

**Queenbees and wannabees: The struggle for power through bullying in
adolescent girls**

by

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DEDICATION

To my children, Sydney and Sumner
who teach me everyday what it means to
“bee” a human, a mother, and a life-long teacher.

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ABSTRACT

In this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I explore the lived experience of 5 middle school girls in grades 5-9, who have experienced bullying. My question for this study asks, “What is the lived experience of adolescent girls who have experienced female bullying?” The metaphor of queenbees and wannabees has helped me understand adolescent ways of being in the world as they have been bullied. In addition, understanding the lived experience of female bullying is developed through the exploration of the phenomenological life-world themes of body, time, space, and relationality. The theme of body is examined through physical being, emotional being, and intellectual being. Lived time is explored as these females experience bullying and their perception of bullying. The theme of space surfaces from where and how they have been bullied, to the spaces in which they feel threatened or safe. The life-world of relationality is explicated through the peers and adults who surround these middle school girls. The in-depth conversations with the researcher focused on the continuing, daily experiences of these female adolescents.

Themes that emerged from the text of the conversations disclose deeper meanings of what it means to be bullied: the deep desire to belong to a group; the feeling of being invisible, which includes the longing to have “new stuff;” the exclusion that accompanies being different; the helplessness of being cyber-bullied; the mighty sting of the queenbee, and the silent code language. These adolescents are, indeed, swimming in uncharted waters. I admire these brave adolescents for sharing their stories with me.

And as busy as teachers may be, they need to recognize female bullying and the many forms of it hidden under the radar. Educators should encourage students to tell them when they have been bullied, or when they have been a witness to a bullying incident. Bullying

occurs primarily at schools: the hallways, the classrooms, the playground, and while riding the bus. It is left to the legal system to answer the questions that arise from cyber-bullying that is meted out by the bully from home. Educators need to take action regarding the bully; middle school girls have the right to feel safe at school. Without the feeling of safety it will be difficult for adolescent females to reach their full potential. This study has created new pedagogical possibilities for viewing the experience of female bullying including implications for teacher in-service and school bullying policies.

CHAPTER ONE:
TURNING TOWARD THE PHENOMENON OF BULLYING

Being Called to the Middle

All I ever asked for was some understanding,
All I ever got as an answer
Was a world too demanding.
All I ever needed was some time,
All I ever received
Was losing everything that was mine.
All I ever prayed for were some clues,
All I ever felt in return were the blues.
All I ever wanted was some love,
All I ever received was a selfish shove.
All I ever searched for was some hope,
All I ever found was a joke.
All I ever needed was to be free,
All I ever had were chains enslaving me.
All I ever got as an answer
Was a world too demanding.

(Esendemir, 2001, p. 21)

The poem above provides us with a view into the life of one adolescent girl who has been bullied; her emotions are felt by many middle school girls, especially the victims of bullying. As I read the poem I find myself wanting to engage in a reflective conversation with her that might go like this:

What is being misunderstood in your world? Who is not understanding you?

Adolescence is a time of life that is frustrating and confusing, a time in life when you are pulled between childhood and adulthood as you search for your niche in life.

What about this search is troubling you? This is a defining time in your life that shapes and molds the future of who you will come to be. No one seems to understand you as a female adolescent; no one seems to be listening or hearing what you are asking. You pray for direction and are crying out for help. What are you needing help with, and what have you lost? What can be done to retrieve what is lost? Might the answers be found within yourself? You state that you want some love and, in return, receive a selfish shove; is this shove to push you out of the way, an exclusion? What does it mean not to love? What was overlooked, your need for love and acknowledgement? You seem to be seeking a thread of hope to hang onto, to pull yourself through this complex time in life. This thread of hope will set you free, yet at the same time, you have chains enslaving you, holding you back. Are these self-imposed chains? What are these chains that enslave you . . . self-doubt, feelings of inadequacy, and frustration borne out of the fear that no one will listen and understand your plight? What part of bullying is so painful that you cannot help yourself? What can ease this transition from childhood to adulthood? Must this world that is too demanding be a right of passage to adulthood? What brought about the need for love, the need for clues, and the need to be free? From what do you need to be freed?

This poem reveals a slice of life that offers one way to explore bullying among adolescent females. The study of adolescence is not new, and the phenomenon of bullying among children has been around since the world has known children. The *Bible* tells us of the

problems between two brothers, Cain and Able. We have Dan Olweus, a researcher in Norway and the father of research on bullying in the 1970s, to thank for bringing this issue to our awareness. “Some youth greatly accelerate their rates of violent behavior in adolescence; hence, this is when many violent offenses occur” (Underwood, 2003, p. 139). Although bullying recently has been recognized, other forms of violence in schools have been studied. Columbine forced our attention on the male perpetrators of this tragedy, which allowed us to examine the overt and direct acts of bullying, in other words the most obvious, visible, and tangible acts.

