few problems with this advice. First, when articles suggest changing culture in response to racial bullying they do not mention a culture of racism, just culture generally. Changing culture, even changing racist culture, is so vague that it fails to qualify as meaningful advice. Second, the suggestion to change culture is often directed at the victims of racial bullying or the immediate community and not to a larger community of people who would be essential to accomplish such a task, if it were possible at all. Third, the advice to change culture takes the place of a strong criminal justice response. There is a good argument that the criminal justice system should not be used in every or even in most cases of bullying, but it seems odd that the most consistent dismissal of a criminal justice response should emerge when the bullying is racial in nature.<sup>65</sup> At best, the advice to change culture evidences the absence of a true, effective, and purposeful response to racial bullying. Additionally, this advice tends to minimize racial victimization, revealing how race is central to understanding discourses on victimization and perpetration in the bullying context.

There is other evidence to suggest that the victim category is often out of reach for racial victims in the bullying discourse. Recalling Cole's (2007) explanation of true victims and victimists, the true victim accepts his victim status reluctantly or rejects it and does not participate in victim politics or frame his victimization as a collective group injury; the victimist is weak, dependent, manipulative, aggressive, potentially dangerous, and may use their victim status to obtain tangible or intangible benefits. The characterization of American society as thoroughly anti-victimist contextualizes the praise for Smoke as part of a larger discourse that rejects victims who sees themselves as victims, effectively nullifying the victim category for all

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<sup>65</sup> There was opposition to using the criminal justice system in the general bullying articles in the Prince and Clementi data sets, 4 articles (1.9% of the entire set) and 3 articles (2% of the entire set) respectively.



but the most pure, innocent, and appropriately helpless, but not passive, victims. Placing these expectations on the victim for how they should respond to racial bullying is another way to minimize racial bullying victimization because the expectations involve minimizing or denying the victimization altogether. What Cole's explanation does not directly address, and what the racial bullying discourse suggests, is that race is central to winning categorization as a true victim versus the maligned victimist.<sup>66</sup> Because the true victim category is unavailable to those who claim victimization based on their group status, this would seem to effectively deny true victim status to anyone claiming racial victimization.

There seem to be different rules and expectations for responding to racial bullying in the bullying discourse. When race is involved victimization is criticized, minimized, or saddled with additional expectations of proper responses, whether they are rejecting the victim status altogether, or taking on the Herculean task of calmly, quietly, and unemotionally working to change culture.<sup>67</sup> Most striking is the association between racial bullying victimization and individual, but not collective, responsibility. This includes the responsibility of the victim to speak up, the responsibility of the vulnerable community affected to quietly and calmly change culture-although not specifically a culture of racism-themselves, or the responsibility of the victim to not claim victim status at all. It is not, however, the responsibility of the criminal justice system or individuals in the larger society. While fingers were pointed at technology, parents, homophobia, and other cultural maladies in the aftermath of the Clementi and Prince

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<sup>66</sup> In the larger bullying discourse there is further evidence that points to the racial minority as the imagined perpetrator or potential bully, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

<sup>67</sup> One might point to the article on Smoke as evidence that race does not preclude one from symbolic victim status. The article, after all, focuses on a specific victim of racial bullying, although it also prominently features her rejection of the victim status. The article also contains descriptions of Smoke that align with traditional feminine attributes, making her eligible for victim status along gendered lines. At the beginning of the article Smoke is described as "an outgoing girl with long, thick hair and penetrating brown eyes" (Shire, 2001, June 24). She is described as a beautiful, appropriately feminine, racial minority who rejects her victim status. Arguably, it is the intersection of race, gender, and her response to victimization that makes Smoke eligible for symbolic or ideal victim status.

cases, there was very little speculation about what could have led to the SJSU bullying and much more discussion about appropriate ways for the victims, not the larger community, to take responsibility and respond.<sup>68</sup> When these responsibilities are examined more closely they reveal how victimization in the racial bullying discourse is not only minimized or negated, but also how responses to victimization turn the victims into perpetrators.

*Implicating minority groups as the partial cause of the bullying problem*

When racial bullying was specifically searched for, the proportion of articles that framed racial minorities as perpetrators rather than victims of racial bullying was by no means a prominent theme, but was enough to call into question the way the issues is being framed. When racial bullying was not searched for and there were no major racial elements of the Clementi and Prince cases that were highlighted by the articles, racial minorities were again framed as potential perpetrators of bullying, or as partially responsible for the culture of bullying that appears to exist when they respond to actual or possible incidents of racial bullying.

Although there was no racial component highlighted in the articles on Phoebe Prince, a published letter to the editor of The Berkshire Eagle in Pittsfield, Massachusetts sounded off on the case and attributed the current culture of bullying to gangster culture. The members of this culture are not racially identified, but are described as youth who wear saggy pants, their hats backwards, and who smoke marijuana. As the writer notes, “although those who follow this culture are not known to be specifically at fault for the death of Phoebe Prince in South Hadley,

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<sup>68</sup> Although the Clementi articles discuss a culture of homophobia as a culprit in bullying, it does so against the backdrop of the criminal case against Ravi, allowing the criminal response in that data set to be quite prominent. Alternatively, the Prince articles only include minimal discussion of how culture contributes to bullying, but frequently suggests the criminal justice system as an effective solution to bullying.

whatever these cultures are that set a standard for "coolness," most notably the gangster culture, they are a threat to the peace and civility of our schools" (Bertram, 2010, April 5).

A second article in the Phoebe Prince data set describes a cyberbullying scenario where a dummy profile could be created online to incite violence from gang members. In New Jersey a student set up dummy profile of another student and posted explicit photo, online tirades, and challenges to other students that resulted in a real life attack on the unsuspecting dummy profile victim. The article details a cyberlaw expert's concern that revenge minded youth could create profiles of students they don't like and provoke violence from inner city gang members. Quoting Parry Aftab, a cyberlaw expert, "We're going to have real gangs--the Bloods, the Crips--targeted by the 13-year-old nerds in school who want to hurt a kid they don't like" (Koebler, 2011, June 3).

In the non-SJSU articles from the racial bullying data set there were three articles that discussed a Philadelphia case of Black on White racial bullying that resulted in the mother of the victims criminally retaliating against the school, which led to her children being placed in foster care and suffering sexual abuse at the hands of foster families. Two other articles from this set criticized President Obama for using racial bullying tactics to silence his critics. The writers opined that critics of the president are being racially bullied because of the suggestion that some of the criticism of the President is based on his race.

Both the potential gang cyberbullying and gangster culture articles reflect an imagined racial perpetrator in the bullying discourse, but not one based on an actual case or event. Assisting in the creation of a racist vision of bullies in both of these articles without technically referencing race are code phrases, or what Haney-Lopez (2013) would call a racial dog whistle, for representations that primarily feature people of color. Haney-Lopez's (2013) research is also

helpful in understanding the articles on Obama, where an accusation of race based criticism can easily turn into a counter-offensive charge of racial bullying. Reading this together with articles on the SJSU case that focus on the angry student protests following the incident suggests that the response to racial bullying can be framed as another form of bullying. Rather than acknowledge that race may play a factor in criticism of the President, or that SJSU students are justified in their demand that the administration do more to protect minority students on campus, the SJSU campus community and critics of President Obama (whose criticism of the President may or may not originate from racial animus) are framed as perpetrators of racial bullying.

Moving to actual rather than imagined cases of racial bullying, although a case of White on Black racial bullying was covered by four articles in the non-SJSU section, the proportion of articles where Black students are the perpetrators rather than the victims of racial bullying is rather high given the number of cases of general discrimination or violence directed toward Black Americans because of their racial minority status, as opposed to the White majority. As an illustration, among the single-bias hate crime incidents in 2012, 48.5% of victims were targeted because of their race, and of those 3,467 victims of racial bias, 66.2% were victims of anti-black bias while only 22% were victims of anti-white bias (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012).

Returning to the first section of this chapter, I began by presenting evidence showing that race is minimized in the bullying discourse, and that bullying is framed as a color-blind and characteristic-blind issue. Although race is not as prevalent in the bullying discourse as sexual orientation or gender, when it does appear it tends to support familiar racist tropes found in crime media studies where perpetrators are often racial minorities, and racial minority victims are rarely highlighted. As the research from crime media studies demonstrates, the racial minority is at risk of being imagined as a criminal perpetrator, and this appears in the bullying discourse

through articles that blame racial minorities through coded references and comparatively high overrepresentation as perpetrators of racial bullying. More importantly, racial minorities also become perpetrators in the bullying discourse by improperly handling their own victimization. The evidence in this chapter suggests that race tends to move on a continuum in the bullying discourse from minimization and irrelevancy to imagined or actual perpetration. Specifically, there is less attention paid to racial minority victimization, and even when racial minorities are victimized, there are strict expectations for how victimization should be properly handled. These expectations require victims to take responsibility for a culture of racism and work to change it, but not by being too demanding, overt, disorganized, or emotional. They must also not dwell on their victim status, and preferably should reject it altogether. Violation of these expectations can lead the racial minority victim to be subtly painted as the racial minority perpetrator.

## **Conclusion**

Based on searches for representations and discussions of race in the Tyler Clementi, Phoebe Prince, and racial bullying articles, the data indicates that race occupies a comparatively small space in the bullying discourse. Pointing out that race seems to occupy such a small space assumes that race should play a more prominent role, or that there are reasons to expect race to appear more in this discourse. One might expect race to appear in the data sets because race, like sexual orientation, is a suspect classification protected in hate crime statutes. Hate crimes have been used by prosecutors to bring serious potential consequences to bullies who target their victims based on protected suspect classification. Bullying based on race can be classified as a hate crime just as bullying based on sexual orientation was in the Clementi case, or national

origin was in the Prince case. Additionally, race is listed as one of the protected categories in a number of bullying laws (17 as of 2010) providing evidence that race is imagined as being a potential impetus for bullying, at least by some states. Finally, race could have been used as a frame in the Tyler Clementi case and may have been an unstated element in the Phoebe Prince case masked as reporting on national origin. When race does appear in the bullying discourse, it does so in ways that minimizes minority racial victimization and highlight minority racial perpetration.

The racial discourse in the bullying articles moves from minimizing race in the victimization context, including characterizing bullying as a color-blind and characteristic blind issue, to framing racial minorities as perpetrators. Racial bullying stories, when they are reported, tend to be described in ways that distinguish them from other bullying stories. This includes strict expectations for how victims of racial bullying should emotionally and practically respond to the incident and few discussions of successful criminal justice interventions. Racial minorities, while underrepresented as victims, are overrepresented as perpetrators in the bullying discourse. When race is minimized in the context of potential bullying victimization yet made relevant in the context of perpetration it helps reproduces the idea of the Black perpetrator, a myth that has been well documented and exposed in crime media studies.

As the psychological research on bullying made clear, findings on both bullies and victims may reflect racial attitudes about the general category of victims and perpetrators, skewing the data on who is more likely to bully and be bullied. Similarly, research in crime media shows that racial offenders are often highlighted while racial victims tend to be ignored. If media representations produce and frame understandings of the social world (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2001), representations of race in the articles are particularly important for shaping

understandings and expectations of potential racial victims and perpetrators. The findings in this chapter are concerning not only because race is minimized in media reports on bullying victimization and overemphasized in reports on perpetration, but because these frames, along with the psychological research on race and bullying, can have real effects on how teachers and administrators will interpret and respond to bullying incidents. Expectations of victimization and perpetration informed by the media may result in more discipline for racial minority bullies and less attention for racial minority victims or specific expectations for how these victims should “appropriately” respond to being bullied. Furthermore, with the increase in attention, resources, and programs directed at combating bullying in schools it would benefit students of all races if racial victimization was included as part of the anti-bullying effort. To continue to leave racial bullying on the margins of the bullying issue could result in less public policy and educational attention to racial bullying, compounding the problem of minority racial marginalization that already exists in this discourse.

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## CHAPTER 4: THE BULLY

### Introduction

In chapter 2, I argued that the discourse through which Prince and Clementi were accorded victim status reified rather than challenged repressive notions of sexuality and gender. Specifically, Clementi's and Prince's suicides were framed as monocausal, resulting directly from being filmed in a sexual encounter with another man and being repeatedly called a slut. I argued that linking suicide so closely to these two events reaffirms rather than repudiates the shame associated with deviating from normative sex and gender roles. This chapter takes up where chapter 2 left off and adds additional dimensions of understanding to the Prince and Clementi cases, and to bullying responses more generally, by focusing on the figure of the bully rather than the victim.

Unlike characterizations of the victim, there is much less consensus around what it means to be a bully in the news articles, anti-bullying statutes, and psychological literature. This lack of consensus is evident in legal definitions of bullying, psychological literature on the effects of being a bully, and in psychological research on the gender differences in types of bullying behaviors. There are, however, identifiable themes in discourses on the bully figure. Specifically, there is a heightened condemnation of gender-based bullying (which includes descriptions of "mean girls" and relationally aggressive girls) in the news articles. There is also a discursive ambivalence in the news articles and psychological literature towards whether the bully is a figure that engages in mean, but normative and correctable behavior, or is an unalterably pathological future criminal. I theorize this ambivalent figure as a representative of the normative/pathological distinction, necessary for generating the bullying discourse.

This distinction is loosely borrowed from Hier's (2002, 2008, 2011) characterization of individuals and groups at the center of moral regulation processes and moral panics. I will show that the fluidity of Hier's moral panic/moral regulation framework is ideal for explaining the frequent shifts between characterizing bullying as normative or dangerous. Similarly, Hier's moral regulation/moral panic framework helps illustrate how the normative/pathological tacking, and the lack of consensus on definitions and consequences of bullying behaviors in the psychological and legal literatures contributes to a productive discourse of risk in the general bullying discourse. While Hier's conception of moral panic as a moment of crisis is useful for explaining the normative/pathological dimension of the bullying discourse, however, it does not account for why gender emerges as a salient theme in the bullying discourse, why there seems to be more condemnation for the female Prince bullies and "mean girl" bullies in general than their male bully counterparts, or furthermore, why gender tends to cause the discourse to slip from a moral regulation to a moral panic. I argue that Hier's conceptualization of moral regulation processes and moral panics, while useful in explaining the bullying discourse, should account for gender and other characteristics that carry a discriminatory potential.

