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Running Head: THE FRAMING OF PAST BULLYING EXPERIENCES: IMPACT ON
SOCIAL DECISION MAKING, EMOTIONS, AND PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

THE FRAMING OF PAST BULLYING EXPERIENCES: IMPACT ON SOCIAL-
DECISION MAKING, EMOTIONS, AND PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY
ABIGAIL STARK, M.S.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABSTRACT	5-6
INTRODUCTION	7-29
<i>The power of frames: Influence on decision making, emotions, and future predictions</i>	
<i>Gains and losses: Resiliency and negative effects frames around bullying</i>	
<i>Consequences and effects of frames around bullying</i>	
<i>Internalized Frames: Gender, Frames, and Bullying</i>	
STUDY AIMS	29
HYPOTHESES	30-31
METHODS	31-42
<i>Measures</i>	
<i>Participants</i>	
<i>Procedure</i>	
<i>Analyses</i>	
RESULTS	43-53
<i>Normality</i>	
<i>Manipulation Check</i>	
<i>Initial Equivalency Descriptive Analyses</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 1. Results</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 2. Results</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 3. Results</i>	
<i>Exploratory Analyses</i>	
DISCUSSION	53-75
<i>Hypothesis 1. Internalized and communicated frames of bullying</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 2. and 3. A deeper exploration of internalized and communicated frames</i>	
<i>Exploratory Findings. Narratives of Bullying</i>	
<i>Synthesizing the findings. Putting it all together</i>	
<i>Limitations and Future Directions</i>	
WORKS CITED	76-88
TABLES	89-97
<i>Table 1. Correlation Table of Beliefs about Bullying and Self-Conceptual</i>	
<i>Table 2. Correlations between types of bullying (Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire)</i>	
<i>Table 3. Correlations between Social Interaction Scale and PANAS</i>	
<i>Table 4. Adherence to prompt by endings</i>	
<i>Table 5. Social Interaction Scale Likelihood Item Analysis</i>	

[Table 6.](#) *Endorsement of current bullying by gender*

[Table 7.](#) *Hypothesis III, MANCOVA results*

[Table 8.](#) *Bullying themes within the narratives.*

[FIGURES](#).....98-107

[Figure 1.](#) *Social Interaction Scale Likelihood group differences*

[Figure 2.](#) *PANAS negative affect group differences*

[Figure 3.](#) *Likelihood of future bullying due to gender group differences*

[Figure 4.](#) *PANAS positive MANCOVA results by group when controlling for gender based variables*

[Figure 5.](#) *Social Interaction Scale Likelihood MANCOVA results by group when controlling for gender based variables*

[Figure 6.](#) *Exploratory narrative results: Social Interaction Scale Risk divided by ending*

[Figure 7.](#) *Exploratory narrative results: Social Interaction Scale Likelihood divided by ending*

[Figure 8.](#) *Exploratory narrative results: PANAS positive divided by ending*

[Figure 9.](#) *Exploratory narrative results: PANAS negative affect divided by ending*

[Figure 10.](#) *Exploratory narrative results: Predictions of future indirection bullying divided by ending*

[APPENDICES](#).....108-127

[Appendix A.](#) *The framing effect*

[Appendix B.](#) *Individual differences and the framing effect*

[Appendix C.](#) *Health psychology and framing*

[Appendix D.](#) *Demographic Questionnaire*

[Appendix E.](#) *Teacher's Attitudes Towards Bullying*

[Appendix F.](#) *Interdependent versus independent self construal measure*

[Appendix G.](#) *Modified Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire*

[Appendix H.](#) *Future Likelihood Questionnaire*

[Appendix I.](#) *Social Interaction Scale*

[Appendix J.](#) *Brief Measure of Positive and Negative Affect*

[Appendix K.](#) *Examples of Resiliency endings*

[Appendix L.](#) *Examples of Negative Effects Endings*

[Appendix M.](#) *Examples of Mixed Endings*

[Appendix N.](#) *Examples of narrative themes*

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Abstract

Background: Studies on framing demonstrate that the way ideas are presented influence the way individuals feel emotionally, conceptualize risk, and make decisions. Few studies have examined framing in social contexts, particularly within bullying. Many bullying interventions involve competing frames, with some discussing bullying in terms of negative effects and others in terms of resiliency from the experience. Gender is closely related to frames about bullying, as culturally communicated expectations and past experiences contribute to differences in individuals' internalized frames about bullying. To explore this gender by frame effect within the context of bullying, the current study examines how creating either a resiliency or negative effects frame impacts emotions and social decision making across males and females.

Methods: Participants ($N = 92$) were randomized to one of two groups. Participants answered self-report questionnaires around self-construal, internalized beliefs about bullying, and current bullying experiences. Next, participants wrote about a previous bullying experience in which they demonstrated either resilience (Resiliency Group) or negative effects (Negative Effects Group) and were further divided by self-identified gender. Lastly, participants answered self-report questionnaires around predictions of future bullying, current emotions, and social decision-making.

Results: First, the four groups (Negative Effects female, Negative Effects male, Resiliency female, Resiliency male) were entered in a MANOVA and compared across dependent measures. The overall model was significant (Wilks Lamda = .51, $F = 1.94$, $p = 0.004$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$). Second, MANOVA results demonstrated significant differences between male and female participants (Wilks Lamda, $F = 3.41$, $p = 0.00$) across self-construal, beliefs about bullying, and current levels of bullying. Third, these variables that differed significantly across gender (self-

construal, prior bullying beliefs, current bullying) were then entered into the MANCOVA model as covariates to better understand the gender by frame relationship. The overall model was significant (Wilks Lamda = 0.57, $F(30,228) = 1.81$, $p = 0.009$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.20$) as well as significant at each level, demonstrating that the effect of group remained significant after controlling for self-construal, bullying beliefs, and current bullying. Each of these covariates partially accounted for the gender by frame variance. Qualitative and exploratory mixed methods results were also investigated.

Conclusions: Results demonstrate that frames around bullying influence emotions and social decision making and that this impact differs across gender. Clinical implications and future directions are discussed.

Introduction

Trajectories after bullying are varied, diverse, and currently impossible to predict. Some individuals who experience bullying have healthy outcomes while others feel effects of this victimization long after the bullying ends. The varied outcomes are often not related to the type, frequency, or even severity of bullying (Smithyman, Fireman, & Asher, 2014). Frames may be one factor influencing individuals' trajectory and ability to successfully navigate both personal and professional relationships after undergoing the near-ubiquitous experience of being bullied. There is extensive literature on how framing and the framing effect influence decision-making, perceptions of the future, and emotions (e.g., Kuhberger, 1998; Best & Charness, 2015). Within this large body of research, a paucity of studies has examined how framing influences cognitions, emotions, and decision-making in social situations. Individuals are making innumerable interpersonal decisions each day, integrating their perceptions of social situations with formulations and predictions of gains and losses. Research demonstrates the importance of emotions and effective decision making in relationships across human development and in both positive and negative contexts (Seppala, Rossomando, & Doty, 2013). A better understanding of if and how frames around bullying impact social decision making, emotions, and predictions of future peer aggression is yet to be elucidated.

Given the widespread nature of bullying throughout development (e.g., school, community, workplace) and the potential consequences, it is important to understand the various frames that currently and commonly exist as well as their impact. Several competing frames around bullying occur frequently in American culture. For example, popular interventions within school settings have focused on both emphasizing the negative effects of bullying (e.g., increased isolation, depression, and fewer social interactions) as well as frames of resilience (e.g.,

becoming stronger due to bullying, having increased empathy). Frames of resilience and negative effects can both equally be true in regard to bullying; individuals can continue to thrive and experience increased resilience after being bullied and bullying can lead to negative outcomes with a range of severity. However, currently only one study (Stark, Tousignant, Fireman, 2019) explores the effects of these frames around bullying.

In this way, cultural frames around bullying of resilience and negative effects happen to be fairly consistent with those observed within the framing effect of gains and losses. The framing effect deals not only with the salience of cues but also with predictions of the future, choices involving risk (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981), behaviors in situations involving risk and reward (e.g., Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987), as well as emotions and attitudes towards events (e.g., Sheaffer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010). The framing effect posits that frames, if presented in terms of risk versus reward, can fairly easily override logical decision-making in an automatic and effortless manner (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). The frames around bullying related to risk and social cost align closely with the cognitive bias described within the framing effect. Comprehending how frames around bullying influence peer interactions, which often involve a feeling of risk, predictions of the future, as well as emotions is key to better understanding trajectories after bullying.

Framing occurs both through frames communicated to us externally, by teachers, family, the media, and other external sources, (*communicated frames*) as well as through cognitive schemas (*internalized frames*). Currently the only study specifically on this topic within the realm of bullying demonstrates that *communicated frames* can influence and interact with pre-existing *internalized frames* and current contextual factors (Stark, Tousignant, Fireman, 2019). When examining framing within the social realm, it is vital to consider social contextual and

individual factors; social decision making does not occur within a vacuum. We hope to better understand how frames of resilience and positive effects versus harm and negative effects influence cognitions, emotions, and behavior in relation to bullying. Furthermore, we hope to improve our knowledge of how pre-existing individual factors intersect with *communicated frames*. The need for additional research is underscored given the prevalence of bullying and the popularity of anti-bullying campaigns with a variety of frames around the effects of bullying. We contend that such an investigation on the effect of frames about bullying will have implications for both bullying prevention and intervention.

The power of frames: Influence on decision making, emotions, and predictions of the future

Framing refers to a phenomenon studied throughout psychology, political science, economics, advertising, and a variety of disciplines wherein small differences in the way a topic is presented often lead to large changes in opinion, affect, and decision-making (e.g., Chong & Druckman, 2007). Messages framed in conflicting manners about bullying surround individuals in contexts ranging from the research lab to quotidian life. Whether from the media, social conversations, our political leaders, or our parents, the context around which information is presented to us matters. The way individuals frame information, changes how we think about peace talks (Sheafer & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2010), agrobiotechnology (Marks & Kalaitzandonakes, 2002), public health interventions (Meyerowitz & Chiken, 1987) and a myriad of diverse facets in life. These frames impact our ideologies, our attitudes, and the very way we think about the world around us (e.g., Snow, 2004).

In daily life, frames often involve telling others what we should fear and to what we should pay attention. In a 2016 *New York Times* article, the author wrote of how differently two politicians, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, framed their messages. Trump framed his

message in terms of loss: everything that we have lost that once added to America's splendor.

Clinton framed her message in terms of gains: all that we have accomplished and can build upon.

Before the results of the election came through, the author pointed out that negative frames tend to make individuals more risk seeking, leading them to possibly take a chance on a political outsider with little experience (Vavreck, 2016). The rest is history.

When inciting our fearful interest, frames not only point our attention in a specific direction but can also influence our decision-making process, especially around decisions involving risk. Humans tend to believe that they make decisions, especially around high-risk situations, in rational and even mathematical manners, weighing the benefits and losses. Research consistently demonstrates this is not the case (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) sought to dispel what the authors purported to be myths around the use of logic in the decision-making process. They hypothesized that the way decisions are framed affect how humans evaluate their choices. Humans seek the most valued or helpful option yet importantly the authors point to the general human reluctance to invoke risk, or "loss aversion," as a mechanism involved in this phenomenon. In this model of human behavior, responses to a loss are stronger than those to a gain. In other words, we all hope to avoid an upsetting loss even more than the allure of taking a chance to make beneficial gains. This response set is so pervasive, it is considered a hardwired bias (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Fundamentally, the framing effect refers to an automatic cognitive bias wherein individuals make different choices depending on how a topic is presented in terms of gains or losses (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Framing and frames more generally refers to small differences in the way something is portrayed.

Within the current study, it is acknowledged that social situations cannot be framed as closed problems with precise probabilistic percentages, such as when the framing effect has been used within behavioral economics (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; for an example of the framing effect, see Appendix A). Social situations are intrinsically open problems, with multiple viable outcomes. Thus, the current study will examine how frames shift our understanding of likelihood and more general probabilities of certain social outcomes occurring. Unlike classic framing effect studies with specific percentages of risk, it would decrease the relevancy and external validity of this study to reduce the complexities of social interaction and bullying to economics. Thus, although the phrase “frames” will be used throughout the paper, this is in reference to the effect of frames and influence of Tversky and Kahneman’s pivotal work, rather than the framing effect. The decision to utilize the word “frames” was made in order to acknowledge the influence of previous research on frames which deal specifically with frames of gains and losses, decision-making, risky behavior, and estimations of probabilities.

How do frames relate to bullying and social relationships? Frames directly address not only how we make decisions in our everyday lives but also mirror ideas in cognitive psychology. As Fagley and Miller (1990) point out, the framing effect demonstrates that a singular outcome can be viewed from different perspectives. Thus, there is not a clear loss or gain, but rather the framing effect demonstrates the multitude of lenses through which a specific prediction can be viewed. This maps onto cognitive work done with social relationships in terms of peer approach or avoidance behavior (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004). Although a relative risk exists with approaching new or known peers after a bullying experience, the way in which these possible losses or gains are framed for an individual may be one mechanism influencing their likelihood of approaching (risky behavior) or avoiding (risk adverse behavior).

One of the most rigorously researched evidence-based therapies for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), is based in part on this idea that frames influence our conceptualizations of risk and approach versus avoidance behaviors. In CPT, individuals write narratives around a traumatic event and slowly find ways to reframe the meaning and thoughts learned from this event. It involves a shift in *internalized frames* in order to reduce avoidance of safe situations that are interpreted after the trauma as risky as well as avoidance of specific emotions (Resick, Monson, Chard, 2008). CPT emphasizes how our memories around traumatic and upsetting events can accentuate specific components that can be detrimental or beneficial for coping. It is likely that both *communicated frames* and *internalized frames* around bullying push individuals to similarly focus on specific aspects of the experience and that this influences their world view. Indeed, in the one study on bullying frames to date, the authors found that the way participants highlighted certain aspects of coping or negative effects in constructing personal narratives of bullying experience, shifted meaning-making and emotions from these events (Stark et al., 2019).

Conceptualizations of risk are closely tied to social decision-making, emotions, and predictions of the future (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004). For individuals who experience bullying, the way they make decisions socially after bullying experiences may be one area that leads to more positive or negative trajectories. By viewing specific social situations as more or less risky, this may enhance or reduce avoidance of social relationships, which can vastly change trajectory after bullying. This may be especially true as research demonstrates that social support is a robust protective factor against future bullying (Rothman, Head, Klineberg, Stansfeld, 2011). This study contends that frames, as they influence our remembered autobiographical narratives of

bullying, in part may account for the way individuals make social decisions around social interactions, their views on the likelihood of future victimization, and emotions.

In terms of social decision-making, this study looks at both bystander behavior as well as peer interactions. A major component of bullying intervention relies not only on how individuals cope with bullying but also whether or not observers choose to intervene and provide support to others during bullying situations. Furthermore, one factor influencing trajectory and wellbeing after bullying involves social cohesion and interaction after bullying events (Rothman, Head, Klineberg & Stansfeld, 2011). We hope to better understand not only how frames affect individual social behavior, but also how frames influence bystander behavior after recalling an experience of bullying.

Frames not only influence decision-making and cognitive appraisals of a situation, but also emotional responses (e.g., Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). Cognitive appraisals and emotional responses are often theorized to go hand-in-hand (Smith & Lazarus, 1993). The way we interpret a stimuli or experience influences the emotions we associate with this encounter. Exemplifying this idea, Gross and D'Ambrosio (2004) conducted a study where participants read two newspaper stories about the same subject: the 1992 Los Angeles riots. One article was framed to emphasize the social context in Los Angeles at the time while the other was framed to emphasize the rioters' criminality. The authors discovered that emotional responses to these articles were influenced by the article's frame as mediated by individual predispositions (Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). This same idea is once again foundational to CPT wherein changing beliefs about a traumatic event leads to a shift in emotions (Resnick, Monson, Chard, 2008; Jonas, Cusack, Forneris, Wilkins, Sonis, Middleton, Olmsted, 2013). Thus, framing may not only change our cognitive appraisals and decision-making process, but also influence our emotions.

Importantly, Gross and D'Ambrosio's study (2004) also demonstrated the role of pre-existing individual factors which interacted with the frames communicated to participants through the chosen newspaper articles. The current study extends the research on framing to examine how the framing of a personal experience involving being bullied influences current appraisal and emotions.

Lastly, the framing effect and frames have been consistently shown to influence how individuals think of the future, especially in terms of predictions about the likelihood of future events and probabilities (e.g. Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Estimations of likelihood of future victimization may be one area that influences current social behavior and cognitions around the future. Due to the proliferation of research on this influence of frames and predictions of the future and the likely clinical implications of how views of the future may influence current coping, this study also aims to examine the influence of frames around bullying on estimations of future peer victimization.

Gains and losses: Resiliency and negative effects frames around bullying

An abundance of research demonstrates that childhood bullying can lead to serious externalizing and internalizing problems later in life, such as depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic issues (e.g., Meltzer, Vostanis, Ford, & Dennis, 2011; Olweus, 1994). There is no denying that bullying can produce devastating effects and does involve varying degrees of emotional pain (e.g. Borg, 2003). However, not all victims of bullying end up experiencing such damaging short or long-term effects (Smithyman, Fireman, Asher, 2014). To reduce bullying and mitigate negative outcomes, there has been a proliferation of bullying intervention programs (for a meta-analysis, see Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008). The majority fall within one of two

nearly dichotomous frames in their portrayal of bullying: those emphasizing the negative effects of bullying and those emphasizing resilience during bullying experiences.

Many bullying intervention programs, especially those intended as school-wide programs, use the more severe outcomes of bullying as examples of the distress and tragedy bullying can cause in an attempt to reduce bullying. In this way, these interventions promote and communicate a negative effects frame (e.g., for a 2-year longitudinal study on a bullying intervention program see Olweus, 1991). Olweus (1978) created a prototype of bullying interventions that has lasting implications today as to how we intervene in school settings to reduce bullying (Merrell et al., 2008). Bullying programs based on his model often emphasize building empathy for the victim of bullying and increasing social skills. Necessarily, these focus on noticing, observing, and responding to distress and negative feelings of bullying victims. Notably, many major reviews and calls for further research on the topic of bullying similarly emphasize potential negative outcomes such as school shootings and suicide as calls to action against bullying and justification for further research. The School Psychology Review special issue in 2003 focused on bullying and exemplified this position, positing that major nation-wide programs, such as the DARE campaign by the US government, were created in reaction to school shootings that were conceptualized as a byproduct of bullying (Furlong, Morrison, Greif, 2003). Research does not yet exist on how these negative effects *communicated frames*, or messaging, affects those who are experiencing or have experienced bullying.

Alternatively, other popular programs such as the “It Gets Better” bullying project acknowledge the negative impact of bullying when it occurs, while focusing on the positive trajectory that children may experience and aim to give hope to the many affected by bullying thereby adding a resiliency frame (itgetsbetter.org). This project fits in with a line of research

that has focused mainly on LGBTQ youths' experience with bullying. Research has demonstrated that conceptualizing LGBTQ youth as at high risk of bullying further enhances the idea that LGBTQ youth are in some way deficient and deviant from normal society (e.g., Russell 2005; Savin-Williams, 2005). Researchers such as Russell (2005) recommend that, especially for LGBTQ youth, communicating frames around bullying in terms of resilience rather than as victims creates feelings of strength, coping, and the opportunity to thrive rather than signaling LGBTQ status as a pathway for distressing experiences.

Returning to the ideas of Tversky and Kahneman (1981) and the framing effect, it is important to note that resiliency and hopefulness are not identical to a "gain" frame. Resiliency based programs do not state that bullying allows a profitable or a fully positive experience. Similarly, the negative effects frame focus on the loss experienced by individuals due to bullying, is not identical to a concrete "loss" frame. However, resiliency frames emphasize the idea of an opportunity for a trajectory full of gains, while the other more negative-effects centered frames focus on a trajectory full of losses. In this way, these different *communicated frames* call to mind the loss/gain frames of the framing effect.

These frames also echo ideas within narrative psychology of the way we frame and describe memories of challenging experiences. Adler and colleagues (2016) discuss how autobiographical narratives of challenging life events often involve three main affective themes and that these themes speak to trajectory after and coping with these events. First, themes of contamination are when a negative event leads to negative outcomes. Second, themes of redemption are when negative events turn to a more positive meaning and "the bad is redeemed, salvaged, mitigated or made better in light of the ensuing good" (Adler et al., 2016, p. 159). Lastly themes of positive resolution involve accepting and moving on from a negative event

(Adler et al., 2016). A growing body of research demonstrates that when individuals construct life stories that emphasize themes of redemption and positive resolution, it is associated with greater well-being and more positive mental health outcomes (McAdams & McLean, 2013). The literature points to our own identities in part being based upon the way we construct these autobiographical narratives of self (e.g., Singer, 2004). The way we tell our life stories, especially those around challenging or upsetting events, matters.