In the aftermath of April 20, 1999, the 13 bodies, on gurneys covered with whitesheets, emerged one by one from Columbine High School. Just as with an injury to one’s body, we can see it, but we do not know the depth, extent of the wound, or the pain that was endured. “Bullying is a life-and-death issue that we ignore at our children’s peril” (Coloroso, 2003, p. xv). What unseen pain preceded this incident? What were the depths of this pain?

Olweus (2004) says, “A broad definition of bullying is when a student is repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (para. 3). In this post-Columbine era, schools have focused on these direct acts, but few schools have addressed the indirect or covert acts of aggression such as name-calling, starting rumors, or ostracizing from a group. Ostracizing from the group is the ultimate form of bullying; it conveys the message that you cannot talk to me because you are not really here. The mere word bullying conjures up visions of boys physically fighting. Lyn Mikel Brown (2003) says:

There have been books written on girl gangs and violent girl behavior, but because such depictions of girls have been racialized—stereotyped and marginalized by the popular press as a problem of urban girls of color—educators have tended to dismiss

the larger realities of girls' anger and aggression. Instead, the prevailing assumption has long been that girls are good at relationships; that their friendships and peer relationships, in particular are responsive and healthy and, in spite of petty bickering and minor conflicts, devoid of really serious problems. (p. 13)

If you ask almost any girl, regardless of color or where she lives as to how girls fight or disagree with each other, she will admit that there is more than what meets the eye. Girls are taught to be nice, and that good girls don't fight, so they resort to sneaky, underground, manipulative ways of displaying their anger.

Flying Beneath the Radar

Rachel Simmons (2002) defines female aggression as "often hidden, indirect, and nonphysical, [and it] has gone unexplored. It has not even been called bullying, but instead 'what girls do' (p. 4). It is often manifested in a passive or silent form of bullying that generally goes unnoticed, although girls do exhibit direct aggression as in physical fighting. These passive forms of bullying are often "beneath the radar" (Simmons, 2002, p. 21); the bully makes the incident appear as though it were an accident. How does a buzzing adolescent fly beneath the radar? What is not being detected by adult radar?

In one of my preliminary conversations with middle school girls, the bully in the school hallway seem to run into the victim innocently and knocks the books from her grasp while looking the other way. The victim, a 7th grade girl, hurt and angry that it happened AGAIN, slowly bends down to gather her books. "Girls suffer not just from overt forms of aggression and bullying but also from the more indirect forms of victimization" (Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2000, p. 373). Other examples of passive aggression are a dirty look, starting rumors, using hand gestures, name-calling, and using internet websites to slam a girl. Relational aggression is a form of emotional violence where girls use relationships to harm

their female counterparts. Ambiguous aggression is the term I have arrived at that more accurately describes the bullying that girls do to one another. This bullying often appears unintended and unplanned to those who witness it; in reality, it is intentional and intended to harm, upset, and hurt the intended target—the victim.

The female adolescent experience of bullying is found on the Internet, in the headlines of newspapers and magazines; it is a subject found in poetry and operas, and is written about in diaries, and portrayed in movies. To understand bullying among girls, I draw upon these resources describing adolescent life as a way to open up this phenomenon. **I turn to phenomenological methodology to explore the lived experience of what it is like for adolescent girls to experience female bullying.** “The phenomenologist as a writer is an author who starts from the midst of life, and yet is transported to that space where as Robert Frost once said, writing is ‘like falling forward into the dark’” (van Manen, 2002b, p. 7). At times, I have felt like I have truly fallen in the dark, knowing where I have fallen yet searching for something to connect with my phenomenon. Female bullying is generally unlike the more recognized male form of bullying where the physical evidence is obvious, such as a black eye. Girls often resort to a type of bullying that leaves no trace of physical evidence but destroys the adolescent girl from the inside out, depleting her self-confidence and causing her to second guess herself. In referring to adult victims of bullying Naimie and Naimie (2003) state, “Over time, the female Target’s personality is bent out of recognition even to herself” (p. 5). How much more damage is inflicted on the personality of a young female? What is this damage? How does one overcome such damage?

Bullying in the Middle

According to the United States Department of Education:

“In 2001, 14 percent of students ages 12 through 18 reported that they had been bullied at school in the last 6 months. Student reports of being bullied decreased as grade level increased from 6th [grade] (24 percent) to 12th grade (7 percent)

(United States Department of Education, 2005, pp. v-vi).

What is behind this bullying? What is it that is occurring with adolescent girls to account for this increase? What responsibility do we as educators have to address this concern? During the 1999-2001 school year, the 6th and 7th grade students reported the highest incidents of being bullied: 10.5 and 9.0, respectively. The bullying occurred on school property, on school buses, or going to and from the school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Despite collecting statistics on bullying, no definition was given, so we only can infer the meaning from the question asked and presume that it does not include indirect bullying.