Hier's moral regulation/moral panic framework also falls short of offering an explanation for why gender seems to trigger a moral panic in the bullying context. While I do not answer this question completely or definitively, I borrow from feminist criminology and sociology to point to a possible answer. While I offer the masculinization thesis (Adler, 1975) as a partial explanation for the heightened concern over female bullying, but not the purported rise in female bullying itself, it does not explain why this heightened concern occurs in the first place. Much like patriarchy was used to fight patriarchy in representations of the bullied victim in chapter 2, the way the attention to and concern over the female bully manifests itself in the news articles

seem to reify notions of traditional femininity (as meanness and as a source of policing appropriate gender behaviors) and criticize it at the same time. I argue that this is because the “mean girl” category in general has the potential to reveal the brutality of patriarchy that underlies gender policing. The Prince case seems to actually accomplish this as evidenced by the heightened vitriol for the female Prince bullies as compared to Ravi.

### **The Bully in Legal and Psychological Literature**

As of 2011, definitions of bullying varied substantially from state to state in both state laws and school district policies. Some common language defined bullying as behavior sufficient to create a hostile educational environment (21 states), and included relational aggression in the bullying definition (29 states) (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Eight states require that the bullying behavior be repetitive, systematic, or continuous, while five require that the bullying be severe or pervasive (Sacco, Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey, & Doherty, 2012). Sixteen states define bullying as behavior the bully intended to be harmful, while seven states define bullying based on whether a reasonable person would know that his actions would cause harm (Sacco et al., 2012).

Massachusetts’ and Nevada’s anti-bullying laws illustrate the trend of variation in bullying statutes. In Massachusetts, bullying is “the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the

orderly operation of a school.” (Mass. Gen. Laws. Ann. ch. 71, section 370(a)). In the more narrow Nevada statute, bullying is defined as “a willful act or course of conduct on the part of one or more pupils which is not authorized by law and which exposes a pupil repeatedly and over time to one or more negative actions which is highly offensive to a reasonable person and is intended to cause and actually causes the pupil to suffer harm or serious emotional distress” (Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. section 388.122).

While both statutes require repetitive behavior on the part of the bully, the Nevada statute requires a reasonable person to find the behavior highly offensive and requires that the bully intend to cause the other student harm or serious emotional distress. The Massachusetts statute is more vague in its definition, specifically in the sections that define bullying as a material and substantial disruption of the education process or as the creation of a hostile educational environment. Given the breadth of each statute, it would be easier to make a case for bullying under the Massachusetts statute as opposed to the Nevada statute. These two state statutes represent the range of specificity in defining bullying conduct among the states and illustrates a narrow and broad approach to defining bullying behavior.

Definitions of bullying in the psychological literature tend to be broader than legal definitions and there is more consensus among researchers over what constitutes bullying. According to Olweus’ classic and widely used definition, “a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. It is a negative action when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another . . .” (1999, p. 10). While definitions vary somewhat, researchers generally characterize bullying as intentional, repetitive, and reflecting an imbalance of power

(Vaillancourt, McDougall, Hymel, Krygsman, Miller, Stiver, & Davis, 2008). The basic definition of bullying is, unfortunately, where the similarities in the psychological research end.

There seems to be little consensus in the psychological and medical literature on the effects of being a bully as they are frequently described in both negative and more positive terms. For example, bullies are negatively assessed as aggressive (Craig, 1998; Schwartz, 2000; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001)<sup>69</sup>, impulsive, lacking empathy, having a need to dominate others (Olweus, 1991), having low pro-social behavior, low academic competence, low self-control, low self-esteem, low social acceptance (Hanish & Guerra, 2004; Nansel et al., 2001, 2004; Schwartz, 2000), are disliked more by their peers (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Schwartz, 2000)<sup>70</sup>, and measure lower in moral compassion (Gini, Pozzoli, & Hauser, 2011). They also, however, make friends easily (Nansel et al., 2001, 2004), enjoy high social standing among their classmates (Juvonen et al., 2003), have higher levels of moral competence (Gini et al., 2011), and are found to use both coercive and pro-social strategies to gain social dominance in their peer groups (Olthof, Goossens, Vermande, Aleva, & van der Meulen, 2011). They may be disliked by peers, but they are not socially marginalized (Schwartz, 2000; Juvonen et al., 2003).

Along with victims, bullies are reported to experience more problems in school and difficulty getting along with classmates than peers who are uninvolved with bullying (Nansel et al., 2001, 2004; Juvonen et al., 2003), but they are less socially isolated than uninvolved children (Veenstra, et al., 2005). While some studies report that bullies, along with victims, have an increased risk of developing psychosomatic symptoms (Gini et al., 2009), other studies found that bullies exhibit fewer health problems than uninvolved children (Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield,

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<sup>69</sup> See also, Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004; Veenstra, Lindenberg, Oldehinkel, De Winter, Verhulst, & Ormel, 2005

<sup>70</sup> See also Veenstra et al., 2005; Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2003

& Karstadt, 2001), and are psychologically stronger than their classmates (Juvonen et al., 2013). While they are not more worried, anxious, or depressed than uninvolved children (Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000, Wolke et al., 2001)<sup>71</sup>, frequent bullying as an adolescent predicted anti-social personality disorder as an adult (Sourander, Jensen, Rönning, Niemelä, Helenius, Sillanmäki et al., 2007; Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013).

There is more consensus in the literature about a category of children who are both bullies and victims of bullying, or the bully-victim. Bully-victims provoke aggressive actions in others and act aggressively towards others (Griffin & Gross, 2004). Research has shown these adolescents are the most at-risk for the negative effects of both bullying and being bullied. This includes being more aggressive and socially isolated (Veenstra et al., 2005), having a higher risk of developing behavioral, psychiatric, and health problems (Wolke et al., 2000, 2001; Kumpulainen et al., 1998) including panic disorders and agoraphobia (Copeland et al., 2013), depression, anxiety (Swearer, 2001; Juvonen et al., 2003), and anti-social personality disorder (Sourander et al., 2007). Bully-victims are also more socially marginalized by peers and more likely to have conduct problems (Juvonen et al., 2003). However, other research has found no difference in the psychosocial profiles of bully/victims, bullies, or victims, although there were differences between these three groups and children uninvolved with bullying (Leiner, Dwivedi, Villanos, Singh, Blunk, & Peinado, 2014).

Studies measuring the link between bullying and later crime often include bullies, victims, bully-victims and measures that include violence, aggression, and risky behaviors or impulsivity. Studies consistently find a correlation between bullying perpetration and later violent offending, but this association is often mitigated by other childhood and family risk

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<sup>71</sup> See also Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998; Kumpulainen, Räsänen, Henttonen, Almqvist, Kresanov, Linna et al., 1998

factors that lead to adult offending (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2013; Bender & Lösel, 2011; Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013). While a meta-analysis of 15 longitudinal studies on the association between bullying and future aggression and violence found a strong association between bullying perpetration and future violence (Ttofi, Farrington, & Lösel, 2012), a longitudinal study of Finnish boys and men<sup>72</sup> found later criminality only existed when bullying behavior was accompanied by a high level of psychiatric symptoms (Sourander, Jensen, Ronning, Elonheimo, Niemela, Helenius, et al., 2007). This suggests that the link between bullying and later criminal behavior is complex and non-linear.

In addition to the purported psychological effects of being a bully, this chapter also focuses on a specific type of gendered bully in the psychological bullying discourse. The relationally aggressive bully<sup>73</sup> harms others through intentional manipulation and damage (including threat of damage) to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Simmons, 2002). This type of bullying is also referred to as indirect aggression, or social aggression, but an extensive review of the literature found that these terms refer to the same form of aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Relational aggression

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<sup>72</sup> Given the cultural differences between Finland and the United States, this finding should be viewed cautiously.

<sup>73</sup> Relational aggression was popularized and framed in American popular culture as a concerning female adolescent phenomenon in the early 2000s with the help of two popular books designed to educate readers on the manipulation and callousness that had become a part of adolescent female relationships. In the self help parenting guide *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (2002), Rosalind Wiseman paints a picture of “girl world” as hostile, hierarchical, and cruel, and a picture of teen girls as ornery, sneaky, manipulative, and as both victimizers of and victimized by other girls’ mean behavior. Wiseman argues that although girls’ catty behavior has been around a long time, the mean girl behavior of today is much more egregious and pervasive. In *Odd Girl Out* (2002), another popular book on meanness in girlhood, Rachel Simmons characterizes girl aggression as insidious, covert, and relational. She argues that covert aggression stems from the problem that girls do experience anger and aggression, yet live under social constraints that embody the “nice girl”-a sweet, loyal, quiet caretaker who values and is valued by her relationships-as the female adolescent ideal. Because overt expressions of anger-and in some cases even experiencing feelings of anger-are considered inappropriate emotional and behavioral responses for girls, feelings of aggression and anger remain hidden and will tend to be expressed in covert ways that attack other girls and female to female relationships. These authors, along with a number of psychologists, journalists, other self help writers, and academics researchers have identified the mean girl phenomenon as a serious social issue that demands attention and intervention (Simmons, 2002; Wiseman, 2002; Dellasega, 2007; Young, Boyle, & Nelson, 2006; Underwood, 2003; Dimarco, 2008; Anthony & Lindert, 2010; Burton, 2009; Holiday & Rosenberg, 2009).

is often characterized as a female form of aggression in the psychological literature (Artz, 1998; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) but more recent research, including a 2008 meta-analysis of previous studies, found no substantial gender difference in the use of relationally aggressive behavior (Card, Sawalani, Stucky, & Little, 2008; Crick, Casas & Mosher, 1997; Wolke et al., 2000). This behavior can manifest through either covert or overt acts, such as the silent treatment, gossip, or forming exclusionary cliques or clubs (Landry, 2008) but is understood to exclude physical aggression.

The effects of engaging in relationally aggressive bullying are far less severe than engaging in directly aggressive bullying, and studies showing positive or neutral effects of engaging in purely relationally aggressive behavior outnumber the studies reporting negative effects. Although some studies find children who engage in relationally aggressive behaviors are more likely to be disliked, have less pro-social behavior than uninvolved children (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), tend to internalize their problems more (Card et al., 2008) and relationally aggressive girls are more likely to experience symptoms associated with oppositional defiant and conduct disorders (Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001), other studies find the no negative effects (Wolke et al., 2000; Xie, Cairns & Cairns, 2002) and a number of positive effects of purely relationally aggressive behavior. For example, relationally aggressive behavior is positively associated with popularity (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004; LaFountana & Cillessen, 2002), having highly sophisticated social cognitive skills (Sutton & Smith, 1999), being better at sports, more physically attractive, and more likely to get their way in class according to teacher assessments (Xie, Cairns & Cairns, 2002). Female relational aggressors are less likely to be lonely and more likely to have higher group rank than non-aggressive girls (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, Lagerspetz, Landau, Caprara, & Fraczek, 2001) and male relational aggressors are



more likely to be accepted in peer groups than non-aggressive boys (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). Furthermore, the negative association between relationally aggressive behavior and likability declines with age (LaFountana & Cillessen, 2002).

A brief investigation of the language used in the psychological articles reveals some fundamental problems with relational aggression literature. In attempting to explain female forms of aggression, there was an assumption that “backbiting and manipulation” are aggressive behaviors intended to inflict pain (Bjorkqvist, et al., 1992). Another article assumed that all types of relational aggression are intended to harm (Wolke, et al., 2001). When one study pointed out “the correlation for self-rated and peer-dominated indirect aggression was low for both genders” it was explained as the difficulty of students in admitting or recognizing that their own indirect actions are aggressive (Bjorkqvist, et al., 1992). If the survey respondents do not view their behavior as aggressive, perhaps it is not. This is especially curious when the use of profanity was summarily dismissed as not a true aggressive behavior without an accompanying explanation (Bjorkqvist, et al., 1992). This small pool of articles tended to simplify human interaction by creating clearly defined categories of bullies and victims based on an unidentified number of unspecified interactions.

Characterizations of the bully can vary widely in the legal and psychological literatures, as well as the media. The acts and behaviors that constitute bullying differ among state statutes and are subject to interpretation by individual school districts, and may or may not include relational aggression. Although the definition of bullying is fairly uniform across the psychological literature, this broad definition encompasses behaviors that range from physically violent aggression to relationally aggressive rumor spreading and social exclusion. Being a bully is shown to have some negative as well as positive effects, but there is no clear consensus in the

literature at this time. The negative effects of being a bully-victim, however, have rather uniform support in the literature, as do the neutral or positive effects of being a purely relationally aggressive bully. Although recent and robust psychological studies have found a lack of gender differences among relational aggressors, popular cultural discourses have contributed to the continued association of covert forms of aggression as exclusively female through the proliferation and popularization of the “mean girl” category.

### **The Bully in News Media Discourse**

The following section details findings from the Prince and Clementi news articles that will be used to engage with theoretical questions surrounding the bullying issue and provide an explanation for the emergence of moral regulations and moral panics in the bullying discourse. The Prince articles discuss the accused Prince bullies in more negative terms, offer more interventions to address bullying, and fewer contextual explanations for the bullying issue than the Clementi articles. Overall, the Prince articles put most of the blame for Prince’s suicide on the bullies and advocate for more surveillance and interventions for bullies in general, although the link between bullying and suicide was stronger in the Clementi articles than in the Prince articles. In contrast, there is far less agreement on Ravi’s culpability in the Clementi articles, and far fewer articles advocate for criminal intervention in his case. There is less support for criminal interventions in bullying generally, and fewer links between bullying and violence. Furthermore, fewer articles ascribe blame to parents or admonish them to monitor the online behavior of their children

*Phoebe Prince*

The term “mean girl/s” appears 45 times in 9% of the articles and were used to describe both the accused Prince bullies<sup>74</sup> (6%, 13 articles) and the topic of bullying more generally (3%, 6 articles). There are no references to the term “mean boy/s”. The articles often describe general girl bullying as an unreasonable or unnecessary form of behavior, in juxtaposition with traditionally male forms of bullying based on strength, and as more troubling or sinister than male bullying. “The bully today is not necessarily the biggest kid on the playground, but more often than not, the petite girl with a cell phone” (Weston, 2010, April 18). “Cyberbullying is prevalent with middle school students and surprisingly, prevalent with young ladies as well...Girls create reasons to fight...sometimes they even sabotage people they care about” (Ryan, 2010, April 8).