Russell (2005) is one of the few researchers currently noting the difference in *communicated frames* used around bullying in terms of risk and resilience. This researcher's work focuses on cultural messages and focused research on LGBTQ youth being resilient versus "at risk." Russell notes that these emphases differentially frame sexual orientation as either a pathway towards negative, challenging trajectories or acknowledges and puts forth a message of strength. Observing these differences may appear minimal and linguistic, yet research on frames note the changes in individual outcomes solely through the language we use around victimization. For example, Hockett and Saucier (2015) through an extensive literature review provide evidence for the difference in conceptualization created in using the word "rape victim" versus "rape survivor." They found that those who used the language of a "survivor" in their articles emphasized pushing back against oppression of women and conceptualizing women who had been raped in a more multi-dimensional manner and spoke of survivors in language pointing out their individuality, when compared to those who used the word "victim" (Hockett & Saucier, 2015).

Examining the semantic transition from the "victim" to "survivor" of sexual violence, research demonstrates that how individuals believe society acknowledges and conceptualizes their situation affects trajectory as well as *internalized frames*. In the case of sexual violence, this

has been shown with PTSD severity after traumatic events (Maercker & Muller, 2004). For example, if an individual believes others around him or her see the trauma as due to a weakness, negative defect, or is in part the fault of the individual, avoidance has been shown to increase as well as individuals' personal interpretations of the averseness and distress of re-experiencing symptoms (Maercker & Muller, 2004). Overall, an abundance of research on survivors of trauma, especially within the sexual assault literature, link language such as the word "survivor" compared to the word "victim" to reduced learned helplessness, blame, and feelings of shame around the trauma (e.g., Flannery, 1987). This speaks to the importance of language in communicating certain frames and beliefs about traumatic life events. Although bullying is a life event that can lead to long-term negative outcomes, there is comparatively less research examining the *communicated frames* around language and perception of bullying and how this influences trajectory.

Research on the specific language used around those who experience sexual assault (victims versus survivors) parallels that of framing in many ways, focusing on either the loss experienced after an event (i.e., victim) or a more gains-like frame of strength (i.e., survivor). Children who are bullied similarly can be framed as hurt victims or imbued with a more hopeful trajectory. How these frames affect those who have been bullied, whether through validation of the pain they have experienced or hope for a better future, remains largely unexamined. Framing is one excellent mechanism for exploring how language changes feelings and perspectives around an event.

Frames do not just exist in isolation for those children who are participating in bullying intervention programs. Framing around bullying is culturally pervasive within classrooms, schools, and the media among other groups. Socially and from school-to-school these frames

also are reflected within teacher and familial attitudes. A study by Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) demonstrated that teacher attitudes about bullying influenced how teachers aided students coping with bullying and how students responded to bullying. Similarly, studies examining children who demonstrate strong coping skills in the face of bullying, often point to familial factors that influence this resiliency (e.g., Sapouna & Wolke, 2013). Although neither of these studies directly investigated frames around bullying and social decision making, this research demonstrates the influence of differing family and teacher beliefs and attitudes in individual resilience after bullying. This may align once again with research on sexual assault survivors who experience “re-victimization” after the initial assault through contact with doctors, family members, peers, and cultural situations which reinforce rape culture and patterns of male aggression within America (Hockett & Saucier, 2015). In noting these cultural frames, understanding the complex interaction between frames learned over time (e.g. being acculturated to a particular understanding of bullying; *internalized frames*) and frames presented in a particular moment (e.g. a bullying intervention at school; *communicated frames*) is necessary.

Environmental and cultural contextual frames are often internalized over time and change how individuals understand personal and threatening events. For example, Sawyer, Bradshaw, and O’Brennan (2008) found that African American children were less likely than White peers to conceptualize aggressive acts as bullying. Furthermore, American children compared to European children were more likely to conceptualize bullying as involving physical acts rather than also including interpersonal aggression, possibly leading to decreased endorsement of more subtle bullying experiences (Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2009). In contrast to Olweus’ tripartite definition of bullying (1993) that includes repeated attacks, Byrne and colleagues (2016) found that Taiwanese adolescents often defined bullying with references to intentionality and power

imbalances, while rarely speaking of repetition. There seem to be varied cultural frames and understandings around bullying which affect conceptualization of our own experiences. The question arises as to whether these socially communicated cultural frames significantly influence emotional reactions to bullying. In other domains of aggression, such as sexual assault, research indicates that salient frames affect how survivors conceptualize, respond to, and emotionally cope with their own experiences (e.g., Kahn, Jackson, Kullu, Badger, Halvorsen, 2003). Thus, research suggests that frames may influence emotions and behavioral reactions to bullying.

Cultural frames also exist generationally. Olweus and Limber (2010) note that it was not until the 1970's that bullying became a topic of systematic research as it was previously thought of as an archetypal part of childhood and adolescence. General opinions of bullying may vary by culture, age group, and setting (e.g., workplace versus school; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). Although stringent and concise definitions of bullying have been widely accepted in the research literature (e.g., Olweus, 1994; recent government definitions), individuals who actually experience bullying typically define or conceptualize bullying in diverse ways (Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2009). These personal definitions and cognitive frames are likely to be influenced by varied cultural and situational frames. In this way, *communicated frames* around bullying are thought to influence those who are bullied, and reciprocally influence *internalized frames*.

Consequences and effects of frames around bullying

Although only one study (Stark et al., 2019) has used a controlled method to examine the effect of frames within the topic of bullying, the influence of frames may also be observed through examining the effects of uncontrolled intervention programs on bullying. As previously stated, there is a diverse range of intervention programs which often fall into two categories: those emphasizing the negative effects of bullying and those emphasizing resilience. Merrel and

colleagues (2008) found that bullying interventions in general (not when considering frames) changed children's knowledge, attitudes, and self-perceptions, for example, self-perceived competency to handle bullying (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, Isava, 2008). The overall finding that self-perception was shifted is a powerful and suggestive finding. If these interventions shift self-perception and interventions frame perceptions of victims of bullying so differently, this calls for a better understanding of the effects of the self-perception frames created by bullying interventions. These self-perceptions may influence how events are interpreted after a bullying event. Self-perception has been shown to be a powerful determinant in social behavior and decision making (e.g., Beck, 1991). Adding to this idea, the previous study by the authors examining frames found a similar shift in self-perception in terms of being able to cope with bullying or long-lasting negative effects from this experience (Stark et al., 2019). However, self-perception and decision-making tend to be overlooked in the major intervention studies of bullying.

A small number of studies have examined cognitive factors that influence the severity of effects stemming from bullying. For example, Catterson and Hunter (2010) demonstrated that cognitive interpretations of threat after a bullying event affected how lonely a victim of bullying felt afterwards. Loneliness after bullying events has been demonstrated to predict likelihood of seeking peer support and other help-seeking behavior after bullying, a major coping skill (Catterson & Hunter, 2010). Wilkins (2014) discussed the possibility of using cognitive reappraisal strategies in responses to nurses being bullied in the workplace. This study posits that being able to reframe attributions about why bullying has occurred and one's own ability to cope, could reduce distress and increase overall coping of nurses being bullied (Wilkins, 2014). Cognitive reappraisal is typically thought of as an effortful method to override pre-existing

schemas that may be creating increased distress or lowered well-being in life and is one of the foundations of cognitive therapy (e.g. Beck, 1991) and several cognitive therapies for trauma symptoms (e.g. Cognitive Processing Therapy; Resick & Schnicke, 1992).

Better understanding how cognitive factors influence both social decision-making and interact with emotions is necessary. For example, in Catterson and Hunter's (2010) study, they failed to explore how some of these cognitive interpretations develop beyond individual temperament. Framing is one major widespread cognitive phenomenon that directly relates to cognitive interpretations of social situations. Research has failed to clarify cognitive mechanisms that may lead to helpful or unhelpful reactions after bullying incidents even while differing frames around bullying are evident around us.

One method of both observing and shifting cognitive schemas around identity and the world is through narrative reconstructions of self. A growing body of literature has demonstrated how the way we tell stories of our own life - the way we conceptualize our own personal narratives- influences our memories of the past and interactions in the future. McAdams and McLean (2013) call this our narrative identity: "a person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imaged future." They write that the way we understand major moments in our own life is dynamic, everchanging, and influenced by both internal schemas and external social cues. Furthermore, echoing much of the cognitive psychology tenants, they put forth the idea that those who find "redemptive meaning" within times of distress and adversity have better mental health and well-being outcomes (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Based on this research, the way individuals conceptualize their own autobiographical narratives of bullying may influence outcome.

The only studies examining the interplay of frames and autobiographical narratives of past bullying experiences are by the current author (Stark et al., 2019; Stark, Tousignant, Fireman, under review). In these studies, college students were randomly assigned to one of two groups; one using a definition of bullying that subtly included themes of resilience and the other framing bullying with negative psychosocial effects. Participants were then asked to provide a written personal narrative of a bullying experience without specifying *how* they should tell this story.

Results demonstrated that the participants provided the negative effects frame were more likely to end their narrative in a negative manner while the participants provided the resiliency frame were more likely to end their narrative in a positive manner. This subtle environmental frame shifted the conclusion of their story. Furthermore, in the way they told their stories, significant difference was found between the two groups with the Resiliency Group reporting using more coping skills in their narratives in direct response to bullying than the Negative Effects Group. Overall, subtle *communicated frames* affected the way participants wrote about and remembered personal bullying experiences. Interestingly, participants in both groups denied noticing the frame and even reported differing ideas around resilience versus negative effects about bullying. However, this brief prompt impacted the way they told a personal and painful autobiographical story of being bullied (Stark et al., under review).

A similar study design was employed in the current study; however, participants were explicitly directed to create a personalized frame around a past experience of bullying by recalling and writing a narrative about a time they exhibited resilience to bullying or negative effects from bullying. In Stark et al. (2019), many but not all participants (63% in the Negative Effects Group and 67% in the Resiliency Group) wrote about experiences of bullying in

alignment with the frame. Although significant differences were observed from this intervention, many of the bullying interventions as well as discussions around bullying are more directed and purposeful towards messages of resilience or negative effects. Now that we have examined and demonstrated effects of a subtle frame, this study moves more strongly towards better understanding how individuals respond to being directed either towards ideas of resilience or negative effects.

Internalized Frames: Gender, Frames, and Bullying

Through the proliferation of research on frames, we have gleaned knowledge on how individual characteristics influence outcomes in response to frames (for further information, see appendix B). These individual differences should be taken into account when discussing an area as complex as social decision-making. Pre-existing *internalized frames* may make it more or less challenging to incorporate a newer *communicated frame*. For example, an individual who has been taught messages of resilience in response to adversity throughout their life, may respond more quickly to a *communicated frame* of resilience around bullying. Although limited research on framing has been done within the realm of clinical psychology, or more specifically bullying, a small area of growing research within health psychology exists (e.g., Meyerowitz & Chaiken, 1987). For a closer examination of this topic, please see appendix C.

Perhaps nowhere are *communicated* and *internalized frames* around expected social behavior, social responses, and appropriate affect as clearly shown as within gender roles. Just as frames around bullying may change the way we think of our own stories and experiences with peer victimization, so do other cultural frames impact our identity and interpretation of the world. This demonstrates the complexity and fluctuating interplay of *communicated* and *internalized frames*.

In the aforementioned investigation of frames and bullying (Stark et al., 2019), there were unexpected findings associated with gender. Results demonstrated significant interaction effects of gender by frame with the same pattern repeated over a variety of explicit and implicit measures. There was a significant interaction between gender and frame where females in the Negative Effects Group had higher self-esteem than females in the Resiliency Group and the opposite was true for males. This same pattern existed for levels of sadness, overall negative affect, levels of distress from the study, and was trending significant for an implicit measure of mood. In other words, females in the Negative Effects Group felt “better” overall than females in the Resiliency Group, while males in the Negative Effects Group felt “worse” overall than males in the Resiliency Group (Stark et al., 2019).

In the current study, describing participants as “male” or “female” is meant in terms of self-identified gender according to socialized norms of cis-males and females. This study is interested in cultural differences that are taught or learned over time especially in terms of internalized frames and beliefs, ways of thinking about self and identity, and current experiences. Biological sex was not assessed. Gender is often thought of as a spectrum rather than dichotomous identity variable. Of note, this study uses gender as a dichotomous variable, however it is vital for future research to explore gender identity and its intersection with bullying in terms of gender’s full spectrum.

This study understands differences by gender as centered around culturally taught and learned distinctions between male and female gender identity and relational patterns, rather than sex, or biological, differences. This speaks to the importance of understanding the interaction between individual characteristics and frames. A large body of research has developed around gender schema theory (Bem, 1981; for a review of literature based on this theory see Starr &

Zurbiggen, 2016), or the idea that across development children learn cognitive schemas, *internalized frames*, about themselves in line with culturally defined and reinforced ideas of what it means to be masculine or feminine. Extending this theory to the realm of bullying, we suspect that culturally different conceptualizations around coping with bullying and its effects may be learned differently by males versus females. Based on this research, gender cannot be ignored in discussions of framing and bullying.

In this way, gender is an important facet in understanding framing and bullying in that culturally different schemas, or frames, around bullying are learned by females versus males. The results from Stark and colleagues' study (2019) may be due to the resilience frame fitting in more easily with pre-existing schemas about bullying for males while the negative effects frame fits in more easily with pre-existing schemas about bullying for females. It may be that males are taught that resilience and coping with bullying is more culturally accepted, a possibility which is reflected in males remembering more coping skills, specifically more independent coping skills, than females (Stark et al., 2019). Salin (2003) describes this idea of differing acculturated frames around workplace bullying. She argues that for females compared to males, the complex interaction between higher exposure to negative interactions, feelings of powerlessness, and a greater willingness to describe these experiences as bullying lead in part to higher prevalence for females than males in being the victim of workplace bullying. In discussing gender and bullying, Salin (2003) emphasizes that bullying, which involves differences in power, necessarily relates to the framed differences in power culturally between males and females. This also speaks to the gender differences in beliefs about ability to cope with bullying found by Stark and colleagues (2019) in terms of beliefs in one's own power and agency to respond to bullying. Thus, the current study begins to assess pre-existing beliefs around bullying, in terms of how to cope with

it and how typical the experience is, to better understand how these *internalized frames* may interact with the study's *communicated frames*.

Frames of resilience versus negative effects around bullying may be further reinforced by different typical bullying events experienced by males and females. In the study by Stark and colleagues (2019), women across the two groups predicted that they were significantly more likely to be bullied either physically or verbally in the future compared to men. Research points to differing rates and types of victimization for women compared to men throughout the lifespan. For example, women are at higher risk of sexual assault while men are at higher risk of violent crimes (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). A recent meta-analysis of children ages 4-17 from seventeen different countries demonstrated significant differences between males and females on rates of direct and physical bullying with males having higher levels, while there was no difference in terms of relational victimization by gender (Casper & Card, 2017). Although not typically thought of as bullying, the rates of sexual assault and sexual-based violence are far higher for females than males (91% female identifying, 9% male identifying sexual assault reported victims; National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). It may be that due to higher rates and fears of victimization, whether in relationships, the workplace, or other facets of life, women react to these frames in a different manner than men who may not experience as high rates of this threat and think of bullying as an aspect of the past. Further information is needed to better understand if being bullied currently versus in the past affect how these frames affect emotions and decision making. This study begins to address this issue through asking about current levels of bullying as well as worries around victimization due to gender or sexual orientation.

Lastly, our own constructions and ideas around identity are often influenced by social contexts such as gender. Previous research has demonstrated that females, relative to males, are taught to be more sensitive to social comparison and pay attention to socially dependent comparisons in their understanding of self when compared to males (e.g., Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that there are gender differences in the way children are socialized to view peer relationships and the importance of these relationships with females being taught to value peaceful, less competitive, and more interconnected peer networks; a contrast to the veritably non-peaceful experience of bullying (e.g. Lee, Kesebir & Pillutla, 2016). It may be that bullying takes on an added social context and emotional toll due to feelings of shame and ostracism given imposed norms of social connection upon females. On the other hand, it may be that cultural norms of greater independence-based self-construal lead to the message of individual resilience resounding more strongly with pre-existing beliefs about coping and self for males. This study aims to explore whether a more inter- versus independent construal of self in part leads to different effects of a frame expressing resilience versus negative effects.

In summary, research demonstrates that expectations around gender are a strong and powerful force and males versus females may learn differing frames around peer aggression. Initial research suggests that gender likely interacts with frames around bullying (Stark et al., 2019). Given that gender is a social construct, inferences from the bullying literature point to prior learned beliefs about bullying, current levels of bullying, and level of how socially intertwined identity is accounting for some of these differences. The previous study's significant results speak to the power of frames in relation to memories of bullying, however there were several limitations to our ability to draw firm conclusions from the results. To date, no study has

examined the components at play within the observed gender by frame interaction. Similarly, no research exists within the realm of bullying on more direct correlates of the framing effect involving decision-making and estimations of probabilities. The current study seeks to answer these questions around the interplay of *internalized frames* related to gender and *communicated frames* of resilience and negative effects, as well as incorporate a closer focus on social decision-making and bystander behavior.

Study Aims

Our primary aim relates to *internalized* and *communicated frames* around bullying. We seek to examine how two commonly utilized *communicated frames* around bullying (resiliency and negative effects) interact with *internalized frames* associated with gender (females and males) in terms of estimations of social risk, likelihood of engaging in social risk behavior, current affect, and predictions of future bullying, within an experimental model.

Our second aim is to further understand gender differences related to *internalized frames* about bullying and current perceptions of peer-victimization. It is likely that differences may in part center around culturally learned differences between males and females. Thus, we will explore differences in prior beliefs about bullying, current levels of bullying, and independent versus interdependent self-construal between males and females in our study.

Our third aim is to investigate how these variables associated with gender may account for and partially explain the gender by frame results. Lastly, our fourth and exploratory aim centers around the narratives that participants wrote. Due to the importance of autobiographical narratives in both creating and understanding frames around bullying, this study also aims to explore qualitatively how narratives around bullying may relate to these frames.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: In examining the effects of *internalized frames* as they relate to gender (female and male) and *communicated frames* (resiliency and negative effects), I predict that there will be significant differences between the four groups (females in the Resiliency Group, females in the Negative Effects Group, males in the Resiliency Group, and males in the Negative Effects Groups). Specifically, I hypothesize that there will be differences in terms of estimations of social risk, likelihood of engaging in social risk behavior, current affect, and predictions of future bullying.

Hypothesis 2: I hypothesize that prior cultural frames around bullying, conceptualization of self (interdependent versus independent), and current levels of bullying will all be significantly different between males and females. This is predicted based on previous research examining cultural differences in bullying, conceptualization of self, and patterns of victimization between males and females. These three specific areas are hypothesized to partially account for gender differences in this study. It is predicted that males versus females will have differing pre-existing beliefs about bullying (i.e. *internalized frames*), that females will have more interdependent self-construal than males, and that females will endorse experiencing higher current levels of bullying.

Hypothesis 3: Where and if differences are found by gender on the factors listed in hypothesis 2, I hypothesize these variables will partially account for some of the variance in the frame by gender effect. In order to better understand how the introduction of a *communicated frame* intersects with qualities of thought and experiences associated with gender, these variables will be entered as covariates into the model. This will reveal how these variables interact with the dependent variables and the remaining effects of the frame and gender.

Exploratory Analyses will be completed to examine narrative themes and the story endings for all participants who completed the study.

Methods

Measures

Before Intervention.

Demographic Questionnaire is a seven-item scale created by study staff (appendix D).

This scale includes questions about age, gender, occupation, race, and ethnicity.

Teachers' Beliefs About Peer Victimization (Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2015; appendix E) is a 14-item scale. In its original form, each question is written twice, once pertaining to boys and once pertaining to girls. This scale was given to all participants to assess their own beliefs about bullying with each question presented once. The measure is on a likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree and includes four categories: normative process (belief that bullying is a normal part of childhood), advocate avoidance (beliefs that bullying is best coped with through avoidance), advocate assertion (beliefs that bullying best dealt with through asserting oneself), and dismissive beliefs (beliefs that bullying is a minor problem). No modifications were needed to the initial study questions because the questions were applicable for any adult population reporting about perceptions of bullying. However, the measure has been amended by adding in a fifth category of specific relevance to the current study: resilience beliefs (beliefs that bullying is challenging, however children can cope with bullying). Although this measure has previously been used only in studies examining teachers' beliefs, the constructs and beliefs examined map on strongly to several common cultural beliefs about bullying.

Examining the correlation matrix of the independent variables, all five subscales on the bullying measure are positively correlated with one another at the $p = 0.00$ level. Independent personality style is significantly correlated with avoidant beliefs about bullying ($r = 0.21, p = 0.03$), assertive beliefs about bullying ($r = 0.31, p = 0.00$), and resiliency beliefs about bullying ($r = 0.34, p = 0.00$). Higher resilient beliefs about bullying are correlated with more normative beliefs, avoidant beliefs, assertive beliefs, and dismissive beliefs, as well as independent personality style (see Table 1).