What do we not understand about bullying? What can be done about bullying?

The question on the survey of schools in the United States asked:

During the last 6 months, have you been bullied at school? That is, has anyone picked on you a lot or tried to make you do things you didn't want to do like give them money? You may include incidents you reported before.” (National Center for Education Statistics 2003, p. 148)

The incidents reported on previous surveys before this question was posed included physical forms of violence. What types of bullying are being overlooked? What is a 6th grade girl's definition of bullying as compared to a 7th grade girl's definition? Quantitative data can provide us with one kind of picture regarding this phenomenon, but it can not tell the complete story of the lived experience of being the victim of middle school bullying.

Research concerning the “girl world” culture, including middle school girls' identity, language, dress, and pecking order, has given us a new way to view this age group in our

society. In the United States, a lot of recent attention has been given to aggression and girls, relational aggression, and overt aggression, but little attention has been directed toward the vicious, secretive manipulation that girls force on each other. The mother of a 5th grade girl talks about how her daughter was continually given the black, brown, and blue colored pencils when the colored pencils were being passed out by her female classmates to use on class projects. The girls passing out the colored pencils kept the pinks, purples, and other desirable colors for themselves and their friends. The less popular girls were given the colored pencils that the other girls did not want to use. The mother was wondering how to communicate this concern to her daughter's teacher. Would the teacher even see it as a problem? It would sound so much like tattle-telling, would it not? "This is a concern of mine, and I do not want it to escalate into a bigger problem, but what can I do?" (K. Gaye, personal communication, December 12, 2004). "This neglect of more covert forms of aggression means that many students may be suffering silently from peer victimization, with little or no support from their schools"(Shute, Owens, & Slee, 2000, p. 370).

Welcome to the female middle school years! This is a period in a young girl's life where she is pulled between two worlds: the world of the child and the world of the adult. The relationship "rules and rituals" learned here carry into adulthood.

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and injustice. (Robert F. Kennedy, as cited in Namie & Namie 2003, n.p.)

It would be a remarkable achievement if educating people about female middle school bullying, would have taken off with the strength of a hurricane by now, but in reality it has

not been more than a tropical storm. Thus, my desire will be to distribute ripples of hope for females of all ages.

Adolescence, Royal Jelly, and Recognition

When I grew up as a female in a small rural community, adolescence was viewed as a chaotic time of life that everyone had to endure, parents and adolescents alike. It was a time when it was accepted that you disliked, disrespected, and even detested your parents. They definitely did not understand you, and they were not expected to understand your periods of clumsiness or forgetfulness. People appeared to sympathize with your parents as they envisioned what your parents were enduring by the presence of an adolescent in the house. Parents are moved down the social ladder of importance in an adolescent's life and are replaced by a girl's peers and boyfriends. This seems to occur as a natural evolution. It was considered an intolerable time when I was growing up, but a necessary time to endure until one reached adulthood. It is a time of life when one grows out of childhood and advances into the adult world. The physical changes that a girl experiences identify the leaving of her childhood in the past, and her emergence into womanhood. As the adolescent girl comes to terms with her changing body, she is cognitively defining and redefining her "framework of values" upon which she will build her life.

There is no definite date as to when adolescence begins or ends; one just knows when an adolescent is present. "It is the nature of humans to be present in a way that impinges on and engages other" (O'Donohue, 2002, p. 58). The presence of an adolescent can draw one emotionally and physically closer or push one away, but the presence of an adolescent is difficult to ignore. Adolescents almost demand to be acknowledged in some manner because they are going through a time of life that is so unlike any other period of human development. "While adolescence certainly includes the more precise biological

moment of puberty we most often associate with teenagers, it is not just a single moment but actually a series of stages, many of which are unseen, that begin long before the first breasts sprout, and last long after kids have left for college” (Strauch, 2003, p. xiii). As a parent, the first noticeable sign that adolescence had arrived at our home was when my 12-year-old daughter announced that her father could no longer drop her off at school in the mornings. As a mother I must have been somewhat acceptable to be seen with in public, as the morning taxi duty then fell into my domain; or, maybe I was the lesser of two evils, yet slightly above the big yellow school bus.