18% of the articles (39 articles) on the Prince case contained highly negative descriptions of the accused bullies including descriptions of the bullies’ behavior as “torture” (The Lowell Sun Editorial, 2011, May 6), “an intolerable form of abuse (The Patriot Ledger Editorial, 2010, April 3), and “a human rights issue” (McCartney & Weissbourd, 2012, February 27). The Prince bullies were labeled as “depraved thugs” (Bardon, 2011, December 2), “megabullies” (Murphy, 2011, May 7), “evil little bastards” (Jacobson, 2012, December 14), “a pack of animals” (Bocamazo, 2010, April 28), and “classmates who took delight in seeing their victim slowly deteriorate” (Sentinel & Enterprise Editorial, 2010, September 19). Only 4% of the articles (9 articles) painted a more balanced picture of the events or were sympathetic to the accused Prince bullies. These ranged from describing Prince’s pre-existing depression and suicide attempt to stating that the legal response was rather severe, to questioning whether teens are mature enough

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<sup>74</sup> I refer to them as the Prince bullies and not by name because there was more than one and some of the bullies’ names were never released because they were minors.

to understand the repercussions of their actions. “These are nice kids, regular kids. They come from nice families. They were headed to college” (Bennett, 2010, October 11). In the same article the co-director of the Cyberbullying Research Center was quoted as saying, “Kids just mess up. They react emotionally and most of them express a lot of remorse. I think most kids deserve another chance” (Bennett, 2010, October 11).

The general bullying articles also included a handful of articles (3%, 6 articles) that discussed the grey area of bullying and advocated for trying to educate or understand the bully (8.5%, 18 articles). These articles discussed the distinction between bullying and “drama” (Jezebel Editorial, 2013, April 9; Bazelon, 2013, March 26), “acting out” (Smith, 2011, January 4), or “kids being kids” (Katzman, 2010, April 1). As one article explained, “Yes. Some conflict is a normal part of growing up, and plenty of friendly, responsible children dabble in mean behavior. For these children, a little guidance can go a long way....Other children bully because they have emotional and developmental problems, or because they come from abusive families. They require our help more than our punishment” (Engel & Sandstrom, 2010, July 23). While 6% of the articles (13 articles) were supportive of criminal justice interventions (and .9%, or 2 articles, were specifically against this approach) 3% of the articles (6 articles) advocated for prosocial approaches aimed at teaching appropriate behavior rather than punishment, criminal or otherwise. Examples include positive behavior classes, teaching ethical behavior and non-escalation of a conflict, and using more school resources to teach values as opposed to preparing students for standardized tests (The Lowell Sun Editorial, 2010, April 5; Viadero, 2010, May 19; Engel & Sandstrom, 2010, July 23; Cavazos, 2010, April 24).

In describing the kinds of behaviors that constitute bullying, the articles cited everything from criminal harassment, physical violence, online threats and tirades, and general meanness

including “rumor campaigns, teasing, name-calling, and excessive fighting” (Carlton Place Editorial, 2010, April 12). One article curiously cited doing nothing. “Bullying is not just the mean things you do, it’s all the nice things you don’t do, like letting someone eat alone at lunch or ignoring people as if they’re invisible” (Blanco, 2010, March 31). 12% of the general bullying articles (26 articles) described bullying as violence or as behavior that can lead to violence, including mass violence. In an article about a 16 year-old who beat up a 10 year-old, one quote illustrated the fear of violence in the bullying issue. “It makes you more aware of how dangerous their peers can be, not just other adults...It makes you aware you live in a dangerous world, whether they’re adults or kids” (Cluett, 2010, April 4).

Just as there is little consensus on whether bullying includes a lack of friendliness or violent behavior, there is also little consensus on how to intervene with bullies. There are a number of articles that urge compassionate, non-criminal intervention for bullying, while others advocate for harsh criminal justice interventions for the same behavior. As one article put it, “It’s hard to feel a sense of justice rendered at the prospect of expelling and jailing high-school students. You want to believe there must be some way of changing young people’s behavior without wrecking their lives, that adolescents who have run amok in a pack will snap back to decent norms and values if they’re separated, given a sharp smack in the face and forced to see themselves the way the rest of society sees them” (Democracy in America Editorial, 2010, March 31). Another article notes, “Kids just mess up. They react emotionally and most of them express a lot of remorse. I think most kids deserve another chance” (Bennett, 2010, October 11). Other articles advocate for a strong criminal justice response to bullying. In one article commenting on the criminal charges for the Prince bullies, “Maybe the D.A. is sending exactly the right message: Act like a pack of animals, and we’ll put you in a cage” (Bocamazo, 2010,

April 28). Finally, some articles assert interventions would be ineffective because some bullies are characterized as too far gone for intervention. As one article ponders, “How can authorities stop bullying, when the kids who engage in it are more likely to be the ones who least respect authority?” (Jezebel Editorial, 2010, January 2).

The Prince articles cite three causes to explain bullying behavior today: technology, culture, and parents. Technology is offered as an explanation (11%, 23 articles), but also dismissed by the articles as an amplifier (due in large part to the anonymity of the internet) rather than the root cause of bullying behavior. The culture explanation includes acceptance of a culture of meanness (Dorsey, 2010, April 6; Carleton Place Editorial, 2010, April 19), aggression (Engel & Sandstrom, 2010, July 23), and lack of civility. Only one article mentioned a culture of abuse towards women and girls specifically for expressing their sexuality. Calling the bullying “slut-shaming” (Jezebel Editorial, 2010, July 21), this article ends with a quote from an anonymous adult who describes Phoebe’s dating behavior as the original transgression that led to the bullying. “In the end you can call it bullying. But to the other kids, Phoebe was the one with the power. She was attracting guys away from relationships” (Jezebel Editorial, 2010, July 21). 10% of the general bullying articles in the Prince set called out parents for their role in contributing to the bullying problem (22 articles), asserting that bullying is behavior learned at home (Baruch, 2010, June 4), and that parents have a responsibility to monitor their children and steer them away from bullying behavior (The Berkshire Eagle Editorial, 2010, March 9; Fanto, 2010, February 9; MacNamee, 2012, September 26), even though parents of bullies often “ignore their child’s maliciousness” (Dorsey, 2010, April 6), or are unable to control their children (Kazdin & Rotella, 2010, March 31).

Characterizations of Ravi were much more mixed than characterization of the Prince bullies. 14% of the articles (21 articles) in the Clementi data set characterized Ravi negatively, but surprisingly a higher percentage of articles (21%, 32 articles) defended him or downplayed his actions. Ravi was characterized as calculated and sick (Daily News Editorial, 2012, May 22), heartless (Feeney, Hutchinson, & Yaniv, 2010, October 4; The Washington Post Editorial, 2010, October 3), a tormentor (Lemire, Feeney, & McShane, 2010, October 1), a gay basher (Peysler, 2012, March 17), callous (Sudol, 2012, May 11), a predator (The Record Editorial, 2012, March 21), and in a contest with Casey Anthony for the most-hated American (The Record Editorial, 2012, May 22). Ravi was also described more light heartedly as stupid but not the cause of Clementi's suicide (Fisher, 2012, March 23), insensitive but didn't hate Clementi (Zernike, 2012, May 22), arrogant, mouthy and offensive, but not a homophobe (Keller, 2012, April 2), a sex spy (Greene, 2012, March 13), and a jerk online but not a homophobe in person (Clunn, Diskin, Harris, O'Brien, Alex, & Naanes, 2012, April 18). Numerous articles also suggested that what Ravi did was not bullying (Herald News Editorial, 2010, October 7; Doblin, 2010, October 18; The Record Editorial, 2010, October 7) or not a hate crime (The New York Times Editorial, 2012, May 23; Zernike, 2012, May 22; Keller, 2012, April 2; Crary, 2012, March 18; Peysler, 2012, March 1; Bikya News Editorial, 2012, May 12). In addition to the lack of universal condemnation for Ravi was evidence of sympathy for Ravi, or at least concern over his punishment. 9% of the articles (14 articles) included concern that Ravi faced a possibility of 10 years in prison. Once his 30 day jail sentence was handed down, however, 2.5% of the articles (4 articles) stated that the sentence was just right, and 7% (10 articles) stated that it was too light.

Along with characterization of Ravi, characterizations of Clementi are relevant to how

Ravi was constructed as a bully. 8% of the articles (12 articles) included somewhat detailed descriptions of Clementi that were either positive, negative, or neutral. 3% (5 articles) characterized him or some of his actions negatively, and 6% (9 articles) characterized him positively or neutrally.<sup>75</sup> Among the negative descriptions were reports of him being in “eager pursuit of online hookups” (Riordan, 2012, May 22), and writing negative texts about Ravi’s ethnicity (Peysner, 2012, March 1; Sudol, 2012, February 17; Perez-Pena, 2011, August 13). Whether the descriptions of Clementi were positive or neutral he was frequently referred to as delicate, shy, or awkward (5%, 8 articles).

Similar to the Prince data, the Clementi data set included articles linking bullying with violence (8%, 12 articles), including 2.5% of articles (4 articles) that expressed concern for the victim or the bully’s future violent behavior. Half of the articles concerned with future violence were concerned with the victim’s future violence in the form of another Columbine or similar school massacre perpetrated by a victim of bullying. Only 2% of the articles (3 articles) were supportive of law enforcement playing a role in the bullying issue, while 5% of the articles (8 articles) supported pro-social approaches to bullying, including kindness training.

In the area of causes and contributors to bullying, culture, technology, and parents come up to varying degrees. Culture generally, including three references (2%) to a widespread culture of homophobia, was blamed in 9% (14 articles) of the articles. In a quote from one article, heteronormativity was specifically called out as contributing to the bullying problem. “From what I’ve seen, it’s not just about sexuality or only about some pathological bully that goes after gay boys but rather this sort of gendered homophobia is central to the way boys come to think of themselves as men and as masculine, that what we think of as bullying is actually part of normative masculinity” (McNeil, 2012, March 6). 14% of the articles (21 articles) cited

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<sup>75</sup> Some articles characterized Clementi both positively and negatively.



technology as a contributing factor in bullying today. Many articles suggest the internet helps amplify a behavior that already exists and 2.5% of the articles (4 articles) specifically stated that technology was not the culprit. 4% of the articles (6 articles) addressed parents' roles in the bullying issue, but unlike the Prince set, half of those articles discussed parental concerns about their child getting into trouble for being a cyberbully. "It's frighteningly easy to envision any number of young people taking actions that resemble a mild version of the allegations in this case" (Herald News Editorial, 2011, April 21). One article suggested that technology (in the form of a new app) could be used as a surveillance tool to help parents determine if their child is a bully (Clunn, Diskin, Harris, O'Brien, Alex, & Naanes, 2012, April 18), while another addressed increasing surveillance of children to monitor for suicide warning signs (Doblin, 2010, October 12).

To varying degrees both data sets include negative descriptions of the bullies, links between bullying and violence (either that bullying is violent or that it will lead to future violence from the victim), some support for criminal interventions and pro-social approaches, and causes or contributors to bullying that include parental supervision and behavior, technology, and culture. In many ways the two data sets tell a similar story, but with some notable differences. The Prince bullies were portrayed more negatively than Ravi (4% difference), and there was more sympathy or downplaying of Ravi's actions (17% difference). Relatedly, while one author in the Prince set discussed Prince's depression and previous suicide attempt frequently, which makes the bullies appear less culpable, this information was not widely reported by other news outlets. In contrast, descriptions of Clementi as delicate, shy, or awkward appeared in a number of different news sources. In discussions of bullying more generally there was a stronger link between bullying and violence (4% difference) and more

support for criminal justice interventions as a response to bullying (4% difference) in the Prince articles. There was also a discussion of the grey area of bullying and calls to educate bullies in the Prince set that did not appear at all in the Clementi set. Parental responsibility for their child's bullying or advice to monitor online behavior appeared more often in the Prince set (6% difference). The Clementi articles discussed culture as a cause of bullying slightly more than the Prince articles (3% difference), but while the Clementi articles discussed a general culture of homophobia, the Prince articles did not mention a culture of sexism or patriarchy that could contribute to bullying generally or to Prince's bullying specifically. Finally, the Clementi articles did not contain a discussion of "mean girls" specifically (which appeared in 9% of the Prince articles), but they did contain some references to the distinction between male and female bullying (3 articles, 2%).

### **Critical Approaches to the Bully**

Gender specific critiques of bullying focus on the use of gender norms to explain differences in bullying between the sexes (Walton, 2005), and pathologize girls who deviate from these gender norms (Ringrose, 2006; Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008). Ringrose (2006) explains the increased focus on mean girls as an attempt to equalize aggression between boys and girls that shifts the characterization of girls from universally vulnerable to universally mean. With this characterization comes the reframing of female success and power as manipulation and meanness, and when viewed as a new or more egregious phenomenon, invites intervention to alter the behavior. Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2008) explain female bullying and the emergence of the mean girl as the millennial form of deviant female behavior in a history that emerges from the sexualized bad girl of the 1950s, the equality-seeking revolutionary of the 1970s, and the

violent gangster girl of the 1980s and early 1990s. In each era of female deviance, girls are targeted for protective intervention or punishment based on their departure from appropriate femininity or association with masculine behavior.

These categories, while reflecting real social events or interpretations of crime statistics, were social constructs used to create an identifiable category of women and frame them as a social problem. Much like the psychological and legal literatures attempts to construct “the bully” and “bullying” as objective phenomena, the identification of “mean girls” as an objective phenomenon and social problem produces an imperative for intervention. These interventions occur in gender specific ways because, as the research shows, definitions of bullying and the way bullying is intervened upon depend on normative gendered behaviors (Ringrose & Renold, 2010). For example, Ringrose and Renold’s (2010) research shows that boys are encouraged to stand up for themselves while girls are told to get along and be friends in response to bullying, reflecting expectations of more assertive masculinity and more passive femininity. What is defined as bullying tends to be behavior which transgresses normative gender performances. Non-overt relational aggression by girls is tolerated, particularly when it regulates standards of sexuality, appearance, and behavior in other girls. Open fighting, however, is not tolerated, primarily because it violates middle class norms of femininity as passive and nurturing. By the same token, aggression and physicality between boys is tolerated if it is not excessive or if it is used to protect ones self or victims from violence (Ringrose & Renold, 2010).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Broader, gender neutral critiques of the bully discourse focus primarily on its punitive approach (Galitz & Robert, 2014), lack of attention to the power dynamics of broad social inequality and prejudice (Meyer, 2007; Walton, 2011), and demonization of children (Porter, 2013). The category of school bully has also been described as a political mechanism that pathologizes already delinquent children and places them on a linear progression toward the adult role of criminal (Valentine, 2014). Others point out the difficulty of reducing bullying incidents in children without addressing the correlate behavior in adults in the wider culture (Valentine, 2014). As Valentine (2014) explains, “we cannot resolve the behaviors we mark as anti-normative against idealized models of student behaviors inside our schools without interrogating the powerful and pervasive normalizing discourses celebrating competition, aggression, and exploitation in the broader neoliberal society of which our schools are a part” (p. 96).