Self-Construal Scale This 24-item measure examines independent versus interdependent self-construal, which has been shown to vary both by culture (e.g., Western versus Eastern cultures) and by gender (Singelis, 1994; appendix F). Items were developed to reflect thoughts, feelings, and behaviors relating to interdependent and independent self-construal's. Factor analyses indicated two major factors, which the author divided into interdependent items and independent items. The scale has been shown to have sufficient face validity and construct validity. Construct validity was examined through samples of Asian Americans and Caucasian Americans who scored as more inter and independent accordingly across several samples. The measure has also been shown to have good predictive validity. The scale is able to predict how likely individuals will attribute a scenario as being influenced by a situation versus an individual. The scale has been shown to be reliable across several samples (Singelis, 1994). The scale has been shown to have moderate internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$; Wang, 1994).

In the current sample, for the independent subscale, Cronbach's α was 0.88 and thus demonstrated good internal consistency. For the interdependent subscale, Cronbach's α was also 0.88 and similarly demonstrated good internal consistency. There seemed to be good face and construct validity for both the interdependent and independent measures of personality, as

they were negatively correlated with one another. Furthermore, the independent beliefs subscale was correlated with beliefs about bullying that involved more typically independent coping at the 0.001 level (resilience beliefs and assertive beliefs; see Table 1).

The Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire is a 44-item scale that measures several aspects of bullying (RBQ; Schafer et al., 2004; appendix G). It assesses type of bullying, severity, frequency, and coping skills used throughout several time points divided by school setting (primary, secondary college, workplace). This measure has been amended for the current study to only include questions about current levels of bullying based on prior research (Stark et al., 2019). Current bullying is included to determine if present levels of bullying are related to gender differences in predicted response to the frames. This measure has been shown in research to have strong predictive validity of current relationship quality measures (e.g., self-esteem, attachment) and criterion validity with other bullying measures (Shafer et al., 2004). The measure also has demonstrated similar rates of bullying compared to other measures with approximately 8% of individuals across the three countries surveyed (Germany, Spain, UK) identifying as “stable victims” or those bullied across several time points and 9-11% identifying as a victim across one time point (e.g., elementary school). This measure demonstrated strong test-retest reliability when individuals discussed bullying experiences within primary schools (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.88$) and within high schools (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.87$). The measure has been validated for use with young adults and adults ages 18-40 years. As seen in the table 2, endorsement (yes or no) of current physical bullying, verbal bullying, and indirect bullying were all significantly correlated together. Thus, being bullied through one method (e.g. physical bullying) was correlated with being bullied through another method (e.g. verbal bullying). Endorsement of worrying about bullying due to gender was not significantly correlated with the

other types of bullying.

Importantly, in this study we assessed gender-based harassment and bullying due to sexual orientation and included these in our measure of current bullying. This was in part due to hypotheses that these more gender- and sexuality-based types of victimization were driving differences between males and females in the endorsement in the current bullying. Much of the research literatures separates gender- and sexuality-based harassment from bullying. It is important to note that within this study, it was included in our current bullying measure due to our specific interest in the interplay of gender and bullying.

After intervention.

Future Likelihood Bullying Questionnaire is an eight-item scale (appendix H). This scale was created specifically for the study due to the known effects of framing on estimations of future likelihood (e.g., Levin & Gaeth, 1988). The scale is modified from its original use in a study by Stark and colleagues (2019) by adding several more detailed questions. Previously this measure only assessed future predictions of physical and verbal bullying. Several changes were made to more directly assess changes in estimations of future likelihood and probability based on the work of Tversky and Kahneman (1981), which demonstrated that frames affect estimates of likelihood and probability. Items assessed likelihood of experiencing bullying in the future, likelihood in demonstrating helping behavior as a bystander in the future, likelihood of different types of bullying, and likelihood of being able to cope with future bullying. In this study, predictions of future bullying were all significantly correlated with one another at the $p < .001$ level. This speaks to the measure's validity. Expecting future bullying in one domain is associated with bullying in another. Research supports the idea that individuals who are bullied

often experience bullying in multiple domains rather than in a single domain (Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Runions, 2014). Predictions of standing up as a bystander was the only item not significantly correlated with the predictions of future bullying. This study measure has only been used in one prior study (Stark, Tousignant, Fireman, 2019) and thus limited information on its reliability across samples is available.

Social Interaction Scale This eleven-item scale is based on the Domain-Specific Risk Taking scale or DOSPERT (Weber, Blais, Betz, 2002; appendix I). Several questions were taken from the DOSPERT which examines risky behavior within a social setting. The items selected were those that most related to social interactions associated with peer relationships. Tversky and Kahneman posit that the framing effect especially affects our perceptions of risk. This measure was created to better understand risk taking behavior in social situations specifically with an aim to better understand social decision making and evaluations of risk. Since the framing intervention in this study directly deals with social interactions, only the social subscale items were taken from this measure. Several questions were added to the social domain of the DOSPERT to better examine bystander intervention behavior specific to bullying scenarios. It is acknowledged that these questions involve both risk to self (i.e., the possibility of negative consequences of intervening or acting) and risk to others (i.e., person being bullied is continued to be harassed). The study measure has been designed to specifically discuss risk to self rather than focus on risk to others. This is based on previous research on frames demonstrating behavioral changes in risk taking behavior in terms of risks to the individual. It is also due to study aims to better understand how individuals conceptualize risk to themselves based on frames. Of note, in this study risky social behavior involves approaching other groups of individuals, standing up for a bystander, and other similar actions involved in a social approach

rather than social avoidant mindset.

The original DOSPERT measure involves two subscales with the same questions repeated twice. The first subscale asks participants to rate how risky the behaviors are on a likert scale (Social Interaction Scale Risk). The second subscale asks participants to rate how likely they would be to engage in these behaviors (Social Interaction Scale Likelihood). Our modified measure followed the same approach thus we created a total score for Social Interaction Scale Risk, assessing how risky participants thought these behaviors were, and a total score for Social Interaction Scale Likelihood, assessing how likely participants would be to engage in these behaviors. Cronbach's Alpha on Social Interaction Scale Risk was .81 and Social Interaction Scale Likelihood was .86.

In terms of dependent variables, Social Interaction Scale Risk mean was significantly negatively correlated with likelihood of engaging in these same risky behaviors ($p = 0.00$). In other words, the riskier participants thought these behaviors, the less likely they were to engage in them. Higher estimates of social risk were also negatively associated with Positive Affect subscale on the PANAS ($p = 0.00$) and positively correlated with Negative Affect subscale on the PANAS ($p = 0.00$), meaning participants who found these behaviors more risky, felt lower positive emotions and higher negative emotions during the study. These correlations point to internal validity of the measures.

Brief Measure of Positive and Negative Affect (PANAS; Watson, Clark, Tellegan, 1988; appendix J). This twenty-item measure has two main subscales: Positive Affect and Negative Affect. It has been shown to be internally consistent with a Cronbach's alpha of .89 for the Positive Affect subscale and an alpha of .84-.87 for the Negative Affect scale (Crawford &

Henry, 2004). Affect states are listed on a Likert scale where participants endorse how strongly they feel each emotion from Very Slightly to Extremely. Test-retest reliability demonstrated no significant differences over time. The scale demonstrated good construct validity in comparisons with other measures of mood such as the Hopkins Symptom Checklist and Beck Depression Inventory and State Anxiety Scale. The scales demonstrated convergent validity between Positive Affect and Negative Affect subscales as well as good divergent validity between the two (Watson, Clark, Tellegan, 1988). The PANAS has been shown to be reliable across diverse ethnic and racial groups (Merz, Malcarne, Roesch, Ko, Emerson, Roma, Sadler, 2013). The PANAS Negative subscale was negatively correlated with Positive PANAS subscale ($p = 0.00$) as well as positively correlated with higher estimates of risk ($p = 0.00$; see Table 3).

Participants

Recruitment and inclusion criteria. Participants were recruited through the online website Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk has been shown to be a valid measure in behavioral and psychological studies (Buhrmester, Kwang, Gosling, 2011) with some data showing its superiority in terms of participant study adherence and demographic diversity (Casler, Bickel, Hackett, 2013). Participants were required to be between the ages of 18 through 30. In order to reduce the variance associated with generational frames as well as the range in life experiences, we only recruited within this age group. Additionally, our study measures are applicable specifically to this adult population. Participants were required to have graduated high school or obtained their G.E.D. as well as be citizens of the United States. This was in order to ensure that their fluency in English is appropriate for the writing intervention task. Participants were not required to have experienced bullying in their lifetime; however they did have to write about an autobiographical experience that they considered bullying. It is of note that almost all

participants were able to recall a time that they felt they were bullied (additional information included within study results). Importantly, these participants' experiences may not have met a stringent research definition of bullying but represented experiences that they personally and subjectively considered bullying. This enhances the external validity of the study and speaks to bullying's prevalence. Future research may wish to replicate this study design with those who have been repeatedly victimized and have experienced a more precisely defined bullying experience.

Based on our previous study of frames conducted by the current researchers, significant effects of the frames were observed after 40 participants per group. Thus, we recruited 120 participants in total, or 60 per group (Resiliency and Negative Effects). After checking for participant adherence to our intervention (writing about the correct frame), 92 participants remained in total. Procedure for checking for participant adherence to the intervention is detailed further in statistical analyses. For all reliability, validity, descriptive, and analytic information included in this paper, analyses were based on these 92 participants unless specifically otherwise specified.

Study population. In the overall sample, the mean age was 27.97 years ($SD = 2.17$; range: 19-33) with 30 participants per group. However, only those participants who completed the study intervention of writing about an experience of bullying that matched the assigned prompt were included in analyses. Of those included in main analyses ($N = 92$), the sample was 50% male ($N = 46$) and 50% female ($N = 46$). The mean age was 27.73 years (range 19-30, $SD = 2.06$). There were 22 participants in the Negative Effects female group, 24 in the Resilience female group, 20 in the Negative Effects male group, and 26 in the Resilience male group. The study sample had some racial and ethnic diversity, however the majority of the sample self-

identified as White. In a self-report survey, 85.9% of participants identified as White or Caucasian ($N = 79$), 3.3% identified as Asian ($N = 3$), 7.6% identified as African American or Black ($N = 7$), 2.2% identified as biracial or multiracial ($N = 2$). In terms of ethnicity, 4.3% of participants identified as Hispanic/Latino ($N = 4$), and 95.7% of people identified as not Hispanic or Latino ($N = 88$). Participants had varied levels of education with 23.9% having some college experience ($N = 22$), 6.5% had trade or professional training after high school ($N = 6$), 51.1% had a bachelor's degree ($N = 47$), 5.4% had graduate degrees ($N = 5$), and 13% completed through high school ($N = 12$).

Procedure

The study and all study procedures were approved by a university Institutional Review Board (IRB). All study procedures were completed online during one time point. The study took, on average, 22 minutes to complete ($M = 23.16$ minutes, $SD = 16.15$ minutes). Completion of the study resulted in compensation of a \$5 gift card. Participants first completed an online consent form which informed them of risks and benefits of participation, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study. The consent form also contains a clear description of the study and time involved in participation. Participants were then randomized to either the Resiliency Group or the Negative Effects Group. Randomization was done separately for males and females to ensure equal number of participants in each group.

Participants first completed a demographics questionnaire. Participants next filled out the Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire survey assessing their current levels of bullying as well as a survey assessing tendency towards independent and interdependent self-construal. Participants then completed a survey assessing their own cultural frames around bullying. This initial part of

the survey is estimated to have taken approximately 5-10 minutes.

The participants then underwent the study manipulation induction of writing about an experience with bullying either in terms of resilience or negative effects. The instructions were as follows for each frame:

Frame 1: *Bullying is linked to serious and sometimes devastating effects such as high rates of depression, anxiety, emotional distress, and lowered self-esteem. In some cases, it has been linked to worsened academic and work performance and increased levels of cortisol, or stress hormones. These effects can last long after bullying experiences have ended, sometimes even through the lifetime affecting many parts of an individual's wellbeing and functioning. Can you briefly describe an incident in the past and not currently ongoing in which you felt you were bullied and experienced negative effects? You will have seven minutes to write and the screen will not progress to the next questions for the entire five minutes. We encourage you to use the full time to write. Please keep in mind that a strong description has a beginning, middle, and ending.*

Frame 2: *Although a distressing phenomenon, many individuals demonstrate resilience during bullying. They may move on from negative bullying and continue to do well academically and in the workplace, make new friends, and demonstrate confidence in social situations. They may also feel emotionally stronger and more resilient than peers, able to handle challenging and upsetting situations that may arise in life. Can you briefly describe an incident in the past and not currently ongoing in which you felt you were bullied and experienced resilience? You will have seven minutes to write and the screen will not progress to the next questions for the entire five minutes. We encourage you to use the full time to write. Please keep in mind that a strong*

description has a beginning, middle, and ending.

Participants were told that they must complete this step of the study (i.e. write a narrative about bullying) to receive compensation although they could choose to end their participation at any time. All participants wrote about an experience of bullying and received compensation, however as detailed later some participants did not complete a narrative which matched the study prompt of resilience or negative effects. During the writing task, participants were not able to continue to the next screen for five minutes and were told that they have seven minutes total to write.

After the writing task, participants then completed surveys of predictions of future bullying, assessments of risk in various social situations (Social Interaction Scale Risk), likelihood of engaging in these same social situations (Social Interaction Scale Likelihood), and a measure assessing current emotions (PANAS). After the writing task, the survey questions took an estimated 7-15 minutes.

At the end of the study, participants were given a referral resource with information about possible support outlets to contact if the study caused distress or they are currently experiencing distress from bullying. Additionally, at the end of the study, participants were given a detailed debriefing form explaining the point of the study as well as providing the contact information for the researchers involved in running the study. The debriefing form encouraged participants to contact the researchers with questions or concerns. No participants contacted the study researchers with any questions or concerns.

Analyses

Data Normality. All variables were examined for normality using multiple methods (Shapiro-Wilk, Kolmogorov-Smirnow, Q-Q plots, histograms) for the 92 participants included in study analyses.

Manipulation Check. To ensure that participants engaged in the writing task as instructed by group, three blinded and trained members of study staff coded all narratives. Coders were two doctoral level graduate students and one undergraduate research assistant. All three coders identified as female. Only participants who wrote a personal narrative consistent with their assigned prompt were included in analyses.

Coding was done in two phases. In phase one of coding, coders first individually coded whether they felt the narratives ended with themes of resilience, themes of negative effects, mixed (included both themes of resilience and negative effects) or if the individual did not follow the prompts (for example, did not write a personal narrative about bullying) for the initial 26 narratives (13 per group). Coders then met as a group and discussed any discrepancies between coded endings as well as created solidified definitions based on these narratives of resiliency themes and negative effects themes. In phase two of coding, using agreed upon definitions of resiliency and negative effects, coders coded remaining narratives and then again met to discuss any discrepancies. Before agreeing on the final ending, Cronbach's alpha was 0.84, thus in general, the endings were clearly divided into the resiliency or negative effects group. A final code was agreed upon for all narratives.

Initial Equivalency Descriptive Analyses. Although random assignment was used in the study, a check was done to ensure there were no differences between the Resiliency Group and Negative Effects Group in terms of prior beliefs about bullying, self-construal, and current levels of bullying, as these were hypothesized to be related to gender. T-tests were also used to

compare the groups on race, ethnicity, time to complete the study, self-construal, and current levels of bullying to assess for initial equivalency. Due to moderate to high correlations, a MANOVA was used to compare the two groups on beliefs about bullying. Descriptive analyses were also conducted to better understand the sample in relation to the different variables in this study.

Hypothesis I. A Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the four groups on all measures (predictions of future bullying, Social Interaction Scale Risk, Social Interaction Scale Likelihood, and emotions). Bonferonni Posthoc analyses were conducted to explore patterns in group differences.

A MANOVA with four groups was chosen for several specific reasons. To reduce the likelihood of a Type 1 error and due to the moderate correlations between dependent variables, a MANOVA appeared better suited to this study than multiple separate hierarchical linear regressions. Furthermore, due to the many covariates and dependent variables, the MANOVA appeared most parsimonious and interpretable compared to other means. A MANOVA was chosen with four groups compared to examining an interaction effect with gender and frame as two separate main effects as it was hypothesized that there would be differences between the four groups, however it was unclear if it would be a full interaction with gender (male and female) acting opposite to one another. Rather, it was hypothesized that there would be significant differences between the four groups that may not have been a full interaction effect with two significant main effects. Indeed, this was what was found within the study with two groups (males in the Negative Effects group and females in the Resiliency Group) driving significance. However, there are clear limitations recognized to this approach especially as this limited the ability to separate the main effects and interaction effects of group and gender.

Hypothesis II. Based on our study hypotheses, possible differences by gender were anticipated in terms of inter versus independent self-construal, prior beliefs about bullying, and current levels of bullying. Due to moderate correlations between all variables, MANOVAs were used to examine differences between males and females on each of these subscales.

Hypothesis III. To better understand the gender by frame results, any variables that were significantly different by gender variables (inter versus independent self-construal, prior beliefs about bullying, and current levels of bullying), were entered as covariates into the MANCOVA model.

Exploratory Analyses. Trained coders were used to code narratives for major themes and the way in which participants ended their stories (negative effects/resiliency). A MANOVA was used to compare those who ended their story in terms of negative effects versus resiliency on all measures (emotions, predictions of future bullying, decision-making estimates around different social situations). Major themes in the narratives were also explored.

Results

Data Normality. Before the writing induction, there were three groups of independent variables. The independent variables included the five beliefs about bullying subscale totals (avoidance beliefs, resiliency beliefs, normative beliefs, assertive beliefs, and dismissive beliefs), interdependence and independent self-construal subscale scores, and current bullying experiences. Avoidant beliefs about bullying ($M = 8.86$, $SD = 2.70$), Resiliency beliefs about bullying ($M = 9.70$, $SD = 2.68$), normative beliefs about bullying ($M = 10.02$, $SD = 3.78$), assertive beliefs about bullying ($M = 9.12$, $SD = 2.90$) and dismissive beliefs about bullying ($M = 6.43$, $SD = 2.37$) all appeared normally distributed after examining histograms, Q-Q plots,

skewness, and kurtosis. Interdependent ($M = 66.26$, $SD = 13.69$) and independent ($M = 76.62$, $SD = 13.12$) subscale scores similarly appeared normally distributed after examining histograms, Q-Q plots, skewness, and kurtosis.

We then examined normality of all dependent variables: future bullying likelihood prediction questions, Social Interaction Scale Risk total mean score, Social Interaction Scale Likelihood total mean score, and PANAS positive and negative affect subscales total scores. Skew, kurtosis, and the Shapiro Wilk normality statistic were all examined as well as histograms and q-q plots. Overall, dependent measures were largely normal except for one dependent variable. The PANAS Negative Affect subscale was heavily skewed towards lowest scores (indicating largely absent negative affect) with 42.5% of the participants endorsing the lowest score possible of 10. Lastly a one-item question of “being able to cope with bullying in the future” was heavily skewed towards definitely able to handle it. These subscales were transformed using natural log (none had a value of 0) and these new transformed variables were used for all subsequent analyses.

Manipulation Check. After coding the narratives, results demonstrated that the majority of individuals engaged in the framing intervention in terms of their narrative endings matching the group to which they were assigned. In total, 76.6% of participants wrote a narrative that was coded as consistent with the prompt or some elements of the prompt (92 of total 120 participants). To demonstrate congruence with the prompt, an ending involving resilience must occur with the resilience group or an ending emphasizing negative effects must occur when in the negative effects group. A narrative containing an ending which demonstrated mixture of both was also accepted as congruent with prompt. Results demonstrated that seven participants did not complete the writing task appropriately (e.g. did not write a personal narrative of bullying but

spoke about bullying more generally; 5.8%) and 21 participants (17.5%) wrote a narrative that did not match their assigned group. All following analyses used the 92 participants who followed the prompt instructions.

Narratives were coded by their ending based on qualitative work that demonstrates the way we end narratives speak to the narrative tone and meaning within them (e.g. McAdams 2018). The majority of narratives described painful and emotional experiences. The endings often demonstrated the main signals displaying whether the individual viewed this experience in terms of resilience or negative long-term trajectories. Examples of narrative coded with a resiliency ending are included in appendix K. Examples of narratives coded with a negative effects endings are included in appendix L.