Once the adolescent girl lights on school turf for the school day, her radar is heightened to “red alert” to avoid unintentionally violating the unwritten and ever changing expectations of the girl world. If a middle school girl makes a faux faux and embarrasses the “queen” or another prominent member of the “hive” she may be slowly and painfully exorcized from the group. The metaphorical connection to bees and their hives can be seen in Longgood’s (1985) description of hive activity: when worker bees have outlived their usefulness to the hive, they may be allowed to work outside the hive gathering pollen as they did in their youth. Outside the hive they are given “light duty;” they are permitted to “care for the brood or guard the entrance” to the hive. “This is probably the closest bees ever come to an expression of sentiment or gratitude for services rendered, but it probably represents less compassion than squeezing out the last semblance of usefulness she has to offer” (p. 98). The uncertainty that the girl who is excluded from the group feels is agonizing. She wonders; am I still a member of the group? What is my sin of omission or commission? Am I in or am I out? Will I be accepted in a new group (hive)? She fears that she will be forgotten and disposed, all the while being tormented from within herself, and wondering what she can do to ingratiate herself to the hive. Longgood describes what happens to a bee that can no longer

provide for the hive and who is shunned. “When no longer useful to the community, she is gotten rid of as an aging or infirm human worker who may be fired or forced out of his [her] job” (p. 98).

The pain that a middle school girl feels after being expelled from her group may lead to bulllycide because she no longer has a productive role to play. The idea that one may voluntarily remove herself from society is described by Longgood (1985). When an aged bee realizes that she is no longer needed by the hive she commits the “final sacrifice for the collective good of the community to which she has devoted her life and energies” (p. 100). What subliminal messages signal a middle school girl to think that she is no longer of any use to her community? Is this community too small? Is the queenbee too demanding? What is too demanding? Infirm bees continually return to the hive, wanting to contribute in anyway they can, cleaning the hive, providing for hive ventilation, doing what they can in their present condition, never knowing that their days are numbered. The middle school girl is not unlike the infirmed bee; she returns to the group, willing to do what she can to maintain the status quo, denying the reality that her days of being useful are numbered. Imagine yourself as a young person, doing what you can to please a very small, select, and elite group of your peers who have no defined rules of order and finding out that you did not meet the requirements. In the words of Longgood:

The bee at a time of her own choosing, simply crawls or drags her way painfully to the landing board and quietly topples over the edge, to perish in the tall grass or weeds below so she won't be a burden to the colony, a final sacrifice for the collective good of the community to which she devoted her life and energies. I do not know whether she is to be pitied or exalted? (p. 100)

Adolescents are different from each other; this difference is reflected in their choice of clothes, hairstyles, language, pimples and oily skin, raging hormones, mood swings, growth spurts, and the increasing influence of peers in their lives. “Adolescents show a great deal of preoccupation with their looks and grooming. This preoccupation is an important aspect of sexual maturation” (Moore, 1999, p. 33), and most threatening to a parent is the burgeoning interest in the opposite sex. What does it feel like to be an adolescent with one’s body growing and changing, hormones coursing through one’s veins, and periodic mood swings? Is it possible for an adult to come close to understanding what it is like to be an adolescent in a new era?

For years people thought that an adolescent’s growth focused on physical development. “For the first time now, scientists are starting to look beyond hormones to explain teenage behavior. And they are finding clues in an unexpected place: the teenage brain . . .” (Strauch, 2003, p. 7). Throughout my education as a Home Economics teacher I had been taught that the majority of growth in the brain had been completed by age three, and most certainly by age six or seven, because the head was about the size of an adult’s at this age. Thus, it was understood that the growth and development of the brain had stopped. Does this mean we are no longer to focus on a teenager’s hormones, or even point fingers to peer pressure, when an eighth grade female chooses to pierce her tongue with an ear punch, used to tag cattle, without her parent’s blessing (M. Wolsky, personal communication, December 6, 2004)? Acknowledging that adolescent brains are growing and developing causes us to question what we grew up believing about this time of life. It causes one to ponder how the lives of middle school girls will change—what will be our expectations as parents and teachers? Are middle school girls to be treated in a more adult manner or more as a child—or will it be something completely new?

As we determine how to treat adolescent girls, one fact remains; female cliques and their hierarchies are established and reestablished throughout the school year according to the needs of the young female bees. “Royal jelly is fed to the one fortunate larve; this special chemical substance is needed to turn ‘an ordinary bee into the Queen Bee.’ The queen is the only bee with fully developed ovaries,” and is much larger in size than the typical bee (Backyard Beekeepers Association, n.d., pp. 2-3). Physical development not only wields power in the insect world; it wields power in the girl world, too. Suzanne Field’s best friend and bully is Linda, “But at age 11 something important separated Linda and me, and she never let me forget it. She wore a bra and I didn’t. She needed one. I didn’t” (Fields, 1996, p. 48). The bullying started with being “mocked as the sweater girl” and the hounding progressively became meaner as she was called “little titties,” “tiny tits,” and finally the ultimate in nastiness, the “Queen of Titticaca.” This humiliation occurred generally within hearing range of boys.

Feeding the larval bee royal jelly helps the newly groomed larva to mature more quickly. And, as the queen, she is continually fed royal jelly throughout her lifetime (Wikipedia, Bee, n.d. para 7). What is the royal jelly that we must feed our larval adolescents to ensure appropriate development? What is adolescent royal jelly—perhaps accepting oneself, to love one’s own body, being given recognition or love, or is it something yet unknown?