Chesney-Lind, and Ringrose & Renold make it clear that concern over what is defined or identified as deviant female behavior cannot be divorced from understandings of normative gender roles. As the equality-seeking revolutionary of the 1970s, the sexualized bad girl of the 1950s, and violent gangster girl of the 1980s and 1990s illustrate, female deviance is defined, in part, through departures from normative femininity. The difference with the “mean girl” is that meanness is not something previously unavailable to girls and women. It appears as though we are experiencing an historical moment where female meanness is especially pernicious. Indeed, some feminist theorists claim the concern over “mean girls” is an example of a moral panic (Ringrose, 2006; Sippola, Paget & Buchanan, 2007; Chesney-Lind, Morash & Irwin, 2007). Taking into account the critiques of “mean girls” and their association with relational aggression, evidence from the news articles where female bullies received far more vitriol than male bullies, and Hier’s theoretical framework of moral regulations and moral panics, I argue that a moral panic exists around certain instances of gendered bullying and offer a way to understand why particular instances of female bullying seem to trigger moral panic reactions.

### **Theoretical Analysis of the Bully**

Descriptions of the bully and bullying in the articles and elsewhere in the bullying discourse suggest that the Prince and Clementi cases, and arguably bullying in general, should be examined through multiple contextual factors, but particularly through the lenses of gender, and what I call the normative/pathological youth discussion. The lack of consensus that helps create the normative/pathological theme, along with wide and varied definitions of bullying behaviors, contribute to a sense that the bully or potential bully is ubiquitous and the danger they pose to themselves and others is ever present and potentially catastrophic. The normative/pathological

theme helps show that ‘The Bully’ is a highly productive category, one whose inclusiveness heightens the risk associated with bullying and the need to regulate a wide range of behaviors. Hier’s (2002, 2008, 2011) fluid and risk based conception of moral panics and moral regulation processes is helpful in making sense of the often contradictory nature of the bullying discourse, and can account for the normative/pathological distinction in the bullying discourse. This framework does not, however, account for why characteristics like gender tend to cause a slippage from moral regulation to moral panic discourses, supporting the assertion that moral panics are not simply neutral moments of crisis in long term moral regulation processes, but are susceptible to social and cultural biases about various groups. Without accounting for characteristics like gender, it is lacking as a complete theoretical framework for bullying.

The term moral panic originated in sociological research with Stanley Cohen’s (1972) now classic study of legal and social (over)reactions to youth behavior in a British seaside town. Moral panics are generally comprised of social concern or anxiety, hostility towards the perpetrators, a consensus of negative reaction, an exaggeration of the threat posed, and a volatility of emergence and dissipation of the panic (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 1994). The threat can be novel or have existed for some time, but is suddenly the focus of societal attention. Cohen (1972) explains moral panics as follows:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic is passed over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective

memory; at other times it has more serious and long lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself (p. 1).

These panics do not exist in a vacuum, but are logically related to more fundamental concerns over the shifting nature of the social order. Changes or threatened changes to certain established social practices or ways of life facilitate the creation of social anxiety that leads to a moral panic. Moral panics, therefore, both mask and point to important or established social, economic, or moral orders within society. Outrage is directed towards a person or group of people known as “folk devils”, who stand as symbols of the underlying shift in value systems and act as outlets upon which to unleash social frustration over these changes (Cohen, 1972). In this sense the moral panic is based on underlying feelings of societal guilt and ambivalence that are then projected onto deviants designated as folk devils (Hall et al., 1978). This is not to say that moral panics are always based only on overreactions to frivolous concerns. As Garland (2008) explains, the moral panic highlights some kind of risk, which often begins with legitimate health or well being threats and dangers, but then evolves into questions about the morality of certain ways of life. Often the issue at the center of a moral panic is an important social problem, such as child sexual abuse or teenage drug abuse, but the response either overstates the problem, has a hysterical quality, or is identified by moral panic scholars of being politically useful or productive.

For example, in *Policing the Crisis*, Hall and colleagues (1978) explain the mugging panic in Great Britain in the early 1970s as an attempt to distract the public from a serious economic crisis. Although the crime of mugging was not new nor increasing in frequency at the time, the label was new and helped initiate a panic over mugging that was disproportionate to the threat. The importance of the moral panic was not simply the observation that it did not reflect

the reality of crime in Great Britain, but what it represented as an ideological phenomenon. Hall does not dismiss mugging as if it does not occur, but instead analyzes it as an ideological justification for increased law and order policies by the state in response to racialized fears of urban unrest and crime that were occurring in the U.S. at the time.

Both Cohen and Hall frame the mass media as a tool by which manufactured campaigns of panic can be created, although they disagree on the source of these campaigns. While Cohen explains moral panic as a looping system of amplified claims making through the media, Hall frames the media as a tool by which the ruling elite can manipulate the media and “orchestrate hegemony” (Hall, et al., 1978). The creation of moral panics has also been theorized as an unintended result of grassroots efforts to draw attention to a particular social issue. When these social issues tap into deep seated and widespread social anxieties, they take shape as a moral panic (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994).

The concept of the moral panic has, after 40 years in the sociological lexicon, been the focus of expansions, contractions, revisions, and criticisms. It is beyond the scope of this project to recount the entire history of moral panic scholarship, so I will instead focus on what appears to be a new direction for moral panic research, one which attempts to expand the term’s applicability in explaining responses to modern social anxieties. In reimagining the content and scope of the moral panic, Hier (2011, 2008, 2002) addresses past criticism of the moral panic framework and takes up the challenge to usefully situate a decades old concept in modern sociology. Drawing on Hunt (2003), Hier links moral panic studies to a moral regulation/risk management framework.

According to Hier, the moral panic is a crisis in a larger, quotidian process of moral regulation (Hier, 2002, 2008, 2011), and as such should be understood through notions of risk,

harm, and personal responsibility, specifically individual risk management. For Hier, there is a moral imperative to manage individual behavior so as to avoid risk created by others and to avoid creating risk for others.<sup>77</sup> Using this framework, a moral panic occurs when a group or individual is unable or unwilling to engage in responsible forms of risk management and they are then met with coercive responses from a larger social group. Importantly, the difference between the routine, everyday, moral regulation and moments of moral panic is a matter of individual versus collective dimensions of risk management and harm. As Hier (2008) explains:

...everyday moral dialectics, which situate individualized risk management against collective dimensions of harm, may become temporarily inverted. In other words, discourses that call upon individuals to engage in forms of ethical self-conduct to manage risk are often transposed into collectivizing discourses of risk management that take the form of defensive group reactions against what is represented as a more immediate dimension of harm posed by 'irresponsible' (i.e. dangerous, uncertain) others (p.174-175).

What begins as a discourse of individualized risk management with collective dimensions of harm, or a routine moral regulation process, becomes inverted and turns into a collective discourse of risk management that sits against an individual dimension of harm, or a moral panic (Hier, 2002, 2008).<sup>78</sup> The main difference between moral panics and moral regulation processes is the emphasis placed on the conduct of others versus self. Moral regulation is a long term process of encouraging others to internalize a sense of appropriate conduct (including responsible risk management), resulting in volitional, self regulating, proper behavior; moral

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<sup>77</sup> The imperative to manage ones self and risk created by others are central components to governmentality, which refers to the techniques and procedures of self management, as opposed to repressive, top-down control of state institutions. As Rose (1996) explains, governmentality is a range of rationalities and techniques that applies to individuals. It involves the reframing of responsible citizenship not as service to the state, but as personal responsibility over ones self, family, and community. See also Foucault (1991); Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde (2006).

<sup>78</sup> Hier's approach is particularly useful for addressing the problem of irrationality and disproportionality in moral panic studies. These criticisms point out that it is difficult to measure the irrationality of a social reaction, and that labeling an issue a moral panic immediately attaches a judgement that the response is disproportionate to the problem, which is often a political judgement. Rather than view the moral panic as irrational, exceptional, volatile eruptions of social concern, Hier sees the moral panic as part of a long term moral regulation process. What appears to be a disproportionate, over reactive response to an issue and its associated folk devils is actually a moralizing discourses that is rationally related to self governance and governance of others (Hier, 2008).



panics elicit coercive responses to inappropriate (or irresponsible) behavior of others, making moral panics more defensive than moral regulation processes (Hier, 2002, 2011).

While descriptions of the Prince bullies are overwhelmingly negative, and descriptions of Ravi were relatively less harsh, both sets of articles include normative and negative assessments of the specific bullies from the Prince and Clementi cases and of bullies more generally. These conflicting descriptions along with the variety of bullying definitions, discussions of how to deal with or punish bullies, and the potential ramifications of being a bully elsewhere in the bullying discourse contribute to what I call the normative/pathological distinction in the bullying discourse. Some bullying is described as normative and correctable, while other bullying is considered a warning of more serious criminal behavior or pathology in the future. It is a way of demarcating and separating out certain kinds of bullies from others, the “good kids”, ones who can be brought back into the fold, from the ones who are unable or unwilling to change their behavior.

Bullying is described in the Prince articles as normative or a cry for help from otherwise good kids, and also as depraved, potentially criminal behavior. While these descriptions include ‘kids being kids’, when the Prince bullies were discussed bullying was often framed in harsher terms, including a form of torture. The Clementi set contained a similar dichotomy of descriptions, although fewer descriptions of Ravi were strictly negative and more included both negative and positive or sympathetic descriptions. When discussing general bullies the articles often vacillate between describing bullying behavior as correctable normative behavior and acts that could precipitate another Columbine type incident. Four of the Prince and two of the Clementi articles directly referenced school shootings or another Columbine resulting from bullying. Bullies are either responsible children who have gone a bit astray or have serious

problems and may become violent, but the discourse is often unclear about which group a child falls into based on their behavior. The discourse is also unclear about bullying definitions, which can range from criminal harassment and physical violence, to rumor spreading and withholding friendship. Similarly, there is little consensus on whether to address bullying through educational or criminal approaches in the articles. The lack of consensus, coupled with the potential for extreme acts of violence, create a tremendous sense of insecurity and risk in the bullying discourse in terms of not knowing exactly what bullying is or what it could mean.

One way to make sense of the lack of consistency in the bullying discourse is to apply Hier's moral panic/moral regulation framework. Hier's concept of the moral panic<sup>79</sup> as a crisis in a longer and larger process of moral regulation is much more instructive and applicable to the bullying discourse than the classic moral panic framework. For Hier, a moral panic occurs when a group or individual is unable or unwilling to engage in responsible forms of risk management and they are then met with coercive responses from a larger social group. Furthermore, there is a shift from discourses of individual risk management to discourses of collective risk management that coalesce in defensive and coercive reactions to irresponsible others. The main difference between moral regulation and moral panic is the focus on the behavior of others versus the self. Hier's conceptualization of the moral panic is more fluid than traditional conceptions and opens the concept to wider applicability.

Hier's moral panic/moral regulation framework offers a theoretical basis for explaining the frequent tacking between characterizing the bully as normative and pathological, or using

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<sup>79</sup> A set of criteria must be met in order for a crisis to be considered a moral panic under the traditional moral panic framework. This includes social concern or anxiety, hostility towards the perpetrators, a consensus of negative reaction, an exaggeration of the threat posed, and a volatility of emergence and dissipation of the panic (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 1994). A few criteria in this set do not fit well with the bullying issue. While there is clearly anxiety over bullying and some hostility towards bullies the hostility is tempered with concern for the wellbeing of bullies as they are considered at-risk along with victims. Furthermore, at times the threat seems to be exaggerated, particularly when bullying is framed as inevitably leading to school shootings, but there is also a fair amount of push back (particularly in the Clementi articles) against over-hyping and over-criminalizing the issue.

Hier's terminology, as regulable and non-regulable. Under this fluid framework, the bullying discourse frequently shifts between existing as a moral panic and a less intense moral regulation. The consistent discursive tacking between assertions that bullying is normative and bullies (or their parents) are capable of regulating their behavior, and assertions that bullying is evidence of pathology, future violence, and that bullies (and their parents) are incapable of self-regulation<sup>80</sup> illustrates how the bullying discourse moves between moral regulation and moral panic. In the part of the bullying discourse that frames bullying as normative and correctable, we can see evidence of moral regulation at work, with its accompanying call for more self-regulation, surveillance of youth behaviors, and preventative interventions such as anti-bullying programs and kindness training. We can see the bullying discourse move from moral regulation to moral panic when the discourse slips into describing bullying as pathological, potentially violent, and non-regulable, either for individual bullies or their parents. This is also where we see more coercive interventions from the criminal justice system.

In both the moral regulation and moral panic frameworks, risk management is at issue. In the moral regulation framework, the individual manages herself (or those she is responsible for) so as not to be a risk to others. In the moral panic framework, those deemed incapable or unwilling to manage themselves are identified and the community then forms collective risk management strategies against these dangerous others. For example, in the context of alcohol consumption, there exists a discourse of individual responsibility in the form of responsibly managing one's own drinking (e.g. drinking responsibly), together with a collective discourse of the harm to be avoided (e.g. the drunk driver) (Hier, 2008). In the bullying context there are

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<sup>80</sup> This form of self-regulation also involves parental regulation of the children for whom they are responsible (Hier, 2011).

discourses of individual responsibility to not bully (or to ensure your child does not bully) together with collective discourses of avoiding the bully or sanctioning their behavior.

The bullying discourse uses language of risk and responsibility found in moral regulation/moral panic framework, particularly in the context of parental responsibility and managing the risk of potentially having a child who is a bully. In the Clementi set, articles about parental involvement tend to be warnings to parents about the possible legal trouble their child could face. The articles also discuss the importance of watching over children's online activity, including an article on an app for parents that investigates children's online correspondences to see if they are a bully. There is no information in the Clementi articles about the ineffectiveness of parents or of parents of bullies as abusers, neglectful, or as seriously lacking. In contrast, articles about parental responsibility to curb bullying in their children appear frequently in the Prince articles. These articles tend to blame parents for their child's behavior and describe parents of bullies as abusive, neglectful, or unable to monitor or control their kids.