Of note, to ensure this coding scheme was sensitive to overall themes in the narratives, the endings coded as “mixed” ($N = 13$) and those that were excluded from analyses ($N = 21$) as well as randomly selected narratives included in analyses ($N = 10$) were recoded to examine if coding the tone of the whole narrative differed from the ending. Of these narratives, 4 of the 44 narratives changed group based on the overall narrative code versus the ending (9.01%). For example, a narrative that was originally coded as demonstrating resilience based on the way the narrative ended, changed to the negative effects group when reflecting upon the entire tone. Due to the theoretical reasoning behind coding the narrative endings and the low number of narratives which differed based on the endings versus the overall coding, it was agreed to keep the initial coding schema which included 92 participants for this study’s primary analyses. Of note, participants who ended their narratives in a “mixed” ending were included in the 92 participants included in study analyses. Participants were only excluded if their narrative ending did not match the assigned frame or if they did not write a personal narrative about bullying.

Interestingly, *when not including* the mixed stories, a chi square analysis revealed that both males and females in the Negative Effects group were significantly less likely to follow the prompt of writing about negative effects than those in the Resiliency Group who were asked to write about resilience (Pearson Chi Square = 9.84, $p = 0.02$). It was no longer significant when including those stories that had themes of both resilience and negative effects, or a “mixed” ending (see Table 4). Thus, this finding should be interpreted with caution as the mixed story endings were not included for these exploratory analyses.

Initial Equivalency Descriptive Analyses. When comparing Resiliency and Negative Effects groups *without being further divided by gender*, initial equivalency analyses revealed that there was no significant difference of age ($t(90) = -1.49, p = 0.139$), race ($t(90) = -0.48, p = 0.631$), ethnicity ($t(90) = -0.18, p = 0.860$), or time to complete the study ($t(90) = -.10, p = 0.923$) between groups. There were no significant differences by group on inter ($t(90) = -0.15, p = 0.880$) and independent total scores ($t(90) = -.80, p = 0.937$). In a MANOVA model there were trending significant differences around pre-existing beliefs about bullying in terms of normative beliefs ($F(1) = 48.35, p = 0.073$) and resilient beliefs ($F(1) = 23.87, p = 0.070$), but not assertive beliefs ($F(1) = 10.74, p = 0.261$), dismissive beliefs ($F(1) = 3.21, p = 0.475$), or avoidant beliefs ($F(1) = 21.25, p = 0.106$). There were no significant differences on endorsement of any type of current bullying ($t(90) = .54, p = 0.594$).

Hypothesis 1. A MANOVA was conducted where the four groups (Negative Effects female, Negative Effects male, Resiliency female, Resiliency male) were compared on the four dependent measures (Social Interaction Scale Risk mean, Social Interaction Scale Likelihood mean, PANAS positive subscale, PANAS negative subscale, as well as the eight likelihood

items). The overall model was significant (Wilks Lamda = .51, $F = 1.94$, $p = 0.004$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.20$).

Posthocs were run on each of the dependent variables and revealed several significant patterns. For the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood and PANAS negative affect scale, the differences were largely driven by the male Negative Effects Group and female Resiliency Group. Specifically, the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood was significantly different between groups ($F(3) = 4.63$, $p = 0.005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.14$). Bonferonni Posthoc analyses revealed that males in the Negative Effects Group ($M = 1.19$, $SE = 0.16$) were significantly *less* likely to engage in risky social and bystander behavior than females in the Resiliency Group ($M = 1.06$, $SE = 0.03$); Mean difference = 0.14, Bonferonni $p = 0.003$; see figure 1). Similarly, the PANAS negative affect subscale was significantly different between groups ($F(3) = 2.66$, $p = 0.050$). Bonferonni Posthoc analyses revealed that once again this was driven by the difference between the male Negative Effect Group and the female Resiliency Group (mean difference = .13, $p = 0.053$; see figure 2) with the males in the Negative Effects Group reporting higher levels of negative affect compared to females in the Resiliency Group.

Participant estimations of “likelihood of future bullying due to gender” was significantly different between groups ($F(3) = 5.78$, $p = 0.001$). This effect appeared largely driven by gender. Posthoc analyses revealed significant differences between the females in the Negative Effects Group and both groups of males (female Negative Effects Group and male Resiliency Group mean difference = 1.48, $p = 0.008$; female Negative Effects Group and male Negative Effects Group mean difference = 1.29, $p = 0.014$). The female Resiliency Group was significantly different from male Negative Effects Group (mean difference = 1.18, $p = .050$) but not male Resiliency Group ($p = .095$; see figure 3).

Following up on these analyses, the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood items were analyzed individually to better understand which items were driving significant differences. First a correlation was done to assess if the items were too highly correlated to be assessed separately. Although all items were significantly correlated, correlational coefficients ranged from 0.27 to 0.49. Thus, these items appeared appropriate for further analysis.

When each item was entered as dependent variables into the MANOVA equation, some of the items which emphasized risk to self (e.g. “standing up for someone being bullied even if you may be bullied in return) drove the significant differences compared to items that did not emphasize risk (e.g. providing support to someone who appears to be a victim of bullying). It appears that across groups, most individuals were willing to help others as a bystander when risk to self was not emphasized (see table 5). Posthoc analyses revealed that four items were significantly different. For three of the four, the difference was once again drive by males in the Negative Effects Group and females in the Resiliency Group. The fourth item, which emphasized physical risk, differed between males in the Negative Effects group and both female groups (female Resiliency Group and female Negative Effects group). Across these items, males in the Negative Effects Group were *less* likely to aid others or intervene as bystanders compared to females in the Resiliency Group who were *more* likely to aid others or intervene as bystanders (see table 5).

The PANAS Negative Affect items were similarly assessed to see if an item-wise MANOVA would further add to results. However, PANAS negative affect items were correlated between .58-.85 level and thus were too highly correlated to merit an additional MANOVA. Overall, as predicted the results demonstrate the power of *communicated frames* around bullying and the differential effects these frames have by individual characteristics, in this case gender.

Hypothesis 2: Based on the study results from hypothesis 1, gender differences as organized by pre-existing *internalized frames* were next examined. Although not experimentally manipulated, differences by gender in terms of beliefs about bullying, self-construal, and current levels of bullying were explored through a MANOVA model. The overall model was significant (Wilks $\Lambda = .75$ $F = 3.41$, $p = 0.002$, $\eta_p^2 = .25$), when comparing male and female groups.

There were several significant differences between males and females. As hypothesized, females endorsing significantly higher levels of interdependent personality factors (Females $M = 69.29$, $SD = 13.91$; Males $M = 63.24$, $SD = 12.92$, $F = 4.66$, $p = 0.034$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$); this fits with much of the current literature on male versus female self-conceptualization in American culture (Singelis, 1994).

As hypothesized, there were also significant differences between males and females around prior beliefs about bullying. Specifically, there were significant differences in terms of normative beliefs about bullying with females endorsing lower ratings of bullying as a normative behavior (Females $M = 8.67$, $SD = 3.31$; Males $M = 11.37$ $SD = 3.78$, $F = 13.26$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$), assertive beliefs about bullying with females rating assertive behavior as less effective in the face of bullying (Females $M = 8.48$ $SD = 2.64$; Males $M = 9.76$ $SD = 3.03$, $F = 4.68$, $p = 0.033$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$), and dismissive beliefs about bullying with females disagreeing more with the overall concept that bullying is not a big deal (Females $M = 5.89$, $SD = 2.32$; Males $M = 6.96$ $SD = 2.31$, $F = 4.85$, $p = 0.030$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$). Lastly, there were significant differences in terms of current bullying with females having higher rates of current bullying (Yes=1/No=0; Females $M = 0.63$, $SD = 0.50$; Males $M = 0.26$ $SD = 0.44$, $F = 14.43$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$). These findings are potential influencers operating in terms of the gender by frame differences.

Further examining differences by gender in current level of bullying, there were several significant findings. Overall, very few people endorsed being currently *physically* bullied ($N = 2$) or *verbally* bullied ($N = 5$). All of the participants who endorsed physical bullying were female. Of those who endorsed current verbal bullying 4 were female and 1 was male. 22 people endorsed current *indirect* bullying with 11 females and 11 males. Lastly, 23 people endorsed often worrying about feeling uncomfortable, intimidated, or unsafe due to their gender. Of these, 21 were female and 2 were male. A new variable of any current bullying was created showing the 41 people who endorsed any type of bullying with 29 females and 12 males. Thus overall, females endorsed higher levels of current bullying and different types of bullying than males, with males endorsing more indirect bullying than any other type of bullying. Overall, there were significant differences between males and females on endorsing *any* current bullying ($\chi^2 = 20.57$, $p = 0.004$; see table 6).

In sum, pre-existing *internalized frames* (i.e. beliefs about bullying and self-construal) as well as current experiences (i.e. current bullying) differed significantly by gender.

Hypothesis 3. Given the findings that there are distinct gender relevant *internalized frames*, or heuristics, as well as differences in current levels of bullying, we sought to determine if these relate to the *communicated frames* outcomes in hypothesis 1. The variables that were significantly different by gender (see hypothesis 2) were entered as covariates into the original MANCOVA model. Due to multicollinearity and similar construct ideas, normative beliefs about bullying and dismissive beliefs about bullying were averaged together to create one scale. Thus, Interdependent beliefs, normative/dismissive beliefs about bullying, assertive beliefs about bullying, and current levels of bullying were entered into the model as covariates. This model

explored how much each variable explained the variance of the dependent variables as well as examined group (frame by gender) differences when accounting for possible internalized contributions to the impact of gender.

The overall model was significant (Wilks Lamda = 0.57, $F(30,228) = 1.81$, $p = 0.009$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.20$). Each level of the overall model was significant (see table 7). Thus, there was still an effect of group after controlling for beliefs about bullying, interdependent self-construal, and current level of bullying. In the final model, group accounted for 20% of the total variance and remained significant on the PANAS positive and on the Social Interaction Scale likelihood after controlling for the effects of the covariates (see table 7).

Although posthoc analyses cannot be run on a MANCOVA model, figures 4 and 5 demonstrate that when looking at the last step in this model (i.e. when divided by group), this effect was largely driven by the male Negative Effects group, echoing results found in hypothesis 1.

To further explore these differences, item analyses were done for the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood item-wise scales within the same MANCOVA model. This model examined the effect of group on the covariates when controlling for interdependent self-construal, normative/dismissive beliefs, assertive beliefs, and current levels of bullying. Interestingly, when examining individual bystander items on the Social Interaction Scale likelihood, analyses revealed differences in terms of “disagreeing with an authority figure on a major issue” ($F(3) = 3.48$, $p = 0.020$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$); “speaking your mind about an unpopular issue in front of a group” ($F(3) = 3.02$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$); “standing up for someone who is being teased even if you may be teased in return” ($F(3) = 3.39$, $p = 0.010$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$); “deciding to not say anything when a friend is being teased to avoid confrontation” ($F(3) = 3.58$, $p = 0.024$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$); and “pretending

to be on your phone or another distraction when you see a friend bullying another person” ($F(3) = 5.41, p = 0.010, \eta_p^2 = .13$). As noted with hypothesis 1, individual items on the PANAS negative affect subscale were not examined due to multicollinearity between the items.

Thus overall, this study supported that pre-existing *internalized frames* must be taken into account when examining the results of *communicated frames* around bullying. When participants were divided into groups based on gender and asked to frame their own experiences of bullying in terms of resilience or negative effects, it significantly impacted estimations of likelihood of engaging in certain social and bystander related behaviors and mood. *Internalized frames* associated with gender also affected these dependent variables and accounted for some, but not all, of the variance seen in the gender and frame results.

Exploratory Analyses. Exploratory analyses were conducted to further examine the 113 narratives which discussed experiences of bullying and peer victimization, those who followed the writing frame instruction ($N = 92$) and additionally those who did not ($N = 21$). Participants were excluded if they did not write of a personal story of bullying, for example, writing of general feelings about bullying ($N = 7$). First the narrative endings in terms of messages of resilience, negative effects, and mixed effects were surveyed.

Mixed endings were varied in their emotional valance. Some narratives demonstrated a sophisticated emotional understanding balancing the challenging events and the strength that brought individuals through them. Other narratives appeared fractured and the writer appeared unsure and still processing whether they considered themselves resilient or irrevocably hurt by the experience. Two examples of “mixed” narrative endings are included in appendix M, one labeled as sophisticated and one labeled as fractured.

Several themes emerged throughout the narratives. Within the narratives, 13 participants wrote about being bullied due to gender or sexuality (9%) and 11 participants wrote about being bullied due to race or ethnicity (9.7%) and 31 (27.4%) due to weight or appearance concerns. These themes often were articulated differently for males than females. For example, in terms of physical appearance, males were more likely to discuss bullying due to appearing too small or unathletic while females more frequently wrote about bullying due to appearing overweight or wearing clothes considered unfashionable. Similarly, in terms of physical bullying, several females described physical bullying in terms of partner violence, while males were more likely to describe bullying in terms of getting into physical fights such as being punched or kicked by peers in school. When examining all narratives, there were no differences between the four groups on bullying due to race or ethnicity or time when bullying occurred, however there were significant differences in terms of themes of bullying between the groups (see table 8). These differences were driven by gender differences, with females being more likely to include themes of being bullied due to gender or sexuality (e.g. being called names for being sexually active) and males being more likely to include themes around physical bullying (e.g. being punched).

In terms of the types of bullying described, narratives were coded as depicting either verbal, physical, or indirect bullying. For narratives which only spoke of one type of bullying, the majority of narratives depicted verbal bullying ($N = 64$) followed by physical bullying ($N = 12$), and indirect bullying ($N = 5$). Many of the narratives included examples of verbal, indirect, and physical bullying ($N = 31$) all within the same narrative. For example, an individual may have been left out (indirect bullying), verbally insulted (verbal bullying), and hurt physically (physical bullying). A small number of narratives did not easily fit into these categories ($N = 4$).

To further explore the narratives, a MANOVA was run to examine all dependent variables when dividing participants into two groups: those who ended their story with a message of resilience ($N = 64$) and those who ended their story focusing on negative effects ($N = 39$), whether consistent with frame or not. Narratives ending in a “mixed” ending were not included in these analyses. Although the groups were then uneven, the purpose of this exploratory examination was to better understand how autobiographical narratives, or the way participants spoke of past bullying experiences, affected the dependent variables. Results demonstrated that the overall model was significant (Wilks Lamda = .80, $F = 2.37$, $p = 0.02$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$).

Examining the dependent variables, the Social Interaction Scale Risk was significant ($F = 6.64$, $p = 0.010$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$), the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood was significant ($F = 11.97$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$), PANAS positive affect subscale was significant ($F = 6.32$, $p = 0.014$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$), PANAS negative affect subscale was significant ($F = 7.41$, $p = 0.008$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$), and likelihood of future indirect bullying ($F = 9.11$, $p = 0.003$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$).

When examining these significant dependent variables, an interesting pattern emerged. For the Social Interaction scales, those who ended their story with themes of resiliency had lower estimates of how risky certain bystander and social behaviors were and were more likely to engage in these behaviors compared to participants who ended their narratives with messages of negative effects (see figure 6-7). Participants who ended on themes of resiliency endorsed higher positive affect and lower negative affect compared to participants who ended their story on themes of negative effects (see figure 8-9). Lastly, participants who ended their narratives with messages of resilience predicted less future indirect bullying, one of the most commonly endorsed types of bullying in our study, than participants who ended their narratives with messages of negative effects (see figure 10).

In sum, exploratory and non-experimentally manipulated results demonstrated that those ending their narratives with themes of resilience, thought of social interactions and bystander behaviors as less risky, were more likely to engage in them, felt more positive affect and predicted less future bullying.

Discussion

The current study investigated the effects of *internalized* and *communicated frames* around bullying. More specifically, this study explored the interplay of *internalized frames* related to gender and *communicated frames* of resiliency and negative effects of bullying. Results provide evidence that both *internalized* and *communicated frames* influenced the way individuals predicted making decisions in social situations, bystander behavior, emotions, and future predictions of bullying. Specifically, there were significant differences between the male Negative Effects Group and female Resiliency Group on the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood, involving predictions around behavior in social situations and bullying bystander situations, and PANAS negative affect subscale, involving overall current negative emotions, and predictions of future bullying due to gender.

To better understand the underlying conceptualizations that inform the gender and frame results, this study also explored cultural and psychological factors between cis-male and female participants in terms of beliefs about bullying, self-construal, and current bullying. Results demonstrated that female participants tended to view bullying as more non-normative and not a phenomenon to be dismissed compared to males. Furthermore, they were less likely to advocate assertion as a way to combat bullying, when compared to male participants. Female participants also had a greater overall endorsement of worrying about current bullying and placed greater

importance on social relationships and interdependent ways to construe self, compared to male participants.

In further investigating these variables that differed by gender, results revealed that these gender-based differences (beliefs about bullying, current levels of bullying, self-construal) partially accounted for the initial gender by frame effect and indeed all did have a significant influence on the dependent variables (see table 7). The covariate variables provide valuable information for explaining gender differences and highlight the overall complexity and the importance of individual factors involved in the impact of frames around bullying. Importantly, group continued to have a significant effect on the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood and PANAS negative affect subscale when controlling for all covariates. Overall, this study supports the idea that *internalized* and *communicated frames* around bullying influence social decision making, emotions, and predictions of future bullying.

Hypothesis 1: Internalized and communicated frames of bullying

The current study demonstrated that when dividing participants by gender, *communicated frames* created significant differences in terms of self-reported likelihood of engaging in social and bystander behaviors, current emotions, and future predictions of bullying due to gender. These results speak to the importance of understanding how individual *internalized frames* (i.e. in this study, frames associated with gender) interact with *communicated frames*.

Males in the Negative Effects Group were the least likely to engage in socially risky behaviors and felt the highest levels of negative affect, while simultaneously thinking that they were the least likely to be bullied due to their gender in the future. Opposite to this, females in the Resiliency Group were the most likely to intervene in a socially risky situation, even if it involved risk to the self, and tended to feel the lowest overall negative affect. Women across the

board felt more vulnerable to bullying due to gender compared to males, however only women within the Resiliency Group, acted significantly differently than the males in the Negative Effects Group. These results speak to the intricacy of frames on individuals, especially within the social realm.

Looking more closely, when examining group by gender differences, several patterns emerged relating to risk and mood. Exploring some of the individual items on the Social Interaction Scale Likelihood, it appears that questions specifically involving risk to oneself in part differentiated the groups from one another. Overall, most individuals were willing to engage in bystander activities that aided the other person when no risk to self was mentioned, for example, “Stand up for someone who appears uncomfortable from being teased.” The personal cost is minimal and the benefit of demonstrating helping behavior is acting in line with recognized social norms (Schwartz & Clausen, 1970). However, these numbers changed when a potential personal cost was added, for example, “Stand up for someone who appears uncomfortable from being teased, *even if you may be teased in return.*” Thus, questions emphasizing greater risk to self, appear in part to be differentiating the four groups from one another in terms of behavioral likelihood of engaging in these actions. This finding makes sense when put in the context of bystander research. Research on bystander behavior within the framework of the cost-reward model of bystander intervention has consistently demonstrated that as cost, or risk, goes up, bystander behavior goes down (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, Penner, 2006). This study points to the interaction between individuals and the environment in understanding social risk-taking behavior. Thus, the frames are operating differentially on males versus females in terms of their willingness to override the personal risk involved in approaching other individuals in social situations especially in terms of bystander behavior. In this way,

personal risk effects willingness to engage in normative helping behavior in the context of both a gender and frame effect.

Importantly, there were no significant differences by group on *estimations* of risk (Social Interaction Scale Risk) but only on predicted *likelihood* of engaging in these socially risky behavior (Social Interaction Scale Likelihood). In other words, most individuals equally assessed how risky these social interactions were, but given that risk, they differed on how likely they were to actually engage in these behaviors. Females in the Resiliency Group were not distinguished in their perception of bystander risk, but they were more willing than those in other conditions to act in support of the victim in the face of this risk. This aligns with the finding that females in both the Resiliency Group and Negative Effects Group predicted similar levels of future bullying due to gender, however there were differences in likelihood of behaving differently in the face of this predicted risk. Thus, frames may not affect perceptions of how “scary” or risky it is to stand up for a peer or approach new friends, but it may aid in approaching these social situations. It is of note that this pattern for females being more likely to help others as bystanders and males in the Negative Effects Group being less likely to help others occurred across all significant item-wise analyses. In other words, this pattern did not just occur overall for total scores on the Social Risk Likelihood Scale, but across all significant specific items. Importantly, this pattern stands in contrast to literature which cites the need to emphasize the negative impact of bullying to increase bystander intervention (e.g. Lazarus & Pfohl, 2010). Our study demonstrated that for females in the Resiliency Group, emphasizing their own strength and resilience over time actually led them to be more likely to intervene if they observed bullying. One hypothesis around these results is that individuals may naturally empathize with victims of bullying without needing to hear of the negative effects associated with bullying. This may be

especially true given the near ubiquitous nature of bullying and thus most individuals can remember a time they felt repeatedly left out, harassed, or in some way bullied. Emphasizing resilience, rather than negative effects, may encourage individuals that they have the strength and tools to help.