The words youth, growing up, and nourish are used to describe this time of life (Onions, 1966, p. 14). The word youth conjures up visions of health, happiness, and a time in life when one is carefree. Our children do grow up, but what are their emotional needs that perhaps become “chains” during the adolescent years? How is it that girls become such easy prey for bullying? Are they really happy and carefree? Do we really understand their culture

in terms of their language? What is acceptable behavior in their world regarding their feelings, emotions, and, most importantly, their peer relationships? As an adolescent female, one's entire world revolves around being accepted by her peers. Girls process information through other girls; their entire existence is confirmed by their peers (R. Wiseman, personal communication September 11, 2004). In the bee world, each bee has a predetermined role to play within the hive, to contribute to the hive's productivity. In the adolescent world, a girl's very being is validated by her peers; she must be accepted by her peers to be acknowledged as existing, as having an identity, worth, or value. "The need for recognition is probably one of the most powerful factors of human existence—yet in teaching contexts the notion of recognition has scarcely been studied" (M. van Manen, personal communication, April 2004). What does it mean to be recognized? I turn to my own adolescent experience for insight.

The Journey to the Middle

I recall my own trek through the middle school years, in particular the seventh grade year when I decided that Sandy and I could not be best friends anymore. There were friends, and then there were best friends, and she had been relegated to the friend category; she was not a part of the "in group, the A list" to which I so desired to belong. In reality, the "in group" was compromised of the cheerleaders of the boys' football and basketball teams. Betsey Lanes's (2005) survey results support the idea that "Athletics play a highly prominent role in determining one's social status in today's middle school" (Lane, p. 45). I sought out Paula's friendship even though she was not a part of the "in group," but she was closer to it. Sandy always hung "around" us; she was always there or following other groups of girls; like paint on a wall, she was just there. Paint is not necessarily noticeable unless it is a color that screams for attention, and Sandy did not have the type of personality that screamed for

attention. She was always on the fringe of a group of girls. “About 10% of children hover around the popular set. The fringers accept their part-time superiority because running with the ‘in crowd’ some of the time is worth being left behind the rest of the time” (Lane, p. 46). What is it like to be flying on the outside of the hive, looking in and longing to belong? All bees have a role to fulfill to keep the beehive in production; the Queenbee reproduces, the worker protects the hive, takes care of the young along with producing honey and wax, and collecting pollen, while, the drone is to mate with the queen (Blackiston, 2002, pp. 23-34). What role does a bee on the fringe fulfill?

I earned the coveted position as a boys’ basketball cheerleader. I now had status, the status bestowed upon one by being an athlete. Although I do not recall being “nasty” as the girls I have read about in the news or in the popular books on girls and aggression, there are two sides to every piece of paper. During this period in my life, I recall an incident with Sandy and her purse. Sandy’s purse hung over the back of the seat at her desk, and it was in this classroom the boys had study hall, while the girls had choir. It seemed that everyone knew the boys rummaged through the girls’ desks and purses while we were at choir—everyone except Sandy. Needless to say, the whispers the next day were about how one of the boys discovered a used tampon wrapped in tissue within Sandy’s purse. As girls, we couldn’t believe she had put a used tampon in her purse; there was a garbage can in the bathroom! (In those days there were no receptacles in each stall in which you could throw away your used sanitary items.) I remember being uncomfortable when other girls were in the bathroom and I had to toss personal hygiene items into the big garbage barrel; I was sure that was how Sandy felt. I was just as judgmental about this embarrassing incident as the other girls in my class; I remember one of my classmates declaring, “How could she be so stupid!” This awkward incident placed Sandy on the untouchable list; she was no longer on

the fringe; she was cut off! She was now a loner! “These are usually the boys and girls who have no friends. Usually 10% of a class falls into this category” (Lane, 2005 p. 46). No girl wanted to be seen with Sandy and associated with the tampon “incident.” Why did we not swarm together and tell one of our teachers what the boys had been doing—instead we turn against one of our own! Is it a case of survival of the fittest? Why did we feel the need to turn against her? Did we feel superior for NOT having done what she had done?

Teacher in the Middle

My fortunate encounter as a teacher of middle school girls occurred at a junior high school in the Midwest. It was here that I was hired as a long-term substitute teacher in Home Economics for the remainder of the winter quarter and through the spring quarter. I loved teaching these young people; they were so full of energy that it was as though my students and I had developed some form of synergy. These junior high students, as they were called then, still loved to be at school; they had not developed the high school “apathy attitude.” They still loved learning, and each day was a new experience for them and for me. I quickly discovered that these students were walking, talking hormones who required more of my time and attention than the high school students that I had substitute taught the previous quarter. When anyone asked me what I taught, I affectionately responded that I teach Home Economics to the “hormones.” This was the launching of my journey with middle school students. What drew me to these smiling, yet insecure young people? What connection did I have with these extremely social beings? They seemed to be at ease asking me questions before and after class that were not related to our subject matter; I kept my professional distance and they seemed to respect this.