Inconsistencies in definitions and consequences of bullying in both sets of articles, bullying laws, and the psychological literature, create a heightened sense of risk and the need for the regulation of self and others in the bullying discourse. Without clear definitions or agreement on exactly what constitutes bullying, many behaviors, even behaviors that lack a substantial action, can be considered bullying. Because there are definitional differences throughout the bullying discourse, one can never know for sure whether a child's behavior will be defined as bullying. Adding to this problem, the consequences of being a bully range from neutral or relatively positive to pathological and violent. The presence of extremes in bullying definitions and consequences in the discourse are problematic because one cannot determine exactly which behaviors warrant intervention or gauge the extent of the consequences of the

behavior. The risk of engaging in behaviors that could be defined as bullying is ever present, creating the need for constant behavioral surveillance and adjustment. In essence, one is always managing their own or a child's behavior to ensure they are not a bully, and also guarding against others who are unwilling or unable to regulate their own or a child's bullying behavior. The bullying discourse produces an imperative to constantly assess and manage a wide range of behaviors in the self and in others. The imperative to manage behavior is stronger when the discourse slips from a moral regulation to a moral panic. The shift from moral regulation to moral panic is not, however, simply a matter of recognizing those who are unwilling or unable to regulate their own behavior (e.g. the drunk driver or the bully). The shift from one to the other does not randomly appear. Some factors tend to accompany moral regulation discourses while others are associated with moral panic discourses.

Turning now to the theme of gender in the bullying discourse, I provide evidence that, in certain instances, gender acts as a switch that moves the bullying discourse from a moral regulation to a moral panic framework. Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988) described gender as a “complex social, historical, and cultural product” that “order[s] social life and social institutions in fundamental ways” (p. 504). Gender is not simply a stand-in for sex, and instead includes social and cultural norms of what it means to be male or female, or how one plays the roles of male or female (Butler, 1990). Gender distinctions feature prominently in the bullying discourse with female bullying frequently appearing as more troubling, puzzling, or more apparent than male forms of bullying. The term ‘mean girl’ (but notably not mean boy) appears in the Prince articles 45 times in 9% of the articles, and while the Clementi articles do not discuss mean girls specifically, 2% of those articles make a distinction between male and female bullying. Not only is “mean boy” not a term in the discourse, but the male bully's role in the Prince case was often

minimized. Although one of the boys was directly involved in Prince's bullying, many articles framed the incident as one perpetrated entirely by mean girls.

Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2008) argue that the mean girl is the newest category in a long line of deviant female types whose deviance stems from their violations of traditional feminine norms. But the discourse does not simply suggest girls are now less nice. Female bullying in general and the Prince bullies in particular are often characterized as pathological, and capriciously cruel. Prince's bullying was described as a form of abuse, violence, and torture, with the articles using the term torture or torturous 18 times (all of which were in reference to the Prince case). As a comparison, the Clementi articles included the term torture or torturous 13 times, but only 2 of those instances were in reference to the Clementi case.<sup>81</sup> In this case, some descriptions of mean girls and numerous descriptions of the Prince bullies characterize their behavior as violating basic norms of human decency. It is not simply that the discourse suggests female meanness violates traditional feminine norms; it suggests that it violates human rights as well.

Female meanness is characterized as a more serious violation than male meanness as evidenced by the extremely negative descriptions of the Prince bullies and more mixed characterizations of Ravi's behavior. Even though both Ravi's and the Prince bullies' behaviors are strongly linked to the suicides, and a higher percentage of articles labeled Ravi's behavior as the cause of Clementi's suicide, Ravi receives less vitriol and more sympathy than the Prince bullies. Although he was facing hate crime charges, many of these articles questioned whether he was actually homophobic. The Prince set did not have nearly as many articles that debated the bullies' motives or questioned their culpability. Although they too were facing hate crime

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<sup>81</sup> The other 11 instances where torture was discussed in the Clementi articles were in reference to the Matthew Shephard case and a case in the Bronx where three men were abducted, tortured, and subsequently killed.

charges for calling Prince an “Irish slut”, there was not a single article in the Prince set that questioned whether the bullies actually harbored animus towards the Irish.<sup>82</sup>

In the few articles that did present a more balanced picture of the Prince case, many focused on Prince’s history of suicide and depression as mitigating factors rather than the Prince bullies’ lack of animus. These articles did not, however, present Prince in a negative light. By contrast, there were a handful of articles in the Clementi set that presented Clementi somewhat negatively, and of the articles that provided a more detailed description of him, over half described him as particularly delicate. This helps construct Ravi as less culpable, because it is Clementi’s delicacy, rather than Ravi’s actions, that precipitated the suicide. Reports of Prince’s depression and previous suicide attempt also help construct her as delicate and the Prince bullies as less culpable, but that construction was based on specific events. In the Clementi articles there was no evidence presented for Clementi’s delicate nature, it was simply asserted.

Additionally, there was a lack of alternative but plausible cultural explanations offered to explain the Prince bullies’ behaviors that were offered to explain Ravi’s behavior. The Prince case was repeatedly framed as one where the female bullies brutally policed what they perceived as a sexual transgression by Prince, but only one of the articles comes close to discussing the larger cultural expectations that girls should not be overtly sexual on their own terms, which would help explain the bullies’ response to Prince. This particular article criticized “slut shaming”, or the bullying of girls because of whom or how many they date, but ended by characterizing Prince as socially powerful because of who she was dating and the bullies as losing that power to Prince. It was less a cultural indictment of sexism and more of an alternative explanation of which girl held more power over the others from within a system of patriarchy. In contrast, three of the Clementi articles cite a widespread culture of homophobia as

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<sup>82</sup> This issue was addressed in Bazelon’s (2013) book that included extensive coverage of the case.

directly contributing to the bullying in the Clementi case, and many more discussed homophobia and bullying generally.

Exploring this concept a bit further, it is not simply gender expectations of girls that explain the difference in reaction to the bullies in the Clementi and Prince cases. For Ravi, his gender saves him from heightened condemnation in the articles because, unlike the mean girl Prince bullies, his behavior upheld hegemonic masculine notions of heterosexuality as normative and natural, and conversely of non-heterosexual encounters as unusual, or at the very least as something to create distance from.<sup>83</sup> Ravi is let off the hook, somewhat, because he expressed discomfort with Clementi's sexuality, which from a heteronormative, masculine viewpoint, is not inappropriate. Furthermore, his behavior was not overtly homophobic in the way that the Prince bullies "slut" taunts were overtly patriarchal. Both the focus on homophobia in the Clementi articles and lack of focus on a culture of patriarchy in the Prince articles work to highlight the Prince bullies' culpability and lessen Ravi's.

While discussions of the bullying issue in general as well as male and female bullies in particular both have a tendency to slip between moral regulation discourses to moral panic discourses, the presence of a specifically gendered discourse supports the assertion that moral panics are not neutral moments of crisis in long term moral regulation processes. The salience of the gender dimension in the bullying discourse, along with the fact that the bullying discourse fits so well with Hier's conception of the moral regulation-moral panic framework, provides justification for adding a component into Hier's framework that can account for characteristics like gender.

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<sup>83</sup> This can account for why the articles included descriptions of Clementi as shy and delicate, and for why Ravi received relatively less vitriol.



The bully category is productive and regulatory, but it is especially regulatory when female bullies are at issue. When gender appears in the bullying discourse there seems to be an accompanying slip from the moral regulation framework to the moral panic framework. There are more negative characterizations of the female Prince bullies in the articles, more coercive interventions supported for the Prince bullies, and a tendency in the Prince articles to minimize the role of the male bully and characterize the case as one perpetrated entirely by mean girls. Furthermore, the Prince articles contain more claims of irresponsibility on the part of parents of bullies. Using Hier's definition of the moral panic as a moment of crisis in the moral regulation process where dangerous, irresponsible others are not self-regulating, it is evident that characterizations of female bullies as dangerous and their caretakers as irresponsible help establish Hier's elements of moral panic when gender is at issue.

While Hier's moral regulation/moral panic framework shows how gender works to shift a moral regulation into a moral panic, it does not explain why there seems to be more of a moral panic around female bullying as compared to male bullying. Feminist criminology and sociology may be helpful in pointing towards an answer to this question. The masculinization thesis posited by Adler (1975) argues that female political liberation of the early 1970s gave women the freedom and opportunity to act more like men. This argument focuses on the assumption that, but for social constraints, the same forces that result in male offending will produce female offending. The masculinization thesis has reemerged over the years in multiple instances as an explanation of female deviance within criminology and especially within popular culture (e.g. the sexualized bad girl of the 1950s, the equality seeking revolutionary of the 1970s, and the violent gangster girl of the 1980s and early 1990s). It has been criticized because it allows researchers to ignore the gendered nature of offending and victimization by

conceptualizing women as fundamentally no different from men once they are allowed to catch up in terms of formal equality (Irwin & Chesney-Lind 2008).

The persistent use of the masculinization thesis in criminology to explain female offending is an example of the binary mindset of gender that exists in the articles. Rather than offer this thesis as an explanation for why girls are meaner or bully more, it is instead offered here as an explanation of expectations of female behavior, including female bullying (Chesney-Lind, 2006). There were numerous examples in the articles of juxtapositions between traditional conceptions of the bully as large, male, and physical, versus the bully of today who is often “the petite girl with the cell phone” (Weston, 2010, April 18). Accompanying these “girls do it too” statements were assertions that girl bullying is actually worse than male bullying. This is accomplished by describing the Prince bullies’ behavior as a form of torture, dehumanizing descriptions of the Prince bullies as “animals” that should be caged (Bocamazo, 2010, April 28), and claims that the Prince bullies’ behaviors violated not only gender norms, but human rights as well.

The moral panic surrounding girl bullying cannot only be explained by public outrage and shock over girl’s participation in less feminine, more masculine behaviors. Unlike the concern that women are violating traditional notions of femininity and becoming more masculine by engaging in more behavior previously associated with boys, the current concern over the mean girl is that her participation in traditional, hegemonic femininity is, at times, problematic.<sup>84</sup> Although research shows that girls are generally held to a standard of normative femininity as nurturing, kind, and passive (Gilligan, 1982; Campbell, 1993, Walkerdine, 1991), they are also allowed to express meanness if it serves the purpose of regulating other girls’ sexuality (Kehily,

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<sup>84</sup> In this way, the discourse about “mean girls” reifies traditional femininity by associating these behaviors exclusively with girls, and criticizes it at the same time.

Mac an Ghail, Epstein, & Redman, 2002; Youdell, 2006). In this way, patriarchy is “stealthy handed over” (McRobbie, 2008) to girls in the regulation of other girls. If, however, the Prince bullies’ behaviors are socially sanctioned forms of gender policing, why do they appear to trigger a moral panic?

In theorizing why a moral panic seems to occur around gender, I draw on McRobbie’s (2008) theory of the “new sexual contract”, which relies, in part, on the notion that patriarchy can be handed off to different institutions and assist in forms of self-policing.<sup>85</sup> I propose that a moral panic occurred in response to the Prince case because the patriarchy that underlies culturally sanctioned gender policing had the potential to be briefly unmasked as dangerous, cruel, and violent when enacted in a group context. Instead of using the Prince case to indict patriarchy as problematic, however, the Prince girls, and girl meanness writ large, become the focus of panic. Cohen’s characterization of the moral panic as representative of underlying feelings of societal guilt and ambivalence may be instructive here. I do not suggest that anxiety or guilt over the existence or enactment of patriarchal power caused the moral panic, but instead that one of the traditional ways it is enacted, through other women and girls, is no longer working the way it should or has become identified as extreme, such that it threatens the system it was designed to uphold.

Is it possible, then, that the bullying discourse represents a turning away from culturally sanctioned forms of gender policing in favor of McRobbie’s vision of a neo-liberal, self-imposed patriarchy? Analysis of representations of the victims from chapter 2 showed how patriarchy and heteronormativity were confronted in the articles through a subtle narrative that actually upheld both of those systems. There is a similar phenomenon for the bullies as well. In both

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<sup>85</sup> McRobbie’s theory of the “new sexual contract” argues that feminism has been replaced by gendered ethics of competition, ambition, self-sufficiency, and consumption. Although young women are not encouraged to participate politically, they are invited to enjoy sexual freedom and independence so long as she remains self-sufficient.

instances, patriarchy does not disappear from the discourse, but is funneled into a form that is subtler. The claim that the moral panic around gender in the articles represents a new neo-liberal form of patriarchy is certainly a possibility, and one that deserves further theoretical development and analysis.

Under this analysis, heteronormativity as a system would also be capable of creating a moral panic if it appeared in a way that represented its violence and cruelty. Ravi's behavior seemed to express discomfort with Clementi's sexuality, but by many accounts he was not hostile to it, nor was his behavior overtly homophobic. This budding theory requires more analysis and attention, but it offers a way of understanding why the Prince case, gender, and potentially heteronormativity, can trigger moral panics.

## **Conclusion**

Looking at the bullying discourse as a whole one can observe that there are numerous examples of a tacking between characterizing bullies as correctable youth and pathological future criminals. The bullying discourse also focuses extensively on the gendered nature of bullying in both the articles and psychological literature with discussions of mean girls and a history of associating relational aggression solely with girls. Finally, the bullying articles, psychological literature, and legal statutes contain discourses of contradiction, risk, and the need for regulation with their wide definitions of bullying and its consequences.

As the review of the legal and psychological literature demonstrates, there is a high degree of variability in defining bullying behavior and little consensus on the psychological consequences of acting as a bully, whether it is general bullying or relationally aggressive bullying. As a result, descriptions of bullies range from relatively normative to dangerously

pathological. In an attempt to make sense of these conflicting descriptions, Hier's conception of moral panics as a moment of crisis in a long-term moral regulation process was offered as a framework for understanding the bullying discourse.

Hier's moral regulation/moral panic framework is instructive for offering theoretical organization to the often conflicting nature of the bullying discourse. It explains the bullying discourse as a process of moral regulation that occasionally slips into moral panic. When we look more closely at the bullying discourse, however, we can see that Hier's moral panic framework coalesces around some aspects of the discourse more than others, in particular, discourses of gender. To ignore the discriminatory potential of moral panics (or the potential of moral panics to capitalize on discriminatory representations of certain groups or individuals) is problematic, and is something Hier's concept of moral panics and moral regulation processes should address.