This finding supports a more recent understanding of risk assessment and behavior. Over time, there has been a shift in psychology from understanding risk taking as purely a stable trait, a part of an individual's inherent personality, to a fluctuating propensity often influenced by the environment (Blais, Waber, Elke, 2006). Much of this work is influenced by the pivotal research of Tversky and Kahneman (1981). Furthermore, research points to the interaction of emotions with helping behavior where positive emotion states tend to lead to more helping behavior (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). In our study, we found support for an association between emotional state and helping behavior, in this case higher negative affect went hand in hand with lowered predicted likelihood to engage in bystander behavior and social interactions.

The Social Interaction Scale Likelihood questions also included several questions involving approaching other peers and socializing. For example, the item "If I am with a new group of people it is better to put myself out there and make friends" was trending significant at .07 level across all four groups. For both the bystander items and social approach items, males in the Negative Effects Group were less likely to approach others or help others compared to females in the Resiliency Group. Approaching other people and continuing to socialize after thinking about bullying events has implications for trajectories after bullying. Naylor and Cowie (1999) found that although social support does not reduce the prevalence of bullying, it can ameliorate the negative effects of bullying and increase bystander behavior. Understanding how and if resiliency or negative effects frames encourage future social interaction is an important

topic for future research. This study points to the idea of resiliency frames increasing likelihood of social interaction and bystander behavior, especially for females.

Males in the Negative Effects Group overall reported higher levels of negative affect than females in the Resiliency Group. When examining figure 2, the two Negative Effects Groups can be seen to have increased negative affect compared to the two Resiliency Groups. Notably, although all four groups were asked to describe a personal and challenging time, one group stood out above the others in terms of negative affect: Negative Effects males. When discussing bullying, understanding the emotions provoked by each frame and how these interact with pre-existing characteristics, like gender, is crucial.

Female participants in both groups endorsed greater likelihood of being bullied *due to gender* compared to male participants. This finding fits in with a body of research demonstrating that females are at higher risk for gender and sexual based violence than males (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). Although the groups did not differ in predictions of other types of future bullying, bullying due to gender appears of particular salience to female participants. Since gender-based bullying represented one of the major types of current bullying endorsed by participants (namely female) in the study, this may be an area of particular salience for participants. Thus, greater predictions of *future* bullying due to gender by females appeared in part to reflect female's reality of greater *current* bullying due to gender. It may be that participants' predictions of future bullying at different developmental stages (e.g. middle school, high school) would affect areas of most salient current bullying, which depending on age group may not as heavily be gender-based aggression, as seen in our sample of participants between the ages of 18-30. In other words, since females were the most likely to be bullied and this bullying was most likely to be gender based, as seen in our current bullying measure, this predicted

likelihood may have been the one most affected by writing about bullying. This result speaks to the importance of understanding cultural contexts and threats of violence and aggression when discussing both how *internalized frames* develop and the effects of *communicated frames*.

Overall, these results are consistent with a large body of research indicating that frames influence how individuals think and make decisions (e.g., Tversky & Kahneman, 1981) as well as experience emotions (e.g., Kim & Cameron, 2011). Furthermore, the findings speak to the complex interplay of *communicated frames* with pre-existing *internalized frames* and characteristics.

Hypothesis 2 and 3. A deeper exploration of internalized and communicated frames

This study found several significant differences between males and females in relation to bullying. This study represents one of the first to examine gender differences in beliefs about bullying as well as how self-construal impacts beliefs about bullying.

Results demonstrated that overall, females had higher levels of interdependent self-construal, or that their identity was in part tied to interpersonal relationships. This is consistent with past research on interdependent self-construal and gender (e.g. Gardner & Gabriel, 2004). When this variable was entered into the MANCOVA model, both the overall model was significant at this level and several of the dependent variables were significant. The way males and females are acculturated to be more or less interpersonally oriented accounted for 23%, a substantial amount, of the variance in this study. One possibility account for this finding is regarding bullying's interpersonal nature. It may be that how strongly individuals' value interpersonal relationships as a part of their own identity influence frames. Some research points to the idea that those who are more interpersonally oriented may also be more socially connected and this acts as a resiliency factor (e.g., Cetin, Eroglu, Peker, Akbaba, Pepsoy, 2012). However,

our study does not support this idea as there was a correlation between individuals with higher levels of interdependent coping styles and lowered belief in being able to cope with bullying. It may be that for those who more highly value interpersonal relationships, being bullied, which often includes ostracism and lower social regard, may have a differing effect, especially on beliefs of coping, than those who are more independently oriented. Further investigation is needed to better understand the relationship between decision making, emotions, and predictions of the future after being bullied, interdependent self-construal, and frames.

Of note, participants in this study were all citizens in the United States who were fluent in English. Research demonstrates differences in self-construal among different cultures, such as those with more or less collectivistic versus individualistic belief systems (e.g., Singelis, 1994). When comparing two cultures, one with strong collectivistic values and one characterized by individualism, differences in self-construal may be classified by these contrasting cultural belief systems rather than by gender. Thus, more interdependently oriented cultures and individuals may have lowered beliefs in ability to cope with bullying, perhaps in part due to increased importance of interpersonal relationships. In the current study, higher levels of interdependent self-construal were significantly associated with lowered beliefs by participants of their ability to cope with future bullying.

This study also examined differences between males and females in terms of pre-existing beliefs about bullying. Very little research has discussed self-reported differences in the ways that males and females internalize cultural norms about bullying and how to respond to bullying. This study supports the idea that males and females are generally acculturated to form different beliefs around bullying. Five different beliefs about bullying were assessed based on a measure examining teacher's beliefs about bullying (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Differences

were found between males and females regarding three different types of beliefs: normative beliefs around bullying, dismissive beliefs around bullying, and assertive beliefs around bullying. All three of these subscales cluster around responses to bullying and how seriously bullying should be taken.

Normative and dismissive beliefs about bullying were highly correlated together. Females endorsed higher rates of disagreeing that bullying is a normative behavior compared to males. Examples of questions on this subscale included “for boy/girls teasing other children is just part of growing up” and “teasing helps people learn important social norms.” It appears that female participants in general disagreed with these ideas. Of note, the scale ran on a likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Research within psychology (Stockard, 2006), literary theory (Beal, 1994), and anthropology (Eisenhart & Holland, 1983) point to the existence of socialized norms surrounding peer interactions that differ between males and females. Study findings point to the idea that female participants were socialized with norms that teasing and bullying is not normative compared to males, who in this study may have been socialized to regard bullying as a more typical part of development. This fits in with research on shifting beliefs about the normalcy of bullying based upon gender. For example, prior research has examined cultural beliefs around physical aggression being more normative for boys than girls and thus intervened upon less frequently (e.g. Kokkinos, Panayiotou, Davazoglou, 2010).

Similarly, females and males differed on their dismissive beliefs about bullying, with males having higher agreeance with beliefs that minimized the effects of bullying, for example, “compared to all of the other problems people have, being picked on is relatively minor” and “people can get over being picked on by classmates/coworkers/friends pretty easily.” These two items were combined in the MANCOVA model and results demonstrated that having higher

levels of normative/dismissive beliefs significantly accounted for some of the variance in several dependent variables including positive mood, Social Interaction Scale Likelihood, and trending significant effects on negative mood, likelihood of future physical bullying, and likelihood of future indirect bullying. Both dismissive and normalizing beliefs around bullying appear to go together, representing an overall idea that bullying is not a serious issue and a relative normal part of development.

Assertive beliefs about bullying also differed between males and females with females rating assertive behavior as less effective in the face of bullying. Examples of questions assessing assertive beliefs include “people who get picked on by others need to learn to stand up for themselves” and “people get picked on because they let others push them around.” Interestingly, there is some research that a more independent and avoidant coping style is related to more normalized beliefs about bullying and peer victimization (e.g. Garner, Parker, Dortch, 2017). Our study supports the association between these variables.

A large body of research exists demonstrating that women are generally taught to be less assertive in their language, the workplace, relationships, and a myriad of other facets. This literature also demonstrates that women are judged more harshly for being assertive compared to their male counterparts (Lease, 2017). Lease (2017) gives poignant examples in her study of judgements made around Hilary Clinton’s assertiveness and leadership style while running for president in 2016 compared to males running for the same office. Additionally, some research has demonstrated that males learn to respond to bullying with greater aggression as a coping tool and find this relatively more effective and socially accepted than females both in terms of school-aged bullying (Craig, Pepler, Blais, 2007) and within the workplace (e.g. Johannsdottir & Olafsson, 2004). Salmivalli and colleagues (1996) found in a survey of children, ages 12-13,

boys found nonchalance and counter-aggressive behavioral reactions to be more effective than girls who more typically reacted with nonchalance or helplessness. Of note for secondary school age children, the research has not unanimously supported this point (e.g. Naylor, Cowie, del Rey, 2001). Thornberg and Knutson (2011), in investigating teenagers' explanations for why individuals were bullied, found that boys were much more likely than girls to blame the victim. Although outside of the scope of Thornberg and Knutson's (2011) study, this perhaps speaks to an idea that victims of bullying have efficacy and control, for example using assertion or aggression, in reducing their own victimization. Not only do cultural beliefs differ on the efficacy of assertion for males versus females, but also differing levels of stigma are associated with males and females who do or do not assert themselves (Lease, 2017). Due to a percentage of stories involving bullying due to gender or sexuality, there also is the possibility of a differing level of danger in acting more assertively or aggressively for males compared to females. It may be that for females, acting assertively or in a dismissive manner towards peer victimization and antagonism would be less effective than for males and have more dangerous consequences.

Beliefs about bullying are important to note and understand both in relation to their interaction with cultural frames and to the way they influence behavior and coping. A study using the same measure of beliefs about bullying, found that teachers who viewed bullying as more normative were less likely to intervene when they witnessed students being bullied (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). In this way, our beliefs affect our behavior and our conceptualizations of the behavior of others. This lack of intervention when normative beliefs around bullying are upheld has been replicated in other studies (e.g. Troop & Ladd, 2015) and within other areas of trauma research (e.g. partner abuse; Reyes, Foshee, Niolon, Reidy, Hall,

2016). The current study is one of the only studies examining youths' perspectives and beliefs on bullying and its causes as well as its relationship to bystander behavior and intervention.

In discussing how individuals' culture and ideas they are taught over time affect beliefs about bullying, it is of note that cultural representations of bullying have changed over time.

Bradford and Hedberg (2018) report that in the United States, the media has increasingly, in the past several decades, focused on incidents of bullying and their effects, leading to greater bullying representation in young adult fiction and media aimed at children and teenagers. In recent years public attention to bullying has increased and understanding has shifted from a typical part of development to an area requiring intervention (Olweus & Limber, 2010). This increase in attention has been seen regardless of politics, gender, age group, and race. In fact, examining the past two presidential terms, first lady Melania Trump began the *Be Best* program to combat bullying while Barack and Michelle Obama held the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention in 2010: increased nationwide attention to bullying as a major challenge is occurring across political and other divides. Even with this increase in interest and awareness of bullying as a phenomenon, it is clear that differences remain in opinion on the negativity associated with bullying in terms of whether it is an effective tool of leaders (e.g. Ferris, Zinko, Brouer, Buckley, Harvey, 2007) or a practice to be avoided. Research on gender and assertiveness points to a possible gender difference in public opinion and beliefs around the efficacy of bullying.

Recent research has examined not only how culturally we shift our understanding of bullying but also how different cultural attitudes, like gender norms and gender expectations, influence bullying. Hellstrom and Beckman (2019) found that gender expectations impact the ways in which children are bullied, the reasons why they are bullied (e.g. deviating from gender

norm expectations), and methods of effective coping with bullying. These researchers take this idea a step further than previous research, reporting that schools must tackle gender norms as a method of reducing bullying, as their study found that the majority of bully victims were children who in some way deviated from gender norms (Hellstrom & Beckman, 2019). The current study adds to the work by Hellstrom and Beckman (2019) and is in agreement with their findings that gender norms must be discussed and addressed in school-wide interventions aimed at tackling bullying.

Past research on sexual trauma, though distinct, is informative in demonstrating cultural messages taught to victims of aggression. For example, research reveals that women are often taught that sexual assault encounters are normative or uncertain experiences and internalize higher levels of self-doubt and self-blame around these experiences (e.g. Brown, 2013). It is of note that within the current study, women reported that bullying experiences were not normal and should not be ignored. With the rise of several movements (e.g. the *Me Too* movement), urging men and women alike that sexual victimization is not a normative or acceptable part of life, this may be shifting the cultural frame around victimization that may extend into the realm of bullying. Hosterman and colleagues (2018)'s literature review speaks to the far-reaching cultural shift in the United States created by this movement. The ever-changing nature of frames around victimization and bullying speaks to the necessity of continued research around current frames and their interaction with communicated frames. This study speaks to the power of frames and the malleability of our own behavior and emotions based on frames. Understanding the effects of how culturally we frame these influential events better illuminates' trajectories after these experiences.

In addition to individual differences in pre-existing beliefs about bullying (*internalized frames*), males versus females also reported having different current levels of bullying (see table 2). Higher current levels of bullying was significantly associated with higher self-reported predictions of likelihood of all future types of bullying occurring (future verbal bullying, physical bullying, indirect bullying, bullying due to gender). Participants seemed to utilize current ongoing bullying as a predictor for bullying to continue. Similarly, level of current bullying was also correlated with increased estimations of risk across the Social Interaction Scale Risk. It appears that those who are experiencing more current bullying, expect to be bullied more in the future and also judge social interactions as riskier. Oftentimes if an individual is *currently* bullied, it may be more challenging and create greater anxiety to approach other peers or stand up as a bystander than if the bullying is in the past. This may be especially true if bullying is both in the past and in a previous context (e.g. transitioning to college with a new peer group after being bullied in high school). Research on social anxiety, points to the link between symptoms of anxiety around peers, especially fears of embarrassment or humiliation, and teasing/bullying (McCabe, Antony, Summerfeld, Liss, Swinson, 2003). This link is often attributed to conditioning and it is likely that as bullying recedes more and more into the past, extinction of the anxiety and social situations may occur (Hackman, Clark, McManus, 2000). Although these current bullying results are unsurprising, they also point to the powers of frames in changing participants' predictions of behavior and emotions exceeding the effects of being currently bullied. Current bullying strongly affected how participants perceived the future (more bullying) and risk (greater social risk) and yet frames still shifted willingness to engage in different social and bystander behaviors, above and beyond endorsement of current bullying. The resiliency frame, especially for females, led to greater social interaction and bystander behavior compared

to the negative effects frame, especially when examining males in this group. Frames are once again not altering understanding of risk or predictions of the future, but rather how individuals *act* once they acknowledge these risks: a powerful finding in better understanding trajectories after bullying.

Overall, when examining the covariates, it is notable that these different factors account for a great deal of the variance seen in the dependent variables and also uniquely relate to the dependent variables. This study demonstrates that multiple factors are interrelated and relevant when examining social decision making and emotions related to bullying events. Hypothesis 2 demonstrated that these factors were significantly different by gender. Thus, gender represents a construct holding together these similar experiences and acculturated beliefs about self and bullying. This demonstrates the importance of *internalized frames* around bullying and the manner in which many of these *internalized frames* cluster together. Simultaneously, frames of resilience and negative effects created changes by gender and group above and beyond these pre-existing factors, underscoring the power of *communicated frames*.

Exploratory Findings. Narratives of Bullying

No specific hypotheses were created around the narratives themselves; however, the many poignant themes and patterns within the narrative warrant attention. Although we provided frames with a definition of bullying, participants wrote about a personal narrative of their choice. The selection and articulation of their story is significant. A number of participants ($N = 8$) wrote about themes of bullying due to gender and sexual orientation or race and ethnicity. Fifteen participants in this study identified as a race other than White/Caucasian. Of these fifteen, over half (8 of the 15) choose to write a narrative that involved race or ethnicity as a reason for being

bullied. Narratives discussed bullying in ways that intersect with how culturally in the United States different identity factors were accepted or stigmatized. For examples, see appendix N.

Differences were also found in participant willingness to discuss and end personal stories focusing on negative effects. For both males and females, fewer participants adhered to the frame of writing about negative effects compared to the resiliency prompt (see table 4). When not including narratives that include both messages of resilience and negative effects (mixed endings), 81.4% of participants in the Resiliency Group wrote narratives concluding in themes of resilience while only 55% of participants in the Negative Effects Group did the same. Although these numbers shift when including those who had endings that were coded as having mixed endings of negative effects and resilience, this difference raises interesting questions. Mixed themes ranged from those that were well synthesized and complex understandings of the nuanced negative and positive effects of bullying to those that appeared more confused and disorganized in their attempt to end their narrative. Males in the Negative Effects group were also the *least* likely to follow the assigned prompt, with about half of the males completing the prompt.

There are several possible explanations for this finding. It could be that there was greater emotional discomfort around the negative effects prompt. Participants may have tried to avoid some of the negative and uncomfortable emotions of writing about negative effects by ending their stories in ways that did not dwell on the negative. Another possibility is that since participants were writing about a time in the past and not current bullying, they have had time to incorporate this experience into their own lives with a way to create meaning and emphasize their own strength. Research on bullying prevalence rates point to its widespread nature (e.g. Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, Scheidt, 2001) and yet the majority of youth go

on to overall positive trajectories. It may be that the ease in ending stories with messages of resilience would differ if participants were asked to recount recent or current narratives of bullying. Inclusion criteria in the study required that participants be between the ages of 18-28; however, 78% of participants wrote about an event that occurred in high school or earlier. The length of time since a bullying event, whether it is a long-term memory or an ongoing stressor, may play a role. Further experimental research is needed to better understand these differences in willingness to write about themes of negative effects versus resiliency. This in part intertwines with findings later discussed about current levels of bullying and their influence on frames, estimations of risk, and affect.

Synthesizing the findings: Putting it all together

The pre-existing gender differences help provide one possible explanation for the group differences found between the male Negative Effects Group and female Resiliency Group. Although built upon the idea of the framing effect and the malleable nature of risk-taking, narrative and cognitive psychology traditions around frames rather than the framing effect specifically appear to better explain the results seen in this study. Interpreting the exploratory findings from the pre-existing gender results and the narratives together, it may be that since males appeared to have been acculturated to different pre-existing ideas about bullying that fit more within the independent and resilient schema, that when faced with a discordant frame, they felt a greater shift in their thinking when asked to write about a bullying memory that may have been conceptualized differently in the past. Similarly, if females were more likely to have more interdependent views of self and focus more on the negative aspects of bullying, how it is not normal and should not be dismissed, those in the Resiliency Group may have correspondingly felt a greater shift in writing about an experience of bullying with a new lens and thus felt greater

effects of the resiliency frame. In other words, males in the Negative Effects Group were faced with a frame more antithetical to the cultural frames they had internalized about bullying compared to males in the Resiliency Group. Females in the Resiliency Group were faced with a frame more antithetical to the cultural frames they had internalized about bullying compared to females in the Negative Effects Group. This idea fits in with findings from the study by Stark and colleagues (2019), which found that males in the Resiliency Group tended to feel more positive affect and ability to cope with bullying than males in the Negative Effects Group, speaking to a tendency for males to more readily assimilate the resiliency model. The opposite was found to be true for females, who appeared to more readily accept the negative effects model.

Putting these results in the context of the narrative findings adds to our understanding. An abundance of research demonstrates that the way we construct and tell autobiographical stories affects our memories (McAdams, 2018; Stark, Tousignant, Fireman, 2019), identity (Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe, Houle, 2016), and how we view the world (Fivush, 2019). Our study asked participants to end their narratives in a specific manner in order to create the framing intervention. This intervention was based on the idea that the way we tell personal narratives influences current ways of relating to the world. McAdams and McLean (2013) point to the way we end narratives as being a source of meaning-making from these experiences. Almost all of the narratives spoke of the pain and sadness involved in being bullied. However, the way individuals ended their narratives differed.

Our analyses of the narratives should be interpreted with great caution due to their non-experimental and exploratory nature. However, the examination of the narratives allows for a better understanding of the experimental results, adds context, a method of deeper understanding

of the study aims, and are suggestive for future research. Similar to what McAdams & McLean (2013) and other researchers describe, those that emphasized a more redemptive message in the way their narratives ended, or an ending of resilience within our study, reported higher positive affect and lowered negative affect. Interestingly, when faced with the same social situations, those that ended their narrative on themes of resilience were more likely to view social interactions as well as bystander behavior as less risky than those who ended their narratives on themes of negative effects. Hand in hand with these lowered estimations of risk, these participants also endorsed being more likely to engage in these same social interactions and bystander behavior. Based on this study, it appears that those who have internalized a message of resilience tend to both have increased positive affect when discussing a likely emotionally painful experience and are more likely to help others and interact socially. This complicates the picture often created by bullying intervention programs which appear to rely on the pain and negative effects of bullying, whether through video clips or informational trainings, to urge bystander behavior and increased empathy. This study speaks to the idea that emphasizing an individual's own strength and resilience actually may lead to more helping behavior. One conjecture is that individuals tend to easily feel empathy for those who are bullied or victimized. It may be that individuals need to feel that they have the tools or strength to help others in order to both feel empathy *and* engage in helping behavior even if a risk is involved.