Over the next six years, I taught both high school and middle school students. Teaching both groups of students was not unlike shifting gears in a car, but at that time, I did

not notice the students on the “fringe;” I was too busy with teaching and extracurricular activities. I had to shift to a lower gear, slow down, and take more time when instructing middle school students, knowing full well there was an abundance of energy within each of these little bodies that was waiting to be directed. Their enthusiasm was contagious and useful as long as I kept it channeled in the direction of the lesson for the day.

As a middle school principal, on hallway patrol, I noticed the girls on the “fringe,” as Sandy had been. These girls were always there, not contributing to the group but desiring to be a part of a group, any group that would accept them; these girls were alone, pretending to solve the next pre-algebra problem while seated on the floor listening to the buzz from the group of girls nearby. They were not a part of the popular crowd, part of the athletic crowd, or members of the brainiacs or musical nerds; they were just there like paint on the wall. These girls were physically present; yet they were invisible just as their thoughts were invisible, and when they did try to join in the banter they were not acknowledged. “What you believe about yourself determines how people treat you. Your feelings make you sad or happy, yet the feelings are invisible, too” (O’Donohue, 2002, p. 27). What does it feel like to be so invisible? What does it feel like to have no one recognize that you are worthy of contributing to the conversation? Occasionally, these “wannabees” would cast a wanting look toward the girls of the “in crowd,” hoping that nobody from the crowd would notice they were watching. I identified with their hurt; as females, we all, at one time or other have been invisible. O’Donohue says, “There is a divine restlessness in each of us which creates a continual state of longing There are always new thought experiences emerging in your life; some moments delight and surprise you, others bring you onto shaky ground” (2002, p. 72).

Although I dearly loved teaching the female hormones, as a principal, I dreaded having to deal with the “trivial” matters these girls brought to my attention; unless the girls were caught in the act, their discretions were difficult to prove. I would, as did my middle school staff, reprimand the girls verbally for whatever the inconspicuous offense was and often chalked up their antics as part of life as a middle school girl. It was taken for granted that this was the way middle school girls were and that is the way things would always be; I recall hearing teachers say “girls will be girls.” I, too, as their principal hesitantly began to believe this fallacy.

It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. . . . In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or deescalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized.

(Ginott, 1995, p. 15)

Middle School Girls and Teaching to the Soul

Peggy Orenstein (2000) states that, in her travels, “Critics would enumerate to [her] the difficulties boys face as they reach adolescence. [She] would always agree, but remind them that this did not cancel out the trials of young girls” (p. xiii). Generations of girls have heard the following statements: girls have to be “nice;” it is not ladylike to fight; and “good” girls do not fight. In reality, girls do fight, but much of this bullying goes unseen, as it is not as obvious as a black eye or a scratched face. The lack of physical evidence is not indicative of a lack of hurt; this hurt is evident in self-doubt, lack of self-esteem, self-mutilation, and thoughts of suicide. The damage from this type of bullying goes much deeper than physical aggression; it damages the soul.

“The soul is a deep and vital energy that gives meaning and direction to our lives”

(Miller, 2000, p. 7). Miller believes that a holistic approach to education is necessary for the teacher and the student, and that it must encompass spirituality, or the soul; teachers concerned with the soul bring caring, and presence to their classrooms. The teachers are more in tune with what their students are going through, and the teachers are in the moment with their students. Students are aware that the teachers really do care about them and understand (Miller, 2000). When we do not educate the whole child, the soul is generally what is neglected. Could this be what our educational system is missing? I ask this as we have classes of 25 to 30 students, knowing full well that it is impossible to get to know individual students in large classes.

A quote I often pass on to students in my education courses is, “Students do not care how much you know; until they know how much you care” (I do not recall where I read this quote, but it is not mine). I believe that if the soul is not recognized by teachers of middle school girls, the existence and contributions of these girls cannot be not fully acknowledged; the significance of their lives is diminished. This is similar to the life of a bee; the bee is commonly acknowledged for its honey production, yet it provides us with so much more! The wax of the honeycomb is used for candles and in furniture polish, and honey itself is used to make mead, the nectar (liquor) of the Gods. “Propolis [bee glue] has remarkable antimicrobial qualities that guard against bacteria and fungi” (Blackiston, 2002, p. 241). The bee and the middle school girl are not fully appreciated or understood.

Miller (2000) goes on to say:

By acknowledging soul we can face the ‘*big*’ *questions* of life. These are the questions that most people confront during their lives but are rarely addressed in educational settings. These questions include, what is the nature of reality and truth?