If concerns about female bullies give rise to moral panic rather than routine moral regulations, this begs the question of whether gender, and other characteristics like gender are more likely to shift a discourse from moral regulation to moral panic. In an attempt to tentatively offer an explanation for why gender seems to trigger a moral panic, I proposed that the "mean girl" discourse has the potential to, and the Prince case actually does, unmask patriarchy as a violent, repressive system. The bullying discourse may represent a move from culturally sanctioned group forms of gender and sexual policing to more subtle self-imposed forms of regulation. In addition to the last chapter's argument that the bullying discourse is racialized, the evidence presented in this chapter on the gendered nature of bullying supports adding a way to account for gender, and other characteristics historically associated with discrimination, to Hier's moral regulation/moral panic framework.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### Summary and Findings

The preceding chapters explored bullying discourses, paying particular attention to how the victim and perpetrators are framed and presented in news reports, psychological research on bullying, and bullying laws. The news reports were compiled through Lexis-Nexis searches of the Tyler Clementi and Phoebe Prince cases, two teen suicides that were explained in the media as resulting from bullying, and a search of the term “racial bullying”. Through an ethnographic content analysis of a sample of these articles, a discourse emerged that showed how both bullies and victims are framed along sexual, gendered, and racialized lines. This research was a first step in data mining and basic theoretical exploration, and as such, is not exhaustive in its examination of all the ways bullying discourses use gender, sexuality, and race to frame the problem, the perpetrators, the victims, or possible solutions. This conclusion will present theoretical directions I plan to take in analyzing the data and the myriad ways in which the social problem of bullying utilizes and deploys characteristics with the potential to invoke discrimination.

Chapter 2 focused on the victims in the two cases, and the term ‘victim’ from ideological and empirical perspectives. Paying special attention to the characteristics of the bullied victims, the aspects of their stories that are highlighted or deemphasized, and how they are described as victims, this chapter showed how bullied victims are recognized and accorded victim status based on sexual and gendered factors. While the discourse that emerged from these cases appears to do similar symbolic work as hate crime laws that condemn harassment based on sexual orientation, on closer examination the discourses can also be read as upholding discriminatory systems of patriarchy and heteronormativity in their attempts to explain the

suicides as expected or predictable responses to homophobia and sexism. Framing Prince and Clementi as victims of bullying, rather than victims of poor mental health or family discord, created a narrative that reified rather than challenged repressive and discriminatory notions of sexuality and gender.

Chapter 3 added a data set comprised of a Lexis-Nexis search of the term “racial bullying”. This chapter analyzed how the category of race and events of racial bullying were framed and discussed in all three sets of news articles. Analysis of news reports revealed that not all victims of bullying receive the same level of public outcry, attention, or responses to address the problem. Findings suggest that victims of racial bullying tend to not be recognized as victims, responses to racial bullying are dramatically different from other non-racial bullying incidents, and in some instances the victims of racial bullying are portrayed as the real bullies. This chapter went beyond revealing unconscious or semi-conscious racism in various bullying discourses and illustrated the centrality of race to constructing both offenders and victims in the bullying context. This evidence supports the argument that race in the bullying discourse exists on a continuum ranging from minimization in the context of victimization to an emphasis in the context of bullying perpetration.

Finally, Chapter 4 focused on representations of the bully. The two most salient themes in the discourse around the bully were gender distinctions in bullying and descriptions of bullying behavior as normative and correctable, and also as unalterably pathological. Loosely borrowing from Hier’s (2002, 2008, 2011) notion of moral panic/moral regulation framework, I referred to this conflicting discourse as the normative/pathological distinction. In addition to arguing for the existence of the mean girl and the normative/pathological youth distinction in bullying discourses, these categorizations were used to further examine Hier’s conception of the

moral panic as a period of crisis in long-term moral regulation processes. While the normative/pathological distinction in the bullying discourse mirrors Hier's conception of moral regulation processes and moral panics, demonstrating the usefulness of this distinction in understanding the bullying discourse, I argued that Hier's theory should also take into account how gender or other classifications that carry a discriminatory potential can be more likely to lead to stronger solidification around certain folk devils and their associated moral panics. Finally, with the help of feminist criminology, I offered a brief explanation for why gender, and specifically the Prince case, seems to trigger a moral panic in the articles.

### **Synthesis of Findings from the Chapters**

There are a number of ways to read these results together. My analysis in each chapter attempted to get beyond the facade of the bullying discourse as it related to both bullies and victims. The chapters were organized by victims, bullies, and race (which included an analysis of both the victim and bully as they relate to race). At times, these three characteristics are so central to the bullying discourse that it could be useful to organize the entire analysis of the bullying discourse around race, gender, and sexuality or sexual orientation rather than around victims and bullies.

As we saw in Chapter 2, the dominant media discourse that framed Prince and Clementi's suicides as directly resulting from being bullied for female heterosexual activity and male non-heterosexual activity could be read as supportive of patriarchal and heteronormative notions of appropriate forms of sexual activity. This is one of a number of ways to read the media discourse, but one that accounts for the overwhelming number of sexuality and sexual orientation discussions in the articles. In chapter 4 sexuality and sexual orientation were also relevant to



explaining how the bullies were framed. There is evidence from the articles to suggest that Clementi's sexual orientation may have worked to lessen the negative reaction Ravi received in the media, or at least temper it with questions of his culpability. Prince's sexual activity and the female bullies' purported sexual jealousy were framed as the impetus for her bullying. Despite some research suggesting this kind of female sexual policing is tolerated by surrounding adults (Ringrose & Reynold, 2010; Kehily, Mac an Ghaill, Epstein, & Redman, 2002; Youdell, 2006), the media backlash against these female bullies was extensive and highly negative.

Chapter 4 examined how the bullies' gender contributed to the negative backlash the Prince bullies received. Gender was central to explaining the different responses to Ravi and the Prince bullies and appeared to act as a tipping point between discourses of moral regulation and moral panic. I argued that gender seemed to trigger a moral panic in the bullying discourse and theorized that the moral panic around gender was a reaction to a performance of patriarchy gone wrong as evidenced by Prince's suicide, and the potential for this to occur again at the hands of other "mean girls". Although girls have been allowed to regulate the sexuality of other girls (Ringrose & Reynold, 2010; Kehily, Mac an Ghaill, Epstein, & Redman, 2002; Youdell, 2006), I argued that the Prince girls' behaviors were too overt. Instead of effectively coercing appropriate gendered forms of sexuality, their behaviors, when framed in the articles as causing Prince's suicide, highlighted the violence and dangerousness of patriarchy. I also questioned whether the moral panic over the Prince case and "mean girls" in the articles reflects a shift away from approval for group policing of gendered sexual norms in favor of more a subtle, self-policing.

If moral panic around gender and bullying stems from its ability, at times, to unmask patriarchy, it may be possible to have a moral panic around enactments of sexuality if the

behavior of the perpetrators are overt enough to reveal the violence and cruelty of heteronormativity. As it was pointed out by Payne & Smith (2013), one of the problems with addressing the system of heteronormativity in bullying incidents is that the bullying is framed as a specific act or comment, and not as reflecting a larger system of gender and sexual norms. If the act is overt and shocking enough, however, sexuality could trigger a moral panic similar to the one the gendered performance of patriarchy created in the Prince case.

Race, on the other hand, does not seem to have the same power as gender to shift a moral regulatory framework into a moral panic, even in moments when the brutality of racism is unmasked.<sup>86</sup> Ironically, Hall et al.'s (1978) foundational moral panic study contained a major racial component. In media accounts of the purported rise in muggings in the U.K. in the 1970s, descriptions often referenced the U.S. rise in violence and racial unrest in inner cities. This connection served to associate a fear of muggings with a fear of racialized violence in the U.K. (Hall, et al., 1978). As we see from the articles in this study, however, racial bullying does not only fail to trigger a moral panic, it is a very small part of the bullying discourse.

There are a number of reasons why this could be the case. In order to offer a preliminary answer, I point out the difference between Hall's use of race to explain moral panic versus the potential for moral panic in this research, and return to Haney-Lopez's assessment of racial discourse in politics and Cole's analysis of American cultural responses to various claims of victimization. In Hall's research, race was used as a way to stir up fear of crime by associating racial minorities with crime. In contrast, the discourse on racial bullying examined in chapter 3 focuses primarily on victimization based on race, and only minimally on racial perpetration.

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<sup>86</sup> This analysis requires more theorization and analysis. This statement is an assumption based on frequent and recurring instances where the brutality of racism is made apparent and no moral panic around racial victimization results.

Haney-Lopez and Cole's work further explain why race is unlikely to trigger a moral panic as either a form of victimization or perpetration today.

Haney-Lopez's analysis of race in politics explains a process whereby a speaker references race, but never does so directly. When the speaker is accused of racial pandering, they are not only able to deny referring to race (because they technically didn't), but they can also claim their accuser is the one guilty of racial pandering. It seems under this analysis the person who directly mentions race first loses. According to Haney-Lopez, although race is discussed in politics, it is not discussed directly and openly. We can see evidence of this type of racial discussion in chapter 3. Some article writers attempt to blame the bullying issue on racial minorities, but they do so in the manner Haney-Lopez documented in her analysis of race in political discourse. Not only do these articles lack evidence of racial minorities acting as bullies, they are also so subtle in their racial references that they are easy to miss as racialized. More noticeable in the articles, however, is the way racial minorities are framed as bullying society with their claims of racial victimization.

In Cole's explanation of true victims and "victimists", the true victim accepts his victim status reluctantly or rejects it and does not participate in victim politics or frame his victimization as a collective group injury. The "victimist" however, receives hostility because they use their victim status to victimize society by obtaining undue benefits from this status. The only discourse from the bullying articles that comes close to using race to frame a moral panic is when claimants of racial bullying are characterized in chapter 3 as being out of control, unruly, or as Cole would describe, "victimists". Hall documents a more vulgar form of racial pandering in the moral panic around muggings in the U.K. As Cole and Haney-Lopez illustrate, creating a racialized moral panic today requires more finesse. While I do not argue there is a racialized

moral panic over minority claims of bullying victimization, Cole's analysis makes the case for this as a possibility.

### **Significance and Impact**

Assessing the importance of this research to the field is difficult because it is applicable to so many different fields. The bullying issue can lend itself to a wide range of scholarship because it is a unique lens through which to examine cultural and social responses to deviance, victimization, discrimination, middle class values, education, race, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, as well as other issues. Bullying research is not necessarily about bullying per se, but can be used as a frame to examine and explain how other issues or characteristics are constructed, regulated, highlighted or ignored, and handled culturally, socially, and legally. There are a number of fields that benefit from this research, including those interested in the discursive production of social categories, policy makers and legal reformers, moral panic theorists, and educators. This research is also relevant to those interested in how race, gender, and sexuality contribute to the construction of legal and social categories.

By demonstrating that text based discourses on race, gender, and sexuality are central to defining the categories of both bully and victim, this research contributes to the field of critical discourse analysis. Emerging from the Foucauldian notion that language produces and reproduces ideology, critical discourse scholars investigate and interrogate how individuals and institutions use discourse to promote the interests of dominant groups over more politically marginalized groups (Bucholtz, 2003). The findings that the bullying discourse contains patriarchal and heteronormative notions of appropriate male and female sexual behavior,

gendered expectations of sexual jealousy and its responses, and racially motivated recognition of victims and perpetrators contribute to critical discourse analysis.<sup>87</sup>

The legal analysis in this project, though limited, demonstrates the wide variation in bullying definitions and coverage among state laws. While other studies have mapped state bullying laws, including their definitions and whether specific groups or types of victims are legally protected (U.S. Department of Education, 2012; Sacco, Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey, & Doherty, 2012), they do not include the effects of this legal divergence. The findings in this dissertation could be useful to legal reformers wanting to make legal definitions of bullying more uniform. Furthermore, the finding that race, gender, and sexuality are highly relevant to framing both bullying victims and perpetrators is information legal reformers and policy makers would want to consider in future versions of bullying laws and policies.

This project makes a contribution to the moral panic literature in Chapter 4 by presenting an argument for the inclusion of gender in Hier's (2002, 2008, 2011) moral panic/moral regulation framework. Although gender seems to trigger moral panic in the bullying discourse, race does not. It may, however, be possible for other cases to trigger a moral panic based on "dangerous" responses to racial victimization. A more nuanced analysis of how race comes up in Hall et al.'s Policing the Crisis, together with Haney-Lopez's analysis of racial political discourse, and Cole's analysis of victimization could be a productive theoretical avenue.

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<sup>87</sup> For additional articles on critical discourse analysis as it relates to race and gender, see Talbot, M. (1995). A synthetic sisterhood: False friends in a teenage magazine. In K. Hall & M. Bucholtz (Eds.), *Gender articulated: Language and the socially constructed self* (pp.143-165). New York: Routledge; Talbot, M. (1997). "Randy fish boss branded a stinker": Coherence and construction of masculinities in a British tabloid newspaper. In S. Johnson & U.H. Meinhof (Eds.), *Language and masculinity* (pp.173-187). Oxford: Blackwell; Talbot, M. (2000). "'It's good to talk?'" The undermining of feminism in a British Telecom advertisement. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4(1): 108-119; van Dijk, T. (1993). *Elite discourse and racism*. Thousand Oaks: Sage; van Dijk, T. (1992). Discourse and the denial of racism. *Discourse Society* 3(1): 87-118; Wodak, R. (1989). *Language, power, and ideology: Studies in political discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins; Wodak, R. (1999). Critical discourse analysis at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 32(1): 185-193; Wodak, R. (2003). Multiple identities: The roles of female Parliamentarians in the EU Parliament. In J. Holmes & M. Meyerhoff (Eds.), *The handbook of language and gender* (pp. 671-698). Maiden: Blackwell; and Philips S. (2003). The power of gender ideologies. In J. Holmes & M. Meyerhoff (Eds.), *The handbook of language and gender* (pp. 252-6276). Maiden: Blackwell.

The gender analysis in chapter 4 contributes to feminist criminology because it shows that, in part, explanations of female bullying rely on popular invocations of the masculinization thesis. Instead of being offered by academics as an explanation for female deviance, it is part of a popular discourse explaining female deviance. This adds to Chesney-Lind and Eliason's (2006) work demonstrating the popularity of the masculinization thesis in media representations of female offending. More importantly, it recalls Faludi's (1991) research theorizing representations of deviant and masculine "bad girls" as evidence of a backlash against feminism. I do not argue that the negative attention paid to "mean girl" bullies indicates a backlash against feminism, but Faludi and Chesney-Lind & Eliason's works could be helpful in connecting how the persistence of the masculinization thesis can add to my analysis that the response to female bullies in the articles represents an anxiety that group policing of patriarchy can, at times, be ineffective. This kind of analysis may also offer insights into countering masculinization discourses in order to move away from the "add women and stir" approach to assessing various forms and constructions of female deviance (Chesney-Lind, 1988).