Taking these results together, the endings that emphasized negative effects were associated with reduced likelihood of risk seeking behavior and higher negative affect. Males in the Negative Effects group may have had to pay more attention to this negative frame as it contrasted more strongly with pre-existing beliefs and thus felt the effects more strongly of engaging in the writing frame than females in the Negative Effects Group. This also speaks to

males in the Negative Effects Group being the least likely to adhere to their assigned frames and struggling the most with writing a narrative ending in themes of negative effects. The narrative endings that emphasized resiliency led to more risk seeking and bystander behavior and higher positive affect. Females in the Resiliency Group may have had to pay more attention to the resiliency frame as it contrasted more strongly with pre-existing beliefs and thus this similarly led to greater change than males in the Resiliency Group. In this way, we hypothesize that it was both the frame and its difference from pre-existing viewpoints and perspectives that led to the shift. This speaks to several clinical implications in terms of the effects of these two frames more strongly affecting those who have opposing pre-existing views.

Implications

For those in therapeutic or school-based professions, these results point to the different ways to discuss and frame bullying based on an individual's pre-existing beliefs about bullying, their current level of bullying, and how important social relationships are to that individual's sense of self. Again, previous interventions relating to frames, such as CPT for PTSD, provide additional evidence for the importance of how we talk about challenging (or traumatic) life events. Research on CPT has consistently found that the frames individuals have around challenging (or traumatic) life events affect wellbeing and trajectory (Resnick, Monson, Chard, 2008). On a wider cultural level, these results draw attention to the importance of noticing the way in which we discuss and frame bullying as it may in part affect trajectory of those who have experienced or are experiencing this form of peer victimization.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates that writing about bullying with a particular frame in mind, is in fact an intervention towards changing attitudes around social interactions, bystander behavior, and emotions. This study utilized a short 5-7 minute writing task and found

significant results. An abundance of research within narrative psychology (e.g. McAdams, 2018) and cognitive psychology relating to frames (e.g. Beck, 1991) speak to the power of similar interventions for psychological disorders like anxiety and depression. Narrative and framing techniques may be an important intervention to aid in positive trajectories after bullying experiences. Further research is needed on more repeated and purposefully therapeutic narrative and framing interventions for individuals across the developmental lifespan.

This study speaks to the specificity needed not only in therapeutic settings but also in school, the workplace, the media, and a variety of settings that address bullying. Overall, those who ended their narratives with themes of resilience were more likely to help others, possibly speaking to the point that resilience may also involve empathy and rather than creating a mentality of toughness, it may push individuals to help others. Oftentimes when bullying is discussed in schools and the media (e.g. Saint Louis, 2013, *New York Times*), negative effects are emphasized. While it is necessary to convey potential consequences of these experiences for prevention and intervention purposes, it is also important to consider the nuanced and multitude of influences stemming from this frame.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study has several limitations which should be addressed in future research. First, the study should be replicated within other populations including children, teens, and older generations. This study specifically was interested in a cohort of individuals similar to those examined in the one other existing study on gender's effect on frames around bullying (Stark, Tousignant, Fireman, 2019). However, it should be explored if these results are replicated within other cohorts and developmentally how these frames may progress. Additionally, the majority of participants in this study identified as White/Caucasian and non-Hispanic/Latino, results should

be interpreted with caution. The study should also be replicated with more diverse participants and within other cultural settings outside of the United States.

Furthermore, in this study, although participants were given the choice to identify as gender non-binary or transgender, all participants reported identifying as either male or female. A major limitation of this study is examining gender using a dichotomous variable. Future research should investigate the effects of gender using a continuous scale, for example, from feminine to masculine, rather than a categorical question for gender. This research should also examine the interaction of gender and frame for transgender and gender non-confirming individuals to better understand the complex role of gender within framing and bullying.

Additionally, in this study, analyses only examined those who completed the frame instructions. For the purpose of this study, important information on the effects of frames was gleaned from selecting participants who completed the writing task intervention. However, as noted in the results, there appeared to be a pattern between groups with many participants having more difficulty adhering to the negative effects prompt than resiliency prompt. Although not statistically significant, when including those who wrote “mixed endings,” future research with larger sample sizes should examine this group of participants who did not follow the prompt. It may be that those who do not follow the prompt are in some way experiencing other effects of the frame and these influences should be investigated further.

This study demonstrated the effect of several covariates on our estimations of future bullying, mood, and other variables. Future research should examine these variables with experimental methodology as this study points to the idea that our beliefs about bullying, current bullying levels, and self-construal affect how we view our social world.

Additionally, this study examined self-report of social and bystander behaviors. One of the strengths of the current study is in noting the way frames shift our own cognition and perceptions of our behaviors. Future research would benefit from other methods of examining this topic, for example, through behavioral measures as opposed to self-report. Research demonstrates that individuals often struggle to predict their own behavior accurately (e.g. Baumeister, Vohs, Funder, 2007). This may be especially true in terms of prosocial behavior. The significant differences of self-reported behaviors between groups continuous to have major implications for understanding social approach and bystander behavior, however it is vital to also understand these implications outside of the more cognitive, self-report realm and within the behavioral realm.

Future studies may wish to examine how these results function in “real world” settings, enhancing the external validity of these findings. For example, beliefs around the efficacy of different behaviors, such as bystander intervention, influence frames, may be one factor at play in everyday life which is not included in this study. Furthermore, research should look at these frames longitudinally, for example, when used within a school-wide intervention, rather than within a short 7-minute writing task, to better understand the effects of frames and bullying. It is likely that many individuals experiencing negative effects from bullying may seek out therapy or clinical intervention. No research has yet investigated the effects of these frames within a therapeutic or school setting. One important clinical implication of this study involves how frequently these frames of resiliency or negative effects are seen all around us, whether in newspapers, the media, or within a school setting. Better understand the effects of these frames is vital.

Another limitation of this study was that all study coders were female. Considering the impact of gender on pre-existing beliefs about bullying and coping with bullying, having all female coders both creating definitions of resiliency and negative effects as well as engaging in coding is a major limitation. Future research should examine differences in understanding these narratives and coding schemas between males and females.

Additionally, as noted previously in this manuscript, a study limitation was the wide-ranging definition of bullying which included sexual assault/harassment. This was separated with specific questions in both the current bullying questionnaire prior to the writing intervention and in the questionnaire assessing predictions of future bullying after the writing intervention. Typically, gender-based harassment or sexual assault is not included in definitions of bullying. These were included as these types of aggression were hypothesized in part to be associated with the high levels of current bullying for females compared to males. Future research should be understand how bullying versus sexual or gender-based harassment go together or diverge in terms of the effects of frames.

In this study, we did not examine the effects of frames on those who bully and those who are “bully-victims.” A large body of research demonstrates that many individuals who are bullied are also bully-victims who aggress towards others (e.g. Solberg & Olweus, 2003). It may be that these frames of resilience and negative effects influence those who bully, victims of bullying, and bully-victims differently. More information is needed to better understand the effects of these frames especially due to the complex relationship between experiencing bullying and acting as an aggressor of bullying.

In conclusion, bullying is a frequent phenomenon that has been found to occur throughout the lifespan and across multiple settings. Both *communicated frames* and *internalized*

frames are a constant: from our cultural institutions, to television shows, to schools. It is vital to continue prevention programs for bullying, as seen by the high frequency of current bullying in this study's sample. Importantly, the results of this study speak to another idea: in addition to continuing conversations and prevention efforts around bullying, we must also be aware that *how* we talk about bullying and to *whom* matters. The influence of frames is complex; this study demonstrated that males and females reacted differently to frames of negative effects versus resiliency. Within this complex interaction, the influence of frames is powerful; this study speaks to the impact of a short frame induction on an experience as challenging and potentially life-altering as bullying.

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FRAMING OF PAST EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING: IMPACT ON SOCIAL DECISION 90
MAKING, EMOTIONS, AND PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE

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Table 1

Correlation Table of Beliefs about Bullying and Self-Construal

	Independent	Interdependent	Resilient	Normative	Avoidant	Assertive	Dismissive
Independent	1	-.33**	.34**	.16	.20*	.31**	.04
Interdependent	-.33**	1	.01	-.17	.09	-.12	-.05
Resilient	.336**	.006	1	.369**	.306**	.417**	.298**
Normative	.156	-.168	.369**	1	.423**	.649**	.700**
Avoidant	.203*	.086	.306**	.423**	1	.345**	.406**
Assertive	.311**	-.116	.417**	.649**	.345**	1	.394**
Dismissive	.040	-.051	.298**	.700**	.406**	.394**	1

** $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.05$

Table 2

Correlations between types of bullying (Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire)

	Physical bullying	Verbal bullying	Indirect bullying	Worries of bullying due to Gender
Physical Bullying	1	.17*	.30**	.16
Verbal bullying	.17*	1	.18*	-.06
Indirect bullying	.30**	.18*	1	.03
Worries of bullying due to Gender	.16	-.06	.03	1

** $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.05$

Table 3

Correlations between Social Interaction Scale and PANAS

	Social Interaction Risk	Social Interaction Likelihood	PANAS positive	PANAS negative
Social Interaction Risk	1	-.432**	-.180*	.42*
Social Interaction Likelihood	-.432**	1	.400**	-.50**
PANAS positive	-.180*	.400**	1	-.30**
PANAS negative (transformed)	.390**	-.494**	-.307**	1

** $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.05$

Table 4

Adherence to prompt by endings

	Ending followed prompt	Ending did not follow prompt
Negative Effects Female	18	13
Negative Effects Male	15	14
Resiliency Female	24	5
Resiliency Male	24	6

**did not include mixed endings in this table*

Table 5

Social Interaction Scale Likelihood Item Analysis

Item	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η_p^2	<i>p</i>
1. Admitting that your tastes are different from those of a friend	3	.82	.03	.49
2. Standing up for someone who appears uncomfortable from being teased	3	1.38	.05	.25
3. Standing up for someone who appears uncomfortable from being teased even if you may be teased in return ¹	3	4.26	.13	.007**
4. Deciding to not say anything when a friend is being teased to avoid confrontation ¹	3	2.69	.09	.051*
5. Providing support for a person who appears to be a victim of bullying ¹	3	1.42	.05	.24
6. Pretending to be on your phone or another distraction when you see a friend bullying another person	3	4.35	.13	.007**
7. Preferring not to get involved either directly or indirectly if you see a verbal or physical fight going on ²	3	3.91	.12	.011*
8. If I am with a new group of people it is better to put myself out there and make friends	3	2.43	.07	.070
9. If I am with a new group of people it is better to remain quieter and observe others	3	1.72	.06	.17
10. Disagreeing with an authority figure on a major issue	3	1.20	.04	.31
11. Speaking your mind about an unpopular issue in front of a group	3	1.85	.06	.14

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < .01$

¹ Post hoc analyses revealed for items 3, 4, and 6, the significant difference was between males in the Negative Effects Group and females in the Resiliency Group.

² Post hoc analyses revealed for item 7, that males in the Negative Effects Group was significantly different than both females in the Resiliency and Negative Effects Group

Table 6

Endorsement of current bullying by gender

		Males	Females
Physical Bullying**	Negative Effects	0	1
	Resiliency	0	1
	Total	0	2
Verbal Bullying**	Negative Effects	0	1
	Resiliency	1	3
	Total	1	4
Indirect Bullying	Negative Effects	5	4
	Resiliency	6	7
	Total	11	11
Worries of bullying due to gender**	Negative Effects	0	12
	Resiliency	2	9
	Total	2	21
Any current bullying**	Negative Effects	7	15
	Resiliency	5	14
	Total	12	29

** $p < 0.001$

Table 7

Hypothesis III- MANCOVA results

	Wilks Lamda	<i>F</i>	η_p^2	<i>p</i>
Interdependence (Overall model)	.78	2.15	.23	.03*
Social Interaction Risk		3.03	.02	.20
Social Interaction Likely		4.01	.05	.05*
PANAS Positive		2.34	.03	.13
PANAS negative		.51	.01	.48
Likelihood cope		9.63	.10	.00**
Likelihood verbal bullying		.04	.00	.84
Likelihood Physical bullying		.55	.01	.46
Likelihood indirect bullying		.74	.01	.29
Likelihood bullying due to gender		1.06	.01	.31
Likelihood of behaviour changing		3.15	.03	.08
Beliefs Normative/Dismissive (Overall model)	.80	1.81	.07	.20
Social Interaction Risk		.32	.57	.00
Social Interaction Likely		4.14	.05	.05*
PANAS Positive		12.14	.13	.00**
PANAS negative		3.51	.04	.06
Likelihood cope		1.20	.01	.27
Likelihood verbal bullying		1.41	.02	.24
Likelihood Physical bullying		3.80	.05	.06
Likelihood indirect bullying		2.85	.03	.10
Likelihood bullying due to gender		.38	.01	.54
Likelihood of behaviour changing		.13	.00	.71
Beliefs Assertive (Overall model)	.75	2.50	.25	.01**
Social Interaction Risk		.00	.00	.96
Social Interaction Likely		4.76	.05	.03*
PANAS Positive		14.16	.15	.00**
PANAS negative		3.72	.04	.06
Likelihood cope		2.94	.03	.09
Likelihood verbal bullying		.11	.00	.75
Likelihood physical bullying		2.27	.03	.14
Likelihood indirect bullying		2.46	.03	.12
Likelihood bullying due to gender		.65	.01	.42
Likelihood of behaviour changing		.03	.00	.86
Current Bullying (Overall model)	.71	3.01	.29	.00**
Social Interaction Risk		5.43	.06	.02*
Social Interaction Likely		10.68	.11	.00**
PANAS Positive		4.97	.06	.03*
PANAS negative		3.75	.04	.06
Likelihood cope		2.59	.03	.11
Likelihood verbal bullying		17.12	.17	.00**

FRAMING OF PAST EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING: IMPACT ON SOCIAL DECISION103
MAKING, EMOTIONS, AND PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE

Likelihood physical bullying		5.00	.06	.03*
Likelihood indirect bullying		22.32	.21	.00**
Likelihood bullying due to gender		13.82	.14	.00**
Likelihood of behaviour changing		15.49	.15	.00**
Group (Overall model)	.52	1.81	.20	.01**
Social Interaction Risk		1.57	.05	.20
Social Interaction Likely		6.48	.19	.00**
PANAS Positive		2.75	.09	.05*
PANAS negative		2.08	.07	.11
Likelihood cope		1.45	.05	.23
Likelihood verbal bullying		.47	.02	.70
Likelihood physical bullying		.50	.02	.68
Likelihood indirect bullying		.87	.03	.46
Likelihood bullying due to gender		1.90	.06	.13
Likelihood of behaviour changing		.59	.02	.63

** $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.05$

Table 8

Bullying themes within the narratives

Theme of bullying (N=113)	Physical Bullying	SES	Gender/ Sexuality	Race/ Ethnicity	Weight/ Appearance
Negative Effects Female	2	3	6	4	5
Resiliency Female	5	1	4	3	11
Resiliency Male	9	2	0	1	6
Negative Effect Male	10	2	3	3	9
Total	27	8	13	11	31