What is the purpose of life? Who am I and what is the nature of the human being?

These questions can begin when as a child we look up into the cosmos and wonder about the nature of the universe. They continue into adolescence when we can begin to probe more deeply into the purposes of life. (p. 9)

Rachel Simmons is one of the best known writers regarding female bullying in adolescence. One of the girls Simmons (2002) interviewed asserts, “They [girls] destroy you from the inside out” (p. 16). Simmons scrutinized what was behind her own experiences with being bullied, and discovered “a sea of articles on boys and aggression and bullying”; she could not envision herself in what most researchers described as male bullying (Simmons, 2002, p. 2). As a result, Simmons interviewed girls from middle schools and high schools, which evolved into a national bestselling book titled, *Odd Girl Out*. “As we guide girls through adolescence, we have to acknowledge it, [bullying] name it, and act to change the effect of Girl World on girls” (Wiseman, 2002, p. 10). Let us not forget to educate their souls.

Bees and the Journey

I felt her pain; I wanted to bear her pain. The tears were streaming down her face as she got in the car. I could tell from the heartbreaking look on her face that “something” went terribly wrong; I could hardly make out what she was attempting to tell me. What could have possibly gone wrong? This outing was supposed to be a fun trip, a break from the daily routine of school. The trip was to Valley Fair, an amusement park, for all the seventh grade orchestra and band students who had faithfully attended the early morning practice. Sydney was hardly acknowledged by her friend Jenny, and the two girls Jenny was with ignored Sydney. Jenny somewhat noticed Sydney’s presence by looking at her every now and then, but the other two

girls gave her the cold shoulder; she was invisible to them, enough so to make Sydney realize that she was not wanted. The message was clear: “You do not belong with us!” Sydney spent the morning at Valley Fair wandering around the amusement park, hurt, angry, and frustrated. Jenny was supposed to be her friend, and the two of them had talked about the trip for months; they had even planned the rides on which they would venture. Later, that afternoon, she found Emma and spent the remainder of the day with her. This day was not a total loss, but the damage inflicted would not be easily forgotten. This trip should have evoked pleasant memories in years to come not the agony of being rejected. (S. Boschert, personal communication, May 15, 2004)

Bees and middle school girls, cause pain beyond words. The sting of the bee causes physical pain; the sting of adolescent rejection causes emotional pain. The memory of being stung by a bee may remain, but the physical pain is gone; the stinging pain of rejection remains in your memory and does not subside with time. The parasitic bees or cuckoo bees do not “forage or make nests themselves but use the nests and food of other species of bees to provide for their parasitic young. The eggs or young larvae of the host bee are killed either by the parasitic female or her larvae” (Bee, n.d. para. 8). As the parasitic bees move into their new dwelling, the middle school bees were moving into Sydney’s head, where they were monopolizing her thoughts until she met up with Emma. The parasitic bees eat the larvae of the host bee while thoughts of the girls’ cruelty were eating away at Sydney’s psyche. This is the type of unpleasant incident that other mothers would relay to me, but it did not happen to my daughter—not in my backyard! How often are things such as this happening to my daughter? What brought about this particular incident? What were her thoughts—anguish, self-pity, revenge?

A good mother protects her child from a world that threatens to harm her child in an attempt to nurture her child. What about in *loco parentis*? This term recognizes that “pupils need formal rules” and guidance in their parents’ absence; I did not push my parental duties off on someone else (Alexander & Alexander, 1985, p. 291). I just was not physically present when Sydney experienced this hurt; I was there for her though when the floodgate of tears broke. A child is described as a young human being who is weak (Onions, 1966, p. 169). I was not there to shield my daughter, to protect her innocence and weakness; nothing I could do or say seemed to ease the pain of what had occurred earlier that day. Every mother wants the best for her child, and this includes the exclusion of the hurtful experiences that are a part of growing up. I do not know what is more difficult, watching my daughter go through the trials of middle school life or actually being Sydney and experiencing emotional hurt and humiliation. There are few life experiences for a middle school girl that can sear as deep as the pain of being rejected by someone who accepted you wholly as an equal, a friend.

What is this pain like for an adolescent? What is the middle school girl in the middle of? What can be done to make this time of life less agonizing? I am called to this phenomenon of female adolescent bullying in order to offer some pedagogical possibilities for how girls might be attended to in order to prevent this bullying phenomenon.

Sail forth—steer for the deep water only,
 Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
 For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
 And we will risk the ship ourselves and all.
 Oh my brave soul!
 O farther farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?

O farther, farther, farther sail!

(Whitman, 1965, p. 251)

It is with these questions I sail forth with the comfort of Walt Whitmans's poetic words.

There is no compass or map for this journey; I am venturing into uncharted waters.