This research makes a contribution to criminology and law and society because it demonstrates how a "new" social concern, bullying, can be used as a justification for additional surveillance, intervention, and punishment of youth. While the use of "technologies, discourses, and metaphors of crime and criminal justice" (Simon, 2007: p. 4-5) in schools, including surveillance and punishment, extend to affluent and poor schools alike, forms of surveillance and punishment take harsher forms in poor school that serve a higher proportion of minority students (Hirschfield, 2008; Gillmore, 2007; Payne & Welch, 2010; Irwin, Davidson, & Hall-Sanchez, 2012). This research suggests surveillance and punishment of bullying behaviors may take different forms based on the socioeconomic and ethnic makeup of the school. Given the

national trend to funnel students out of the education system through zero-tolerance policies into the criminal justice system, known as the school-to-prison pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003), we may see bullying punishments contribute to youth incarceration rates. Because the school-to-prison pipelines disproportionately affects African American students (Wald & Losen, 2003), and the discourse analysis from chapter 3 demonstrated a potential racial biases in recognizing and responding to bullying incidents, this may lead to more children of color being punished and funneled into the criminal justice system as a result of bullying.

Finally, educators working with children who bully and who are victimized by bullying should be aware of how gender, sexuality, and race are relevant to making victims and bullies more or less recognizable. The findings on gender, race, and sexuality were embedded in hundreds of articles, but were not patently obvious. For example, Chapter 3 documents how well-meaning writers and commentators unwittingly upheld patriarchal and heteronormative notions of male and female sexual behavior in the articles in their attempts to present Prince and Clementi as victims. Educators can use these findings to craft a sensitive approach to dealing with both bullies and victims that do not rely on subtle gendered, sexualized, or racialized forms of discrimination.

### **Future Research**

The hypothesis that sexuality could trigger a moral panic similar to the one the gendered performance of patriarchy created in the Prince case is worthy of further investigation. It may be interesting to see if a similar panic occurred in the media in response to the murder of Larry King, a 15-year-old student from Oxnard, California who identified as gay and was shot at school in 2008 by Brandon McInerney, a 14-year-old classmate. In that case, King dressed in

girl's clothing, wore make-up, and flirted with other boys in class. One day after asking McInerney to be his Valentine, which prompted other boys to make fun of McInerney, he brought a gun to school and shot King in the head. This case is different from the Prince and Clementi cases because it involves gun violence by the perpetrator, and no reports of bullying between King and McInerney.<sup>88</sup> Based on a cursory exploration of the case, however, there seems to be an attempt in the media to hold McInerney less accountable for the murder, or at least explain his motivations as stemming from some amount of sexual harassment by King. While a search to locate a moral panic for this case do not appear to be promising, it would be useful to test whether sexuality, and specifically non-conforming male sexuality and responses to it, can trigger a moral panic.

The possibility of a moral panic emerging from race, specifically in the form of “dangerous” responses to racial victimization, would be an especially important and timely research project. A content analysis of news article on the recent unrest in Baltimore or protests in Ferguson may provide evidence of a racialized moral panic over minority communities’ responses to police brutality. While these cases have facilitated a dialogue about serious racial inequality in the U.S., they may also be producing a discourse where racial victimization is reframed as perpetration.

In addition to going in more depth with the potential of race to create a moral panic in the bullying discourse, I would want to further explore the link between governmentality, risk management, and the normative/pathological distinction I discuss in chapter 4. I would want to understand how the normative/pathological distinction is related to and interacts with race, gender, and sexuality and examine what elements help move the discourse from normative to

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<sup>88</sup> This was not included as a possible case study for this project because of the gun violence involved and lack of a clear bullying component.



pathological, and whether moral panic is part of that movement. Rose (1996), Foucault (1991), and Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde's (2006) foundational texts on governmentality will be helpful. Their research explains governmentality as a form of responsible risk management and self-governance, where the state is no longer in the position of securing its citizens from economic insecurity. Waquant's (2000) theorizing of the astronomical rise in the prison population as a way to manage the social insecurity created by these economic policies may be helpful in theorizing the moments where bullies are described as primarily pathological.

Additionally, I would want to theorize more about sexual policing gone array, and how governmentality studies about proper self-management could contribute to this analysis. I would do a more in depth theoretical analysis of the claim that gender seems to create a moral panic because it results in a momentary unmasking of patriarchy. McRobbie's (2008) research on the "new sexual contract" and its service to neoliberal governmentality goals of self-management, along with the work of governmentality scholars mentioned above, will be helpful with this theoretical development.

The purported link between bullying and violence is a key aspect of understanding the bullying discourse, one that I was not able to focus on in this research. I see this as a theoretical project that can be facilitated by Waquant (2000), Simon (2007), the various works of Giroux, and Swain & Noblit (2011), among others, because their work examines connections between punishment, education, and the use of punitive measures to manage groups and individuals hit hardest by neoliberal governance rationales. Taking a slightly different turn, Reddy's (2011) work linking state sanctioned social emancipation, in the form of legal protections against racism and homophobia, to the state's monopoly on the use of violence would also be helpful. As part of a larger analysis on various sanctioned and unsanctioned forms of violence, this research

imagines a quid pro quo between equality seeking movements and the state where the state acts as protector against private violence based on bigotry in exchange for a recognition that the state may need to act violently (at home and abroad) in order to do so. This type of analysis would be less about bullying per se, and more about how the bullying discourse can assist in extrapolating a larger theoretical discourse about appropriate, inappropriate, or extreme forms of violence and their relationship to the state.

There are a number of additional directions for future research that could add to and test my research findings. Because the legal definition of bullying is inconsistent across states, and because state laws vary widely in their scope of bullying protection, a future project that focuses on the legislative histories of various state bullying laws would add to the bullying research tremendously. Such a project would shed light on how the combination of research findings, cultural myths about bullying, and emotional reactions to bullying cases, which were documented in this project, are turned into law and policy. A comparison of two divergent state approaches to bullying, such as Massachusetts' and Nevada's bullying laws, could provide valuable information.

To add to this legal analysis, gathering survey or ethnographic research in various schools could help test the findings in this research project, and determine how the law is being implemented in individual school districts. Because bullying laws are directives for individual school districts, a lot of variation exists in how bullying laws are implemented at the local level. In addition to testing if factors like race, gender, and sexual orientation actually determine how victims are recognized and bullies are sanctioned in school settings, there are numerous other factors to investigate relating to how bullying laws are implemented. A few important questions to consider would be whether they are applied equally across various student demographics in a

particular school, or whether they are applied similarly across different schools within the same district, county, or even state.

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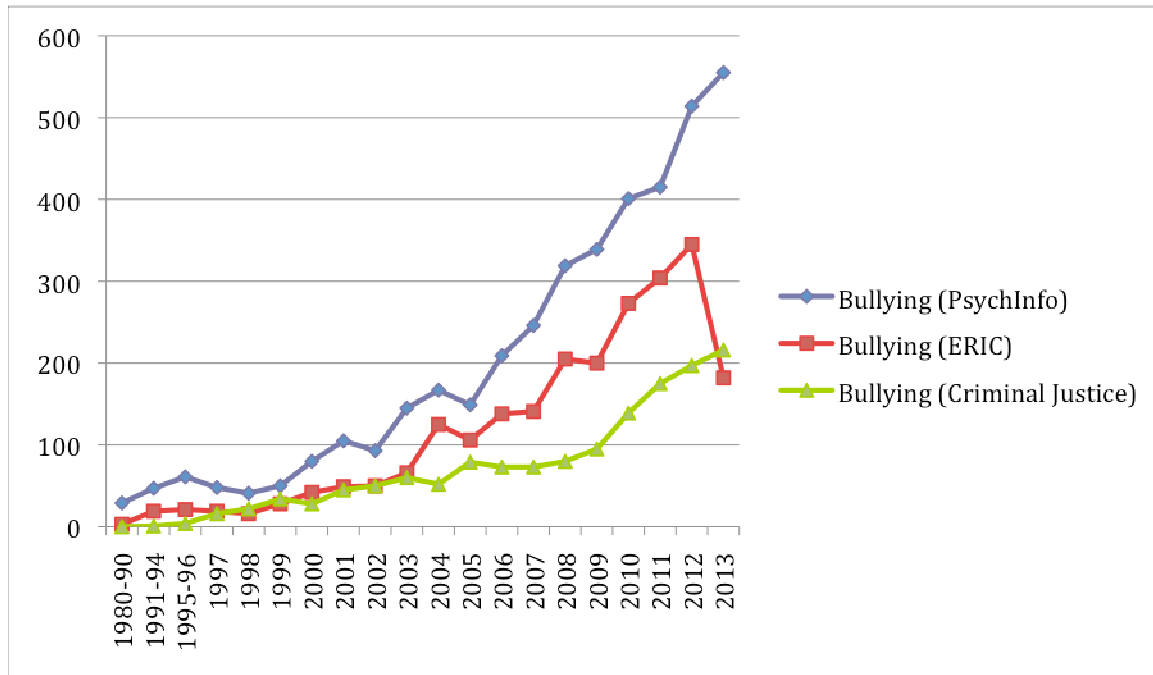
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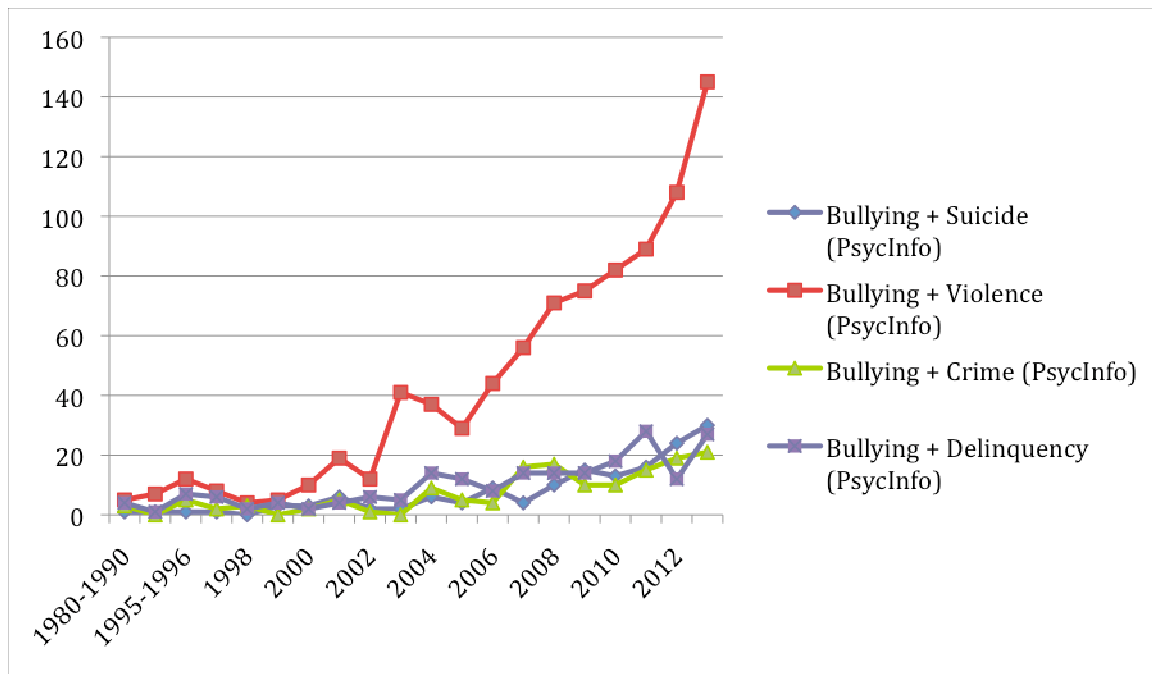


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## APPENDIX A: MENTIONS OF “BULLYING” IN ARTICLE DATABASES

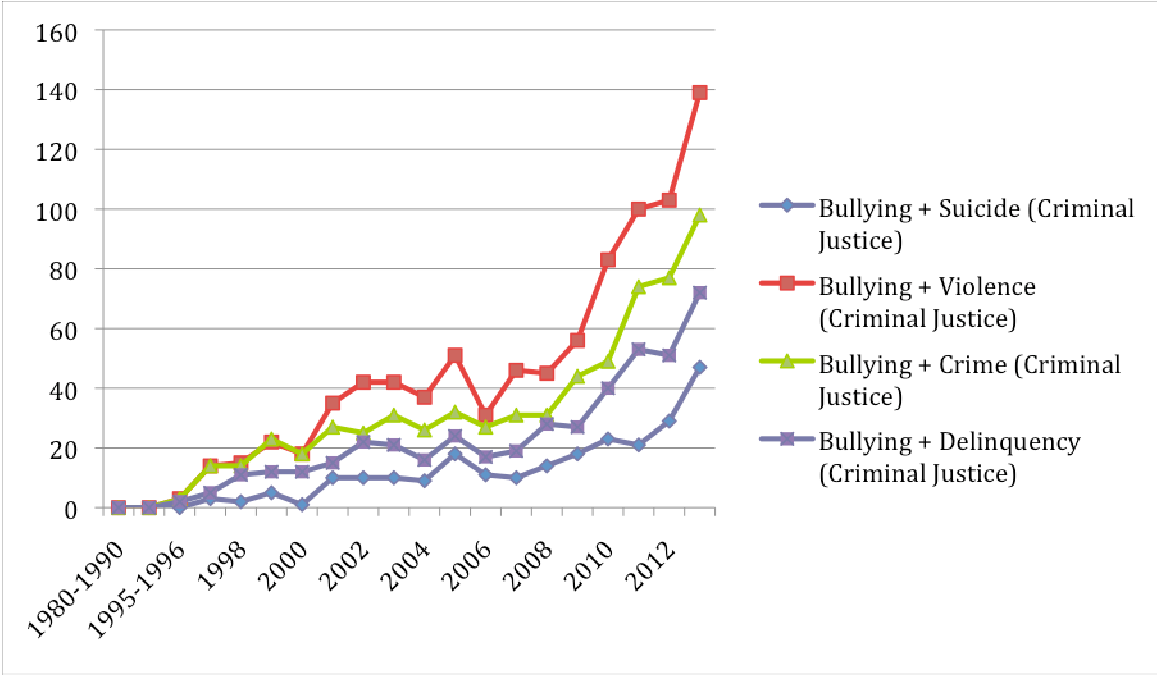
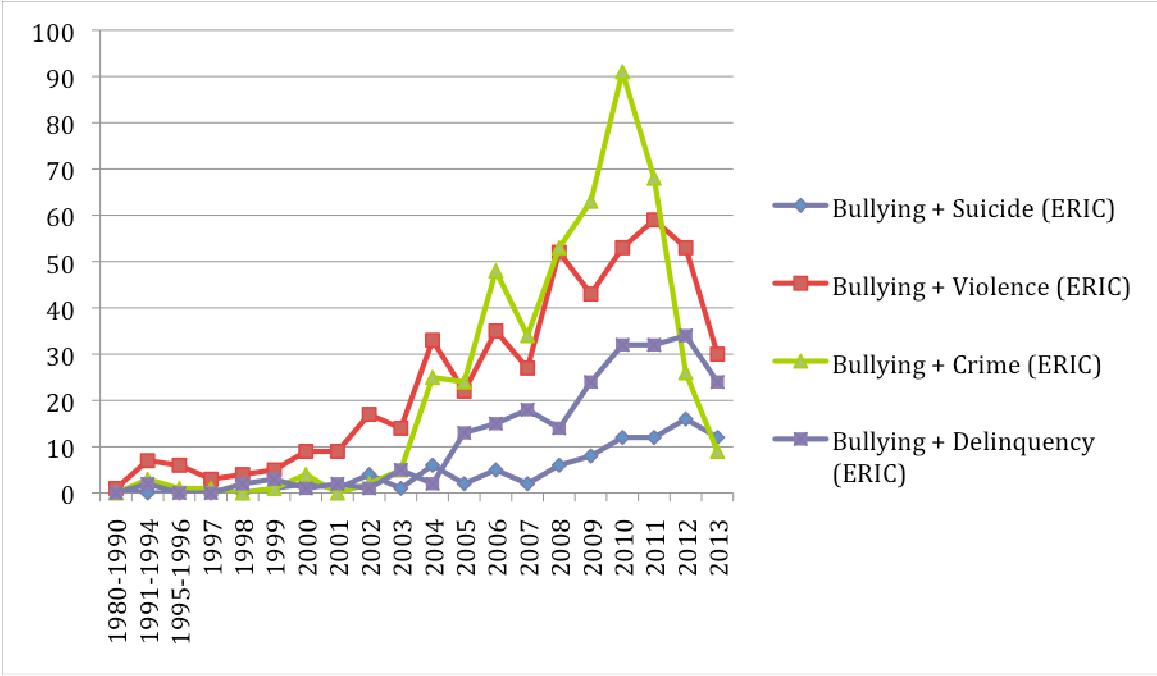