Figure 1

Social Interaction Scale Likelihood group differences

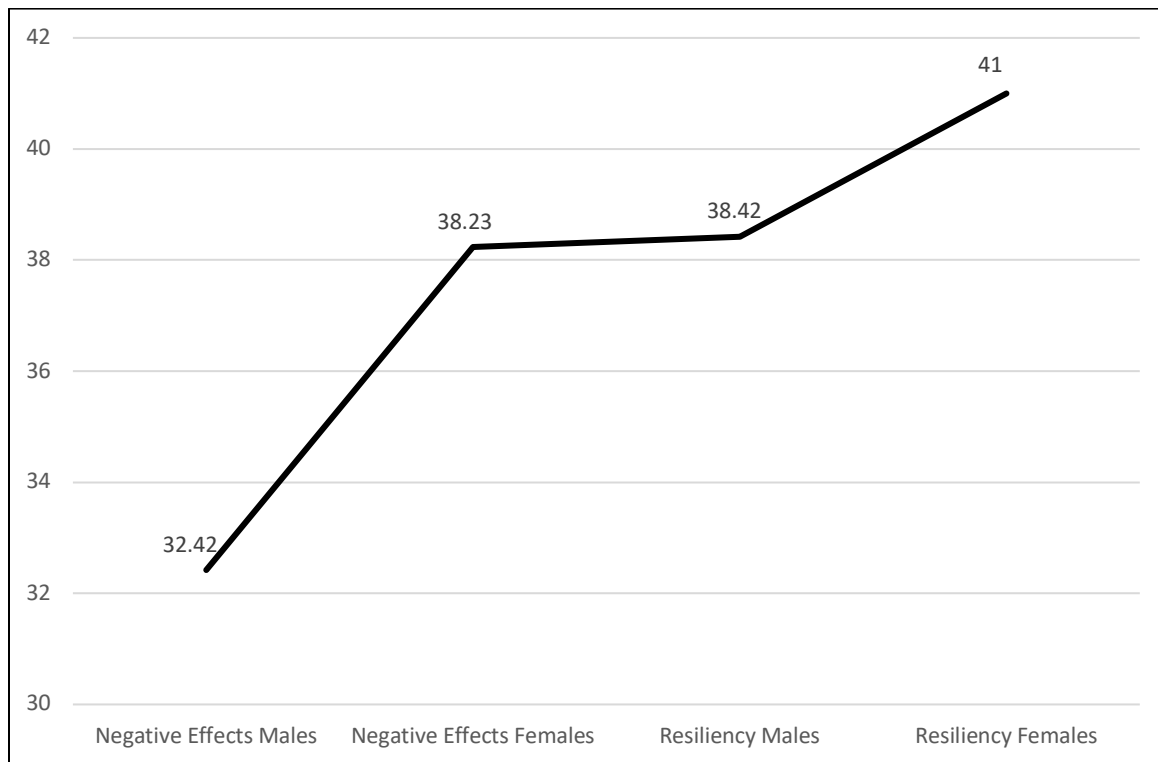


Figure 2

PANAS negative affect group differences

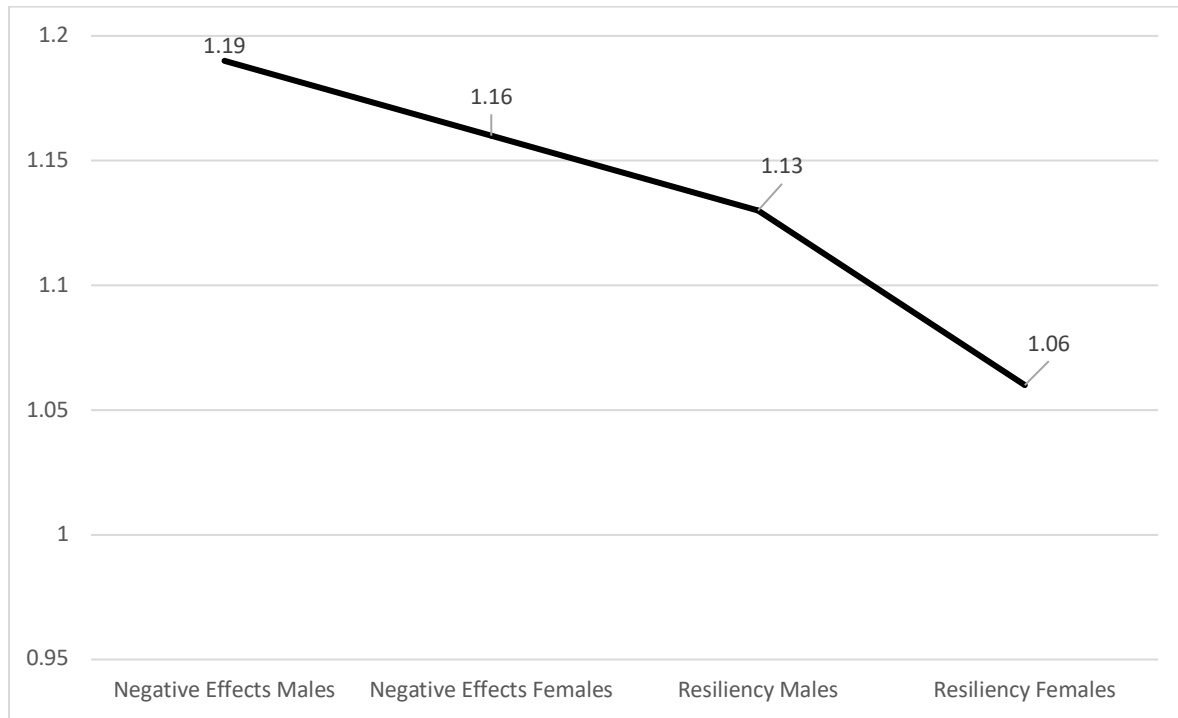


Figure 3

Likelihood of future bullying due to gender group differences

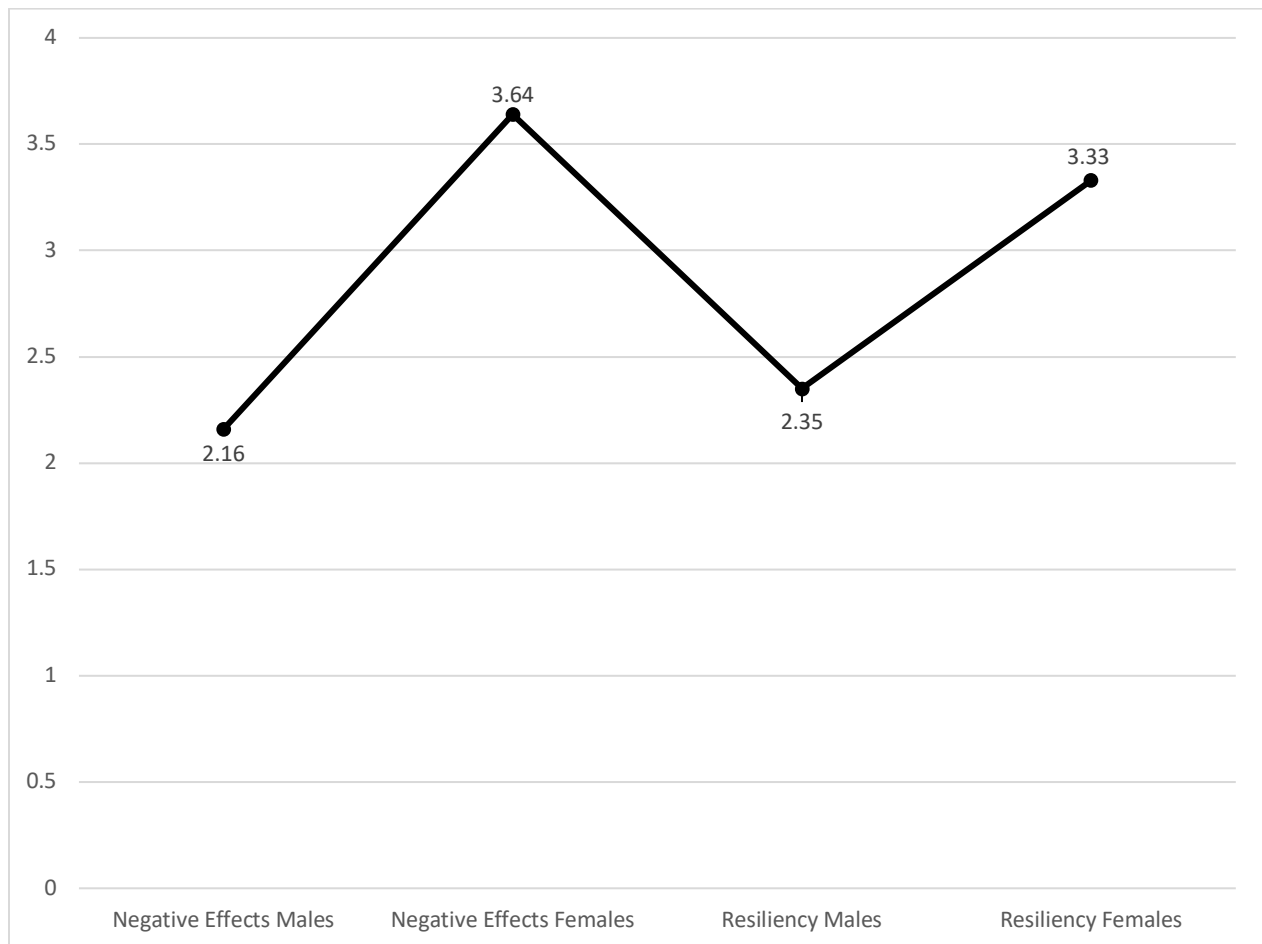


Figure 4

PANAS positive MANCOVA results by group when controlling for gender-based variables

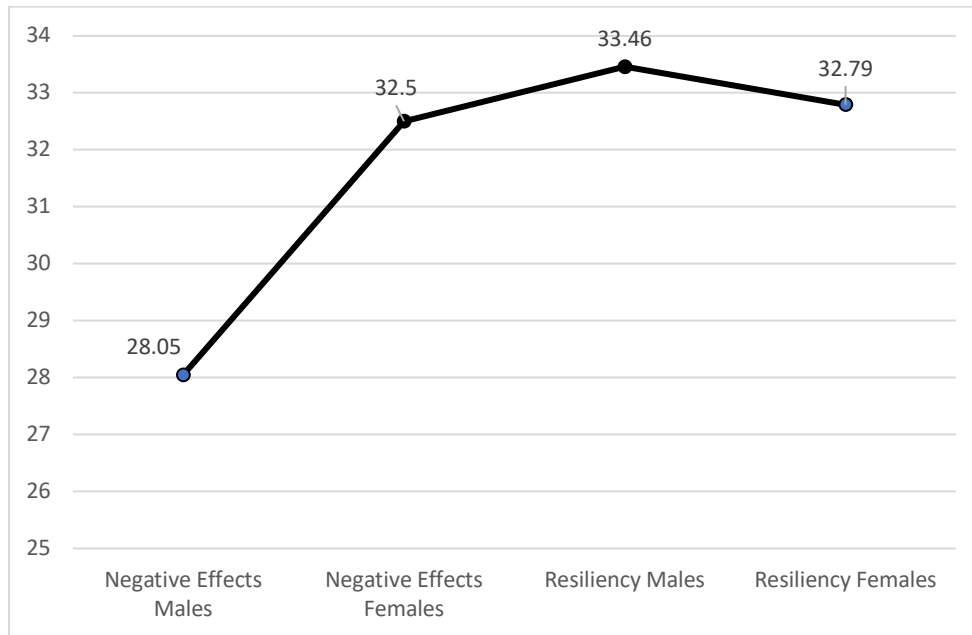


Figure 5

Social Interaction Scale Likelihood MANCOVA results by group when controlling for gender based variables

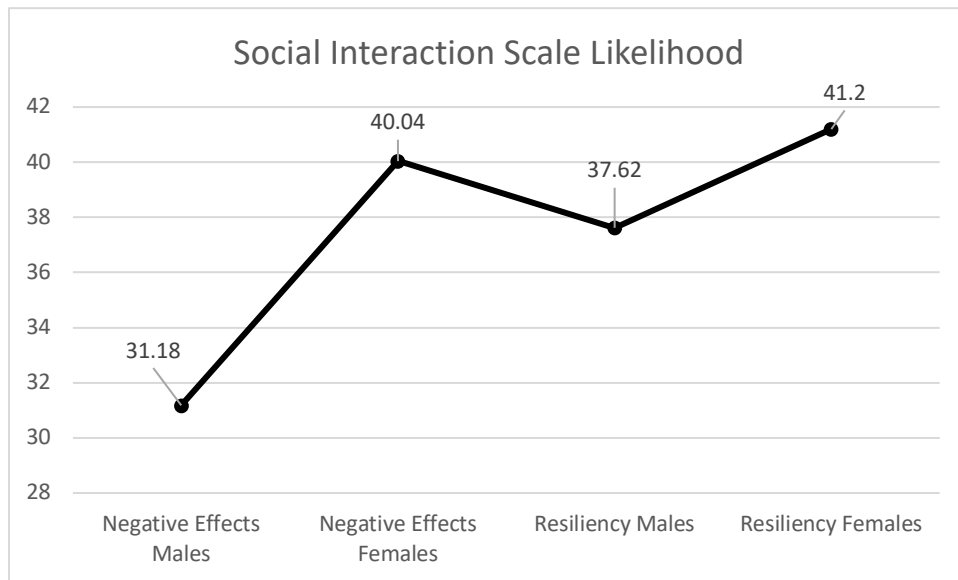


Figure 6

Exploratory narrative results: Social Interaction Scale Risk divided by ending

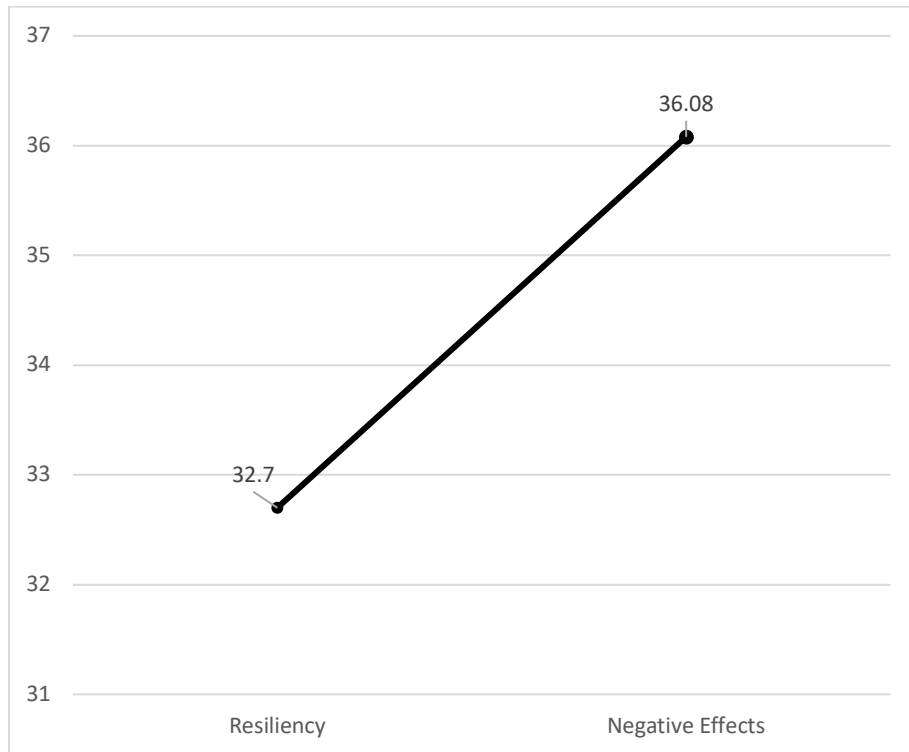


Figure 7

Exploratory narrative results: Social Interaction Scale Likelihood divided by ending

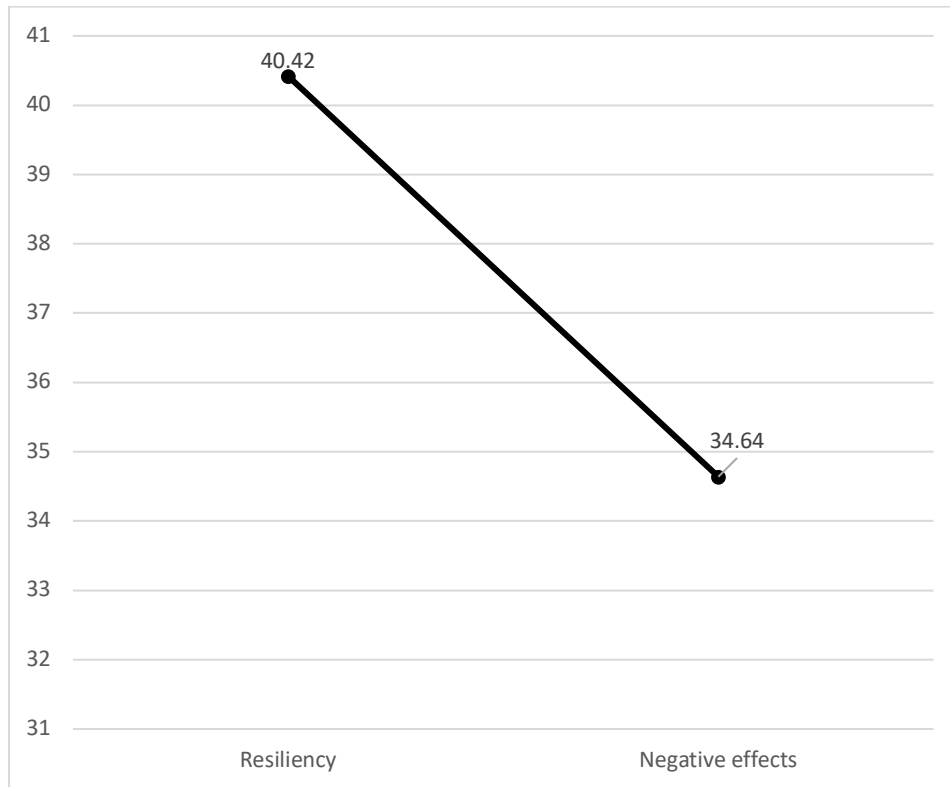


Figure 8

Exploratory narrative results: PANAS positive divided by ending

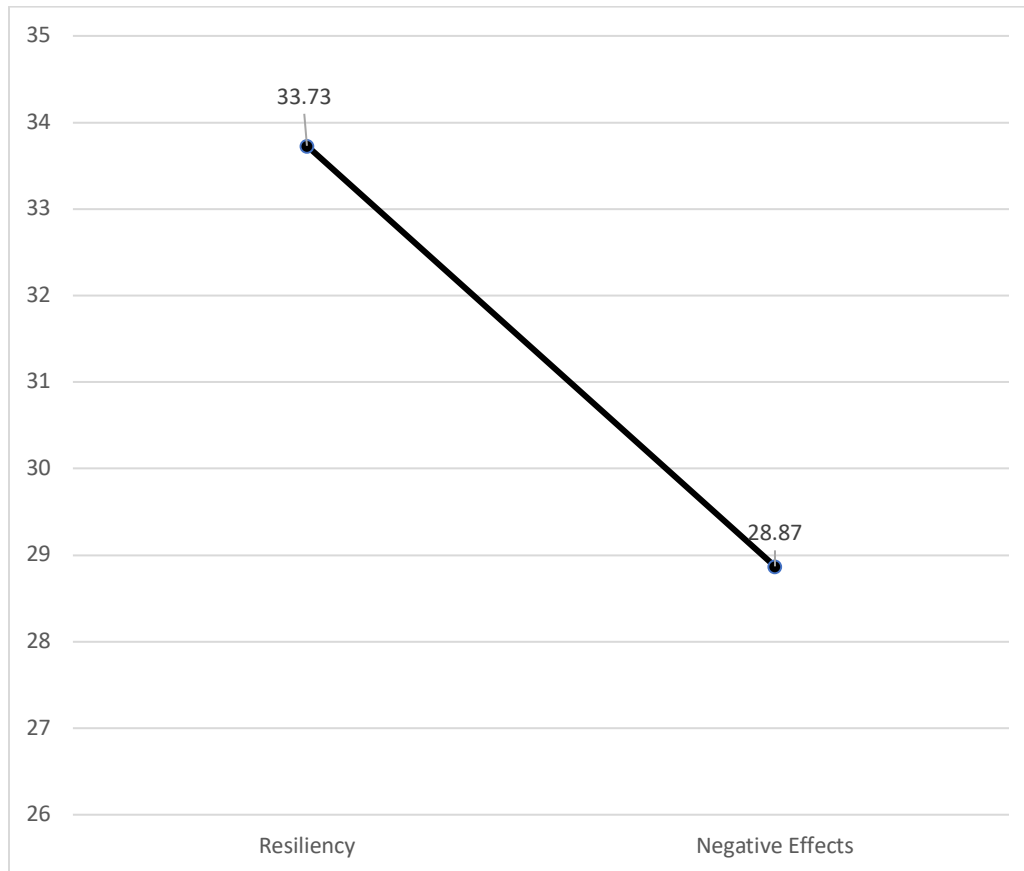


Figure 9

Exploratory narrative results: PANAS negative affect divided by ending

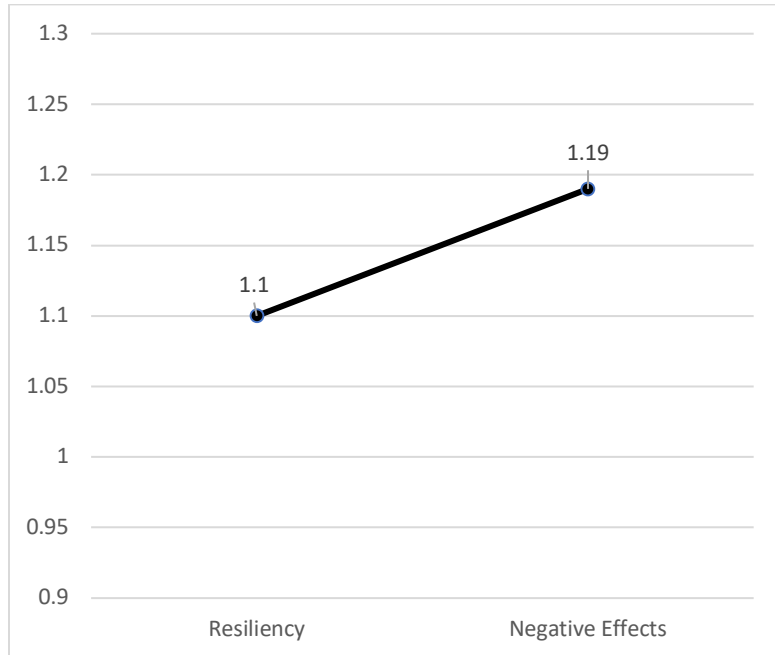
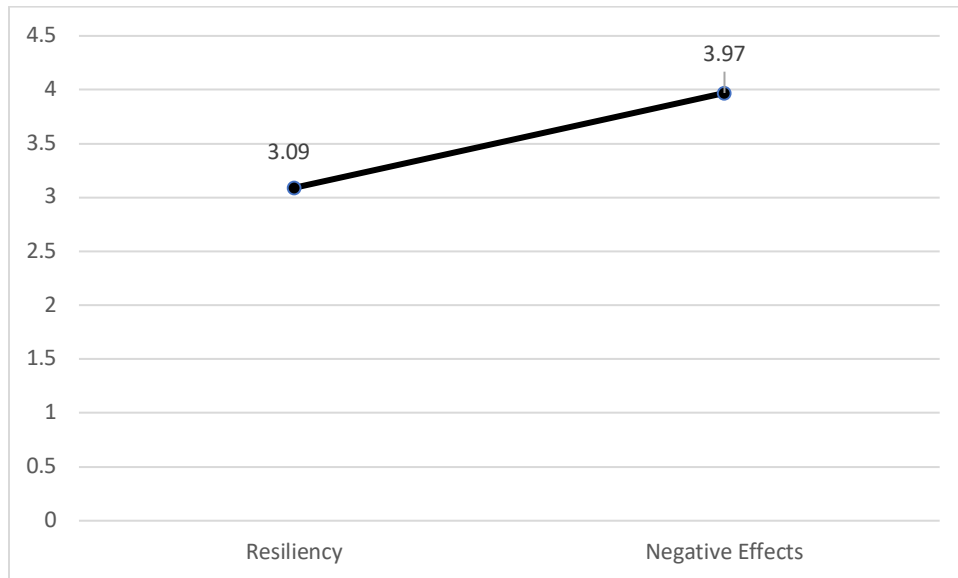


Figure 10

Exploratory narrative results: Predictions of future indirection bullying divided by ending



Appendix A

The framing effect

The framing effect is often best understood through an example. In one of their initial studies on the framing effect, Tversky and Kahneman (1981) requested half of their participants read option 1 and the other half received option 2:

Option 1: Assume yourself richer by \$300 than you are today. You have to choose between a sure gain of \$100, 50% chance to gain \$200, and a 50% chance to gain nothing.

Option 2: Assume yourself richer by \$500 than you are today. You have to choose between a sure loss of \$100, 50% chance to lose nothing, and 50% chance to lose \$200.

Although option 1 and 2 provide identical outcomes (\$400 absolutely, or 50% chance of \$500 or \$300), the way their participants answered this question was to be risk adverse in option 1 and risk seeking in option 2. Participants in option 1 chose to take the sure gain of \$400 absolutely, a more risk adverse choice. Participants in option 2 chose to take the riskier choice of 50% chance of \$300 or \$500 in order to avoid a sure loss. In this way, the manner in which the options were framed and humans' risk adverse nature leads the majority of people to follow these decision-making preferences when presented with the two options (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). This paper has been cited over 5,500 times and has inspired numerous replication studies and research building from this premise.

Appendix B

Individual differences and the framing effect

Age, or developmental stage, may influence the framing effect. An individual's developmental stage has rarely been considered during studies specifically regarding the framing effect as the majority only examine the phenomenon within adults. Methodologically, most framing effect research with adults uses written vignettes. The framing effect has been adapted for use with children through using puppets as well as computer games (e.g., Strough, Karns, Schlosnagle, 2011). In a review of the framing effect across the lifespan, Strough and colleagues (2011) report that the framing effect is apparent as early as six years olds. However, it appears stable and consistent from middle-childhood onwards. Furthermore, the authors note a curious occurrence that occurs with adolescents where large rewards (e.g., 150\$ compared to \$5) led to a reverse framing effect where greater risk taking behavior occurred. Thus the framing effect and risky decision making in adolescents may be similar to but not synonymous with adults.

One major area of research and controversy is how gender or sex influences the framing effect. Fagley and Miller (1990) conducted a study examining both sex and risk taking propensity on the framing effect. The authors found significant sex differences in which women followed the predictions of the framing effect while men demonstrated an opposite pattern. The authors argued that this finding aligns with other cognitive work that women tend to be more field dependent and men more field independent in their visual perception objects related to social contexts (Witkin et al., 1967). Thus, sex may affect both the power of the framing effect and the type of problem solving individuals engage in during bullying situations. However, over time as the mechanisms of the framing effect have been better clarified, much controversy remains. Several other studies have pointed to the contrary. For example, in a task regarding

gambling behavior, men were more susceptible to the framing effect than women and were more risk taking in the positive condition than even the women in the positive condition (Levin, Snyder, Chapman, 2010).

Not only individual characteristics but also how frames are presented to participants, or the methodology of studies, affects the results of this phenomenon. For example, several studies found that allowing people more time to think about the decisions reduced the strength of the framing effect (Takemura, 1992). Similarly, encouraging the individual to elaborate and describe their decision and more deeply process it, removed the effect of the frame (Takemura, 1994). In contrast to Takemura, Block and Keller (1995) write that negative frames are more effective in motivating behavioral change when deep processing is occurring as compared to positive frames. Thus these researchers found that the framing effect works in different manners when deep processing versus quick decision making is used. Bullying often leads to rumination and dwelling on the social problems at hand (e.g., Erdur-Baker, 2009). This type of deep processing around an event must be taken into account when discussing the framing effect and bullying intervention. How frames influence quick, impulsive decisions made in the heat of the moment may be different when asking individuals to carefully reflect upon and plan their future responses.

Appendix C

Health psychology and framing

Several studies in the medical field demonstrate the framing power over behavior. Interestingly, the positive (risk averse) versus negative (risk emphasis) frames used in these studies have produced a range of results. This has been especially true within the domain of public health. For example, Meyerowitz and Chaiken (1987) examined the effect of message framing on college aged females' likelihood to perform breast self-exams. The authors found that participants in the negative frame were more likely to engage in risky behavior (checking for breast cancer through self-exams) than risk adverse behavior (avoiding checking) when in the negative frame condition. This may directly relate to how we understand the likelihood of individuals engaging in risky behavior, for example telling a teacher about a bullying incident or talking with peers, versus risk adverse behavior, refraining from sharing and avoiding social contact. Similarly, in a study examining propensity to engage in exercising, authors found that more positively framed messages emphasizing the rewards of exercise rather than negatively framed messages emphasizing the risks of not exercise caused participants to exercise more (Jones, Sinclair, Courneya, 2003).

Yet these results must be carefully interpreted. Other studies have shown (e.g., Maherswaran & Meyerws-Levy, 1990) that positive frames have a greater influence on individuals' health-related behavior in situations where there is low motivation to engage in the behavior. For example, framing quitting smoking in terms of the benefits versus the negatives was more effective in creating behavioral change. However, when individuals are already highly motivated to create change, negative frames are seen as more informative, more helpful, and create larger effects on behavior. Thus, assessing an individual's motivation for change will also

determine whether a positive or negative frame will be more likely to influence change. This may directly relate to an individual's motivation in a social situation.

In addition to motivation, the expected efficacy in a situation has also been shown to influence the strength of the framing effect (Block & Keller, 1995). In the foundational studies of Tversky and Kahneman, there was no question as to whether the probabilities they stated would come true. The medication would save 30 individuals and harm 2. However, in real life, we typically do not have such certainties in the probabilities around us, especially in terms of social situations. Several studies have demonstrated that the more uncertainty in a situation, the more carefully we process the choices and outcomes around the situation (e.g., Fredrickson, 1985). Block and Keller (1995) demonstrated that more effortful processing reduces the strength of the framing effect. In bullying situations, common tactics used to advise victims of bullying are to tell a teacher or parent, or to continue approaching and building friendships with other children thus maintaining other forms of peer support. However, for children in the midst of these situations, what is their interpretation of the probabilistic certainty that these tactics will help them? Motivation and belief in the efficacy of tactic to combat bullying will influence the strength of the framing effect. Of note, in these studies, efficacy was measure after the frame and thus how effective the proposed solution was, may have inadvertently been influenced by the frame itself.

Of note, frames affect those with limited or in-depth knowledge of a specific situation. In a study of medical students, the students were asked whether they would advise a patient as well as if they themselves would undergo a risky medical procedure. Positive and negative frames affected how they decided to proceed (Marteau, 1989). Thus, psychological clinicians should equally be aware of the effects of frames as well as victims of bullying.

In the current study, we have chosen not to specifically address motivation for change as well as perceived efficacy. First, we are not asking participants to change their behaviors in the future but rather are asking them to answer a series of questions about hypothetical situations. In this way, since we are not asking participants to engage in behavioral change after the end of the study, the need to assess for this motivation is no longer needed. Future studies may wish to assess how motivation to change, for example, change amount of engagement in bystander intervention, is related to behavioral changes after the end of the study. Secondly, since the social world is inherently unpredictable, there is no way to create specificities around efficacy of certain social interactions. What may work in one social situation may fail in a different context. Thus efficacy, unlike within medical interventions, is difficult to quantify and not necessarily relevant to this particular study. Future studies may wish to examine how beliefs around the efficacy of different behaviors, such as bystander intervention, affect frames.

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Please enter your current age:
2. Please enter your date of birth:
3. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Transgender Female
 - d. Transgender Male
 - e. Gender Variant/Non-Conforming
 - f. Not listed
 - i. Please enter your gender identity:
 - g. Prefer not to answer
4. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. Completed through 8th grade
 - b. High school
 - c. Some college, no current degree
 - d. Trade or professional training after high school
 - e. Bachelor's Degree
 - f. Master's Degree
 - g. Professional Degree
 - h. Doctorate Degree
 - i. Prefer not to answer
5. What is your race?
 - a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - e. White
 - f. Other
 - g. Biracial
 - h. Not listed
 - i. Please enter your occupation
 - i. Prefer not to answer
6. What is your ethnicity?
 - a. Hispanic/latino
 - b. Not Hispanic/latino
 - c. Prefer not to answer

FRAMING OF PAST EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING: IMPACT ON SOCIAL DECISION122 MAKING, EMOTIONS, AND PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE

Appendix E

Teacher's Attitudes Towards Bullying

Please enter how much you agree or disagree with the following questions

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

Normative Bullying Beliefs:

1. Fighting between boys/girls is just a part of playing.
2. Fights between boys and girls help them learn to stand up for themselves.
3. For boy/girls teasing other children is just part of growing up
4. Teasing helps people learn important social norms

Advocate avoidance

5. The best thing for someone to do when others tease them is to stay away from those people in the future.
6. Individuals who are teased by their classmates/coworkers should just avoid their attackers.
7. People will stop picking on those who ignore them.

Advocate assertion

8. Individuals will stop bullying someone who asserts herself.
9. People who get picked on by others need to learn to stand up for themselves.
10. People get picked on because they let others push them around.

Dismissive Beliefs

11. Compared to all of the other problems people have, being picked on is relatively minor.
12. People do not mind being teased because it shows interest in them.

13. People can get over being picked on by classmates/coworkers/friends pretty easily.

Resilience beliefs (added by authors to measure)

14. People who are bullied are emotionally strong.

15. People who are bullied are emotionally weak.

16. People who are bullied show resilience to these experiences.

17. People who are bullied have severe negative outcomes.

18. People who are bullied may be able to handle tough situations better later in life.

19. People who are bullied have greater difficulty coping with challenging life events.

Appendix F

Interdependent versus independent self-construal measure

- ___ 1. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.
- ___ 2. I can talk openly with a person who I meet for the first time, even when this person is much older than I am.
- ___ 3. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.
- ___ 4. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
- ___ 5. I do my own thing, regardless of what others think.
- ___ 6. I respect people who are modest about themselves.
- ___ 7. I feel it is important for me to act as an independent person.
- ___ 8. I will sacrifice my self interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
- ___ 9. I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.
- ___ 10. Having a lively imagination is important to me.
- ___ 11. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.
- ___ 12. I feel my fate is intertwined with the fate of those around me.
- ___ 13. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.
- ___ 14. I feel good when I cooperate with others.
- ___ 15. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.
- ___ 16. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
- ___ 17. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.
- ___ 18. Speaking up during a class (or a meeting) is not a problem for me.
- ___ 19. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor (or my boss).
- ___ 20. I act the same way no matter who I am with.
- ___ 21. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.
- ___ 22. I value being in good health above everything.
- ___ 23. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I am not happy with the group.
- ___ 24. I try to do what is best for me, regardless of how that might affect others.
- ___ 25. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.
- ___ 26. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.
- ___ 27. My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.
- ___ 28. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.
- ___ 29. I act the same way at home that I do at school (or work).
- ___ 30. I usually go along with what others want to do, even when I would rather do something different.

Appendix G

Modified Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire

Modified from the Retrospective Bullying Questionnaire to ask only about current bullying

1. Are you currently physically bullied (hitting, kicking, having things stolen from you)?
Yes No
2. Does this happen:
Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Constantly
3. How serious do you consider these bullying attacks to be?
I wasn't bullied Not at all Only a bit Quite Serious Extremely Serious
4. Are you currently verbally bullied (being called names or threatened)?
Yes No
5. Does this happen:
Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Constantly
6. How serious do you consider these bullying attacks to be?
I wasn't bullied Not at all Only a bit Quite Serious Extremely Serious
7. Are you currently indirectly bullied (lies or rumors told about you behind your back or deliberately excluded from social groups)?
Yes No
8. Does this happen:
Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Constantly
9. How serious do you consider these bullying attacks to be?
I wasn't bullied Not at all Only a bit Quite Serious Extremely Serious
10. Do you often worry about being bullied, intimidated, or made to feel unsafe
Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Constantly
11. Does this happen:
Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Constantly
12. How often do you feel uncomfortable, intimidated, or unsafe due to your gender or sex?
Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Constantly

FRAMING OF PAST EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING: IMPACT ON SOCIAL DECISION127
MAKING, EMOTIONS, AND PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE

How likely do you think it is that you will be feel uncomfortable, intimidated, or unsafe due to your gender or sex in the future?

Very Unlikely
Unlikely
Somewhat Unlikely
Undecided
Somewhat Likely
Likely
Very Likely

How much do you predict you will change your behavior to avoid being made fun of or bullied in any way?

Very Unlikely
Unlikely
Somewhat Unlikely
Undecided
Somewhat Likely
Likely
Very Likely

If you experienced bullying in the future, how likely do you think you would be able to handle it?

Very Unlikely
Unlikely
Somewhat Unlikely
Undecided
Somewhat Likely
Likely
Very Likely

Appendix I

Social Interaction Scale

For each of the following statements, please indicate **how risky to yourself** you believe is engaging in each activity or behavior and how much you **would avoid** each activity or behavior. Provide a rating from **1 to 5**, using the following scale:

	1	2	3	4	5
Very Risky		Risk.	Moderately Risky	Mildly Risky	Not Risky

	1	2	3	4	5
	Definitely avoid	Likely avoid	Neither	Likely engage in	Definitely engage in

1. **Admitting that your tastes are different from those of a friend. (S)**
2. **Disagreeing with an authority figure on a major issue. (S)**
3. **Speaking your mind about an unpopular issue in front of a group. (S)**
4. Preferring not to get involved either directly or indirectly if you see a verbal or physical fight going on.
5. Standing up for someone who appears uncomfortable from being teased.
6. Standing up for someone who appears uncomfortable from being teased even if you may be teased in return.
7. Deciding to not say anything when a friend is being teased to avoid confrontation.
8. Providing support for a person who appears to be a victim of bullying.
9. Pretending to be on your phone or another distraction when you see a friend bullying another person.
10. If I am with a new group of people, it is better to “put myself out there” and make friends.
11. If I am with a new group of people, it is better to remain quieter and observe others.

**** In bold are from the original DOSPERT scale or risk, social subscale**

FRAMING OF PAST EXPERIENCES OF BULLYING: IMPACT ON SOCIAL DECISION129 MAKING, EMOTIONS, AND PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE

Appendix J

Brief Measure of Positive and Negative Affect

Indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week.		Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
PANAS 1	Interested	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 2	Distressed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 3	Excited	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 4	Upset	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 5	Strong	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 6	Guilty	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 7	Scared	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 8	Hostile	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 9	Enthusiastic	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 10	Proud	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 11	Irritable	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 12	Alert	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 13	Ashamed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 14	Inspired	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 15	Nervous	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 16	Determined	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 17	Attentive	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 18	Jittery	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 19	Active	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
PANAS 20	Afraid	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Appendix K

Examples of resiliency endings

When I was going to school I had anger issues. I'd lash out at everyone and eventually most people stayed away from me. Except for this one kid, he was a bully in every definition of the word. Eventually the school told me that if I don't straighten up they're going to have to expel me. This meant no more fighting or acting out of any sort. Well imagine my surprise when somehow the bully found out about this and he started doing everything in his power to get me expelled. My grandparents sent me to a therapist so that I could learn to control myself and thankfully they did because he got worse every week. At one point he found out that I had a fear of getting stung due to my mother being allergic to them and he started trying to capture bees and wasps and throwing them at me, putting them on my chair etc. I had to ignore all of this, focus on my studies and control myself because I didn't want to wind up in Juvie again or expelled from school and sent to another crappier school that didn't care about me. In the end I wound up learning how much I could put up with as well as a few meditation techniques that I still use to this day. My anger control got much better and I haven't lashed out at anyone in years. I feel more assured of myself and when I face trouble I turn to others to help me out be it a few kind words or to bounce ideas off of to solve the difficulty.

I was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. It was very severe. After over 20 surgeries, it is still noticeable. A few years ago, I was working at a local gas station and an older gentleman came in that I had never met before. I thought I was a good judge of character, because I immediately began to turn my "happy face" on and was trying to talk sweetly like I do to older people. Instead of replying to my "How are you today", he said "What's wrong with your face? Were you in a wreck or something? It looks really bad." I was shocked. The store was full of people that were now looking at me. For the first time ever, I stood up for myself as far as bullying over my appearance goes. I looked at him and I said "For your information I was born this way, and my job is hard enough without dealing with ignorant people like you. I deserve to be able to work and pay my bills without dealing with rude comments." He didn't say anything else, but paid for his items and left. Everyone else in the store carried on with what they were doing like nothing happened. A regular customer came up and said, "Don't let it get to you". It made me feel better. Usually after instances like this, I clam up and start feeling depressed again. This time, I carried on with my work day and didn't let his words get me down.

Appendix L

Examples of negative effects endings

I was bullied in college by a group of mean kids, I experienced side effects of nervousness, anxiety, constant fear, and angry. they physically assaulted me a few times. I have still not fully gotten over the incidents and find myself being afraid or scared sometimes and I avoid groups of people. I dropped out of college and eventually completed online courses. At the time, I had been in the hospital for almost a week recovering from my injuries. It was overall one of the worst incidents of my life.

I had to wear a hat throughout junior high because of my trichotillomania, which is a compulsive disorder where you pull your hair out. I pulled so much out, that the bald spots took up most of my head. Shaving it didn't hide them. Obviously being the only one allowed to wear a hat in school will bring lots of attention. There were 2 guys specifically who bullied me about it. They were really the only ones. Everyone else just asked why I wear it, I would lie, and that'd be it. But they took my hat off in front of lots of people multiple times, joked about me having cancer, tried taking pictures of my head, etc. They would only do it when they were together, never just one of them. They got in trouble multiple times, and I punched one of them a couple times on one occasion, but they didn't stop. They eventually took my hat off in the middle of the lunch line where 200-300 kids were around and they threw it across the room. That was when most everyone finally saw my hair. Someone threw me my hat back to me and I hit the one who threw it. But I was so embarrassed that I didn't go to school for a week. When I did go back, I made sure to always wait in the back of lines, be the last one to leave class so I wouldn't be in a crowd of people who could potentially take my hat off, and I just got much quieter and paranoid. That lasted the rest of the year.

Appendix M

Example of mixed ending (Fractured)

This was when I was about 11 or 12. My friends from elementary school were with me and we were in middle school. We were at our first football game. I had been friends with all these people since pre k and had done many things with all of them. I went to sit with them and they told me to leave. They said I was ugly and did not have a girlfriend so I could not sit with them. Again these are people i knew for many years before this. I left and never came back. It made me really sad at the time but looking back it was great. I meet my best friend a few weeks later that I am still friends with. We have had great times togher and all those people are nothing to me now. But it still sticks with me as you can tell from this writing even though it was so long ago and turned out for the better.

Example of mixed ending (Sophisticated)

When I think about bullying in my life, my childhood comes greatly to mind. I was quite an obese child growing up and got teased mercilessly for being overweight. Not only this, but my family was quite poor, and I got made of a lot for the cheap clothing I wore, especially from females. Growing up, I've found myself to be to catty to women at first due to my past experiences with females. I have a lot of trust issues due to this bullying but I'm working on it everyday. Growing up, I lost a lot of weight and now am in a healthy weight range and have been for 5+ years. I guess I should thank bullying for that, but at the same time I learned how unhealthy it was to be overweight. Bullying lead me into a healthy lifestyle, but the psychological damage has been enough. I had an eating disorder for many years and began to think my self worth was only through my looks. I constantly worry that people are looking at me and thinking of ways to bully me. It's not something I think of constantly, but does cross my mind quite a bit in public. Bullying hasn't occurred to me in a long time, but I still live with it daily. I think about the people who called me names when I was younger, and thinking about how I could have had a better childhood without it. I've learned to move on with my life and not let it affect me too much, and I can't constantly dwell on the past.

Appendix N

Appendix N

Examples of narrative themes

“I knew that when I was born in California, I would be different. This had something to do with the fact that I am Filipino. However being said that, I live in an American (more White people) urban population. I did not realize this until I was a little bit older. My parents are born in the Philippines. Both of them are full Filipinos. According to their story due to how bad the economy is and still is in the Philippines, they decided to move. So I was born on August 22 1990. Even though I was born in California, I was still able to speak fluent Tagalog (Filipino) language and have that culture in me. I still keep in touch as they say, my roots. I knew I was different. I live in Cypress California with my family and people must act different towards me because I'm not white. This happened most especially during my school days. Whenever we would have group projects or sleepover, I was always the one feeling left out. No one wanted to approach me as much or they would make a racist remark saying I do not belong in the group because I do not have blond hair and I have flat nose etc. My feelings? Of course I felt hurt. I dread going to school every single day because I don't feel worthy at all. I just wanted to be alone and always blame my parents or ask them why we are Filipinos”

“Myself and my friends we're bullied in a sense in high school. This may not have been the most "serious" issue, but it affected me the most. There were a big bunch of stupid high school guys that made a challenge with each other to see who could touch and grope the most girls butts, boobs, etc without being called out or caught. That is so gross and degrading. I remember randomly feeling hands on my butt at time when we were all in close group settings so they could "sneak" groping me in without it seeming real. Sometimes I couldn't even tell, but other times it was so obvious they had just tried to touch me without my permission. All my friends were victims of this too. The worst thing is that when we tried to come forward, the teachers either didn't believe us, or didn't want to get the guys in trouble, so they basically just "had a talk" with all high school boys and moved on. That was it. That was all the "justice" we got after being touched and groped by these stupid filthy guys that can't even keep their hands to themselves. It really makes you wonder if women really are just objects in their minds sometimes. I don't like to talk about it, it makes me angry and ashamed at the same time even now, when it's been two, almost three years since that was going on.”

“I feel that I was bullied online on reddit by others due to my gender and my beliefs. I posted in a thread about being a feminist and I got several really rude, abusive messages calling me a [gendered insult] and saying they hoped I got raped. Of course I was upset when I first read it, but honestly it just made my convictions even stronger. It motivated me to keep fighting and keep speaking out against sexism. I also thought that the writers of the messages must be really pathetic people, so why should I care what they think of me and that took the sting out of their words.”

“I was mostly bullied in high school because I wasn't the typical male and super into sports. Yea I enjoyed watching them, but was not really into playing them because of my health and unstable home situation. This caused some of the guys to call me names and make assumptions about the kind of man I was going to be. To them without sports you were dumb and worth less.

At first this made it difficult to find friends, but eventually I found some guys with similar interests and just did my best to ignore the others. After a while I turned my focus more on college sports and professional sports. As I've gotten older I realize most of us were just over run by hormones and not thinking before speaking. Those jerks can say whatever they want, they aren't a part of my life anymore and I'm ok with that. Back then those words did really hurt though, looking back I wish I hadn't let myself get so upset about the things that were said to me. I wish that I had found the positive attitude that I have now a little sooner in life."