Year	Bullying (PsychInfo)	Bullying (ERIC)	Bullying (Criminal Justice)
<b>1926-1979</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b> (starting in 1966)	<b>0</b> (starting in 1981)
<b>1980-1989</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1990-1999</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>77</b>
1990-1992	16	5	0
1993-1995	63	21	2
1996-1998	131	50	41
1999	50	28	34
<b>2000-2009</b>	<b>1852</b>	<b>1121</b>	<b>646</b>
2000	80	42	28
2001	105	49	45
2002	93	50	50
2003	145	66	60
2004	167	125	52
2005	149	106	79
2006	209	138	73
2007	246	141	73
2008	319	205	80
2009	339	200	95
<b>2010-2013</b>	<b>1890</b>	<b>1103</b>	<b>723</b>
2010	401	273	139
2011	415	304	175
2012	514	345	197
2013	555	182	216



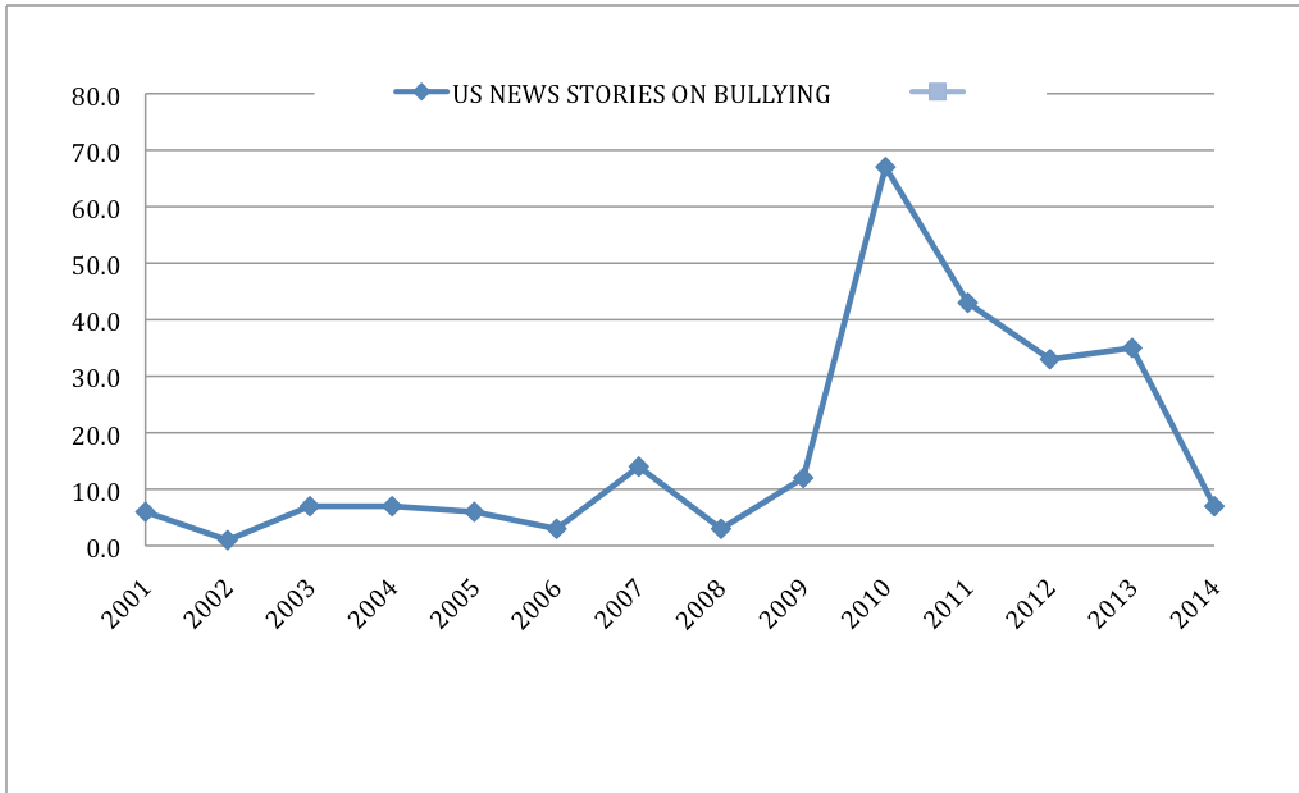
### PsycInfo Search

Year	Bullying	Bullying & Suicide	Bullying & Violence	Bullying & Gender	Bullying & Delinquency	Bullying & Sex Orient.
<b>1926-1979</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1980-1989</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1990-1999</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>
1990-1992	16	0	2	0	0	0
1993-1995	63	1	8	8	4	0
1996-1998	131	2	21	14	12	1
1999	50	3	5	6	4	2
<b>2000-2009</b>	<b>1852</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>68</b>
2000	80	3	10	5	2	0
2001	105	6	19	16	4	3
2002	93	2	12	20	6	3
2003	145	2	41	20	5	4
2004	167	6	37	27	14	7
2005	149	4	29	22	12	2
2006	209	9	44	31	8	7
2007	246	4	56	35	14	17
2008	319	10	71	42	14	16
2009	339	15	75	45	14	9
<b>2010-2013</b>	<b>1890</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>68</b>
2010	401	13	82	60	18	7
2011	415	16	89	67	28	14
2012	514	24	108	86	12	20
2013	555	30	145	100	27	27



## APPENDIX B: VANDERBILT TELEVISION ARCHIVE BULLYING REFERENCES

Year	NUMBER OF US BULLYING STORIES
<b>1968-2000</b>	<b>4</b>
1984	1
1997	1
1999	1
2000	1
<b>2001-2014</b>	<b>244</b>
2001	6
2002	1
2003	7
2004	7
2005	6
2006	3
2007	14
2008	3
2009	12
<b>2010-2014</b>	<b>185</b>
2010	67
2011	43
2012	33
2013	35
2014	7



## APPENDIX C: DATA CODING THEMES

### Racial Bullying Data Set

General Bullying	SJSU Case
<p><b><u>Racial Bullying Specific Cases</u></b>            Obama accusing critics of racial bullying            Big Brother racial bullying            Racial bullying of whites (CPS case)            Racial bullying at HS football game            Racial bullying in NFL            Racial bullying in Columbine            Racial bullying in school</p>	<p><b><u>Responsibility</u></b>            Focus on school responsibility            Focus on student liability            Responsibility of Vic to speak up            Zero tolerance called for</p>
<p><b><u>Racial Bullying as Part of a Discussion of Larger Issues</u></b>            Boy scout plug            Novel            Voting rights act struck down            mental health needs of black and minority children            Bullying in schools            Dayton NAACP            Cameras on busses            Stop bullying on campus            PP case references PA race bullying</p>	<p><b><u>Characterizing the Incident</u></b>            Characterized as hate crime            Characterized as bullying            Characterized as both HC and Bull            Parents brought the issue to light            RA warned students about flag            N-Word            Confederate flag            Blacked entry            Bike lock            Bigoted name calling            Nazi symbols            Sarcastic apology note            Non-criminal legal responses to case            Criminal dimensions of case discussed (more than sentence that students were charged)            Response to independent report            Report from vic or vic's family</p>
<p><b><u>Comments on Racial Bullying</u></b>            More needs to be done to end racial bullying            Racial bullying ignored            Racial bullying in suicide</p>	<p><b><u>Response to the Bullying</u></b>            Protests            Sense of defeat/depression or shock            Other minority marginalization on campus            Students must take lead on campus climate            Focus on all minorities            Task force Discussions            Calls to address additional issues</p>
	<p><b><u>Other</u></b>            Suicide of black student            Question of diversity on campus            Other issues facing campus            Black power Olympic alums            Poor representation of black students on campus</p>

## Clementi Data Set

General Bullying	Clementi Case
<p><b><u>Male v. Female Bullying</u></b>            Distinction b/t male and female bullying            About culture of heteronormativity</p>	<p><b><u>Webcam and Suicide</u></b>            Link b/t web cam and suicide/ (n) link between suicide and Ravi's actions questioned            Distinguishes the sex of TC's date</p>
<p><b><u>Why Someone is Bullied</u></b>            Bullying on: Other            Bullying on: Sexual orientation            Bullying on: Race            Bullying on: National Origin            Distinguishes bullying from harassment</p>	<p><b><u>Clementi</u></b>            Tyler troubled b/4 suicide            Descriptions of Tyler            Tributes to Tyler            C. parents change attitude toward gays            Tyler felt rejected by mother</p>
<p><b><u>Responses to Bullying</u></b>            Links to law enforcement            Laws/legal response needed/approved            Zero tolerance necessary            More bully awareness/resources needed / (n)            Intervention makes it worse            Discussion of anti bully programs            Prosocial approaches (kindness training, civility)            School liability            Bystander action needed            Increased parental involvement            Positive spin on bullying (it's normative through life, prosocial)            Focus on the bully / (n) Focus on toughening up vic</p>	<p><b><u>Ravi</u></b>            Ravi sentence too light            Ravi sentence too severe            Ravi sentence just right            Ravi should be punished harshly            Ravi as gay basher            Mixed results on punishment            Descriptions of Ravi</p>
<p><b><u>Link Between Bullying and Violence</u></b>            Generally            Future violence for bully or vic            Future criminality for bully or vic            Physical harm to victim            Psychological harm to vic            Link b/t bullying and suicide</p>	<p><b><u>Other</u></b>  <i>(included descriptions of other themes in the explanation category)</i></p>
<p><b><u>Explanations</u></b>            Bullying different today            Abuse of Power            Culture            Technology / (n) Tech as tool to stop bullying            Other</p>	
<p><b><u>Other</u></b>            Serious problem, more needs to be done / (n) we've gone overboard            Bullying and Politics            Religious issues            Class/wealth issues            Adult bullies            Celebrities involved, merchandise</p>	



**Prince Data Set**

<b>General Bullying</b>	<b>Prince Specific</b>
<p><b><u>Male v. Female Bullying</u></b>  Mean girls or extreme mean girls  Girl bullying more sinister  Equating RA w/ bullying  Distinction b/t male female bull.</p>	<p><b><u>Fault/Liability</u></b>  Link b/t student actions and PP suicide  Criminal charges should be filed  Charges against the school or school liability  Hadley family settlement</p>
<p><b><u>Link b/t Bullying and Violence</u></b>  Generally  Perp: (physical violence)  Vic: (school shootings)  Equating physical w/ verbal bullying  Link b/t bullying and suicide</p>	<p><b><u>Constructions of Victim</u></b>  "Irish slut" or "whore"  Bullied b/c of sexual relationship  PP pre-existing depression  Phoebe as the bully  Country of origin/ foreignness</p>
<p><b><u>Why Someone is Bullied</u></b>  Bullying on: Sex or sexuality  Bullying on: Race  Bullying on: National Origin</p>	<p><b><u>Constructions of Perpetrators</u></b>  Rival gangs  Megabullies  Sympathy for perps</p>
<p><b><u>Responses to Bullying</u></b>  Links to law enforcement  Laws/legal response needed/approved  Zero tolerance necessary  More bully awareness/resources needed  Discussion of anti bully programs  Prosocial approaches needed  School liability  Solutions aimed at kids  Increased parental involvement</p>	<p><b><u>Use of Prince Story to Introduce Other Topics</u></b>  Violence against women  Problems for free speech and over broad laws  Teenage depression  Transgendered bathroom access is ridiculous compared to "real" gender violence  Earlier manslaughter case based off short fight with popular and athletic victim/student  Child abuse, for both victimized and victimizers  Political correctness in language  Obama is mishandling Iran  Victims shouldn't determine what the CJS does  Technological dating abuse  Life w/o parole for juv.</p>
<p><b><u>Explanations</u></b>  Bullying different today  Competition  Reality TV  Sex + Sexuality  Technology</p>	
<p><b><u>Other</u></b>  Suspects and kids have lawyered up  Bullying and Politics  Class/wealth issues  Appeal to experts  Notes lack of funding for legal compliance  Serious problem  Vigilance</p>	