Queenbees and Wannabees

This metaphor of "Queenbees and Wannabees" captures the lifestyle of middle school power brokers, known as "queenbees," and those who are willing to do whatever needs to be done to belong and be accepted, the "wannabees" (R. Wiseman, personal communication, September 11, 2004). Rosalind Wiseman speaks all over the nation about girls' aggression. She is the cofounder of the Empower program which works with girls and boys to stop violence, and she is the author of the book *Queenbees and Wannabees* (2002). This metaphor allows us to examine the phenomenon of bullying in a new perspective. Just as the queenbee reigns over her hive, the middle school queenbee rules over her female clique. The "wannabees" must have the "in" hairstyle, the latest clothes, and even an acceptable boyfriend in order to overthrow the queen. Just as a real "queenbee" is disempowered by swarming adolescent girls, they also will demote and show aggression to their leader if she violates their unspoken code. The rules girls follow in their little cliques seem to be changing constantly, just as the members of the group change. The queen can be dethroned quickly by not inviting the latest up-and-coming power broker to her birthday party, by violating the cafeteria seating arrangement, or by saying or wearing something that is deemed unacceptable by the clique. The adolescent girls will swarm together, excluding the dethroned queen, passing the crown on to the newly, often self-appointed queen. The dethroned queen only realizes that she has been demoted and tossed out of the hive when the

members of her crowd refuse to acknowledge her and are taking their cue from their new royalty.

What does it mean to be dethroned? From what is one dethroned? What does it mean to be tossed out of the hive? Max van Manen (2003) states, “To do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings” (p. 5). The phenomenological question I am pursuing is: **What is it like to be a female middle school victim of bullying?** I seek to understand the phenomenon of bullying in the world of middle school girls in order to help make their lives better, and to aid teachers and parents to help them understand middle school girls. “Surviving the years of adolescence these days takes courage and strength” (Esendemir, 2001, p.15). What is there to survive? What makes these years so trying? What is meant by “these days?”

Safety and Swarming

“Bees are dependent on pollen as a protein source and on flowernectar [*sic*] or oils as an energy source;” the bee larvae feed on the pollen collected by female bees (Bee, n.d., para.1). The larvae feed on pollen to grow and develop physically into bees; the bully feeds on the victim as an emotional source of energy to continue her bullying. Girls generate strength and courage while picking on the insecure and less self-assured female; the female aggressor and the queenbee thrive on power. “Bullying is about the imbalance and abuse of power” (Brown, 2003, p. 200). What does it mean to be a queenbee? What does it mean to be a wannabee? What does one feel as a queenbee or wannabee? What power does the adolescent queenbee hold? What attracts the wannabees to be the queenbee—is it the need for social order and knowing where you stand in that order? Is it the need for a set of rules to live life by? Or is it the status of being a part of a clique?

According to Abraham Maslow human behavior is motivated by a set of basic *needs*. Which needs are most active in driving behavior depends “on the level of need in the hierarchy of needs and whether lower needs have been satisfied” (Heylighen, 1992, p. 40). “Survival is the primary concern of all living organisms” (Simpson, 2002, p. 2). The physiological needs are the lowest level; these “basic needs,” survival needs, are for such things as air, water, and food. Once the basic needs are satisfied the next hierarchal level is “security.” Many adolescent bees cannot develop beyond this level; all of her energy is focused on shielding herself from an attack. Students who are in physical danger [or are threatened mentally and emotionally] will have little psychological energy to put into learning” (Slavin, 2003, p. 333).

The female victim of constant bullying dares not let her guard down as her tormentor could be around the next corner, or waiting in the bathroom ready to sling unwanted and undesired names, and to hurl belittling comments. “Children who are victims or witnesses to acts of bullying often suffer from serious emotional problems including depression and anxiety” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d., para. 10). What is it like to be bullied? What goes on in the mind of a girl who cannot escape the buzz of bullying? Can she not just fly away to a place of safety and security? What does protection and freedom from fear look like to an adolescent bee?

The Sting of Bees and Bullies

Once the safety need is satisfied the need for love, affection and belonging emerges. Throughout our lives, we demonstrate this need to be accepted and to be shown affection, and love by joining a gang, a club, a religious group, and by getting married. Girls may exhibit this need by being a member of the soccer team, the French club, the student council, by having a boyfriend, or by belonging to a clique. “Cliques are moderately stable friendship

groups of perhaps three to ten individuals and such groups provide the setting for most voluntary social interactions” (Ormrod, 2003, p. 75). “A student who is unsure of his or her lovableness or capability will tend to make the safe choice: go with the crowd” (Slavin, 2003, p. 333). This is the path of least resistance, and the adolescent’s choice will not be questioned or criticized by her peers. There is safety, security, and, anonymity in following the crowd, and this provides a more secure foothold. Brown (2003) says:

Exclusion becomes a huge issue for the youngest girls. Even preschool girls know the dangers of social ostracism and they engage in protracted power struggles over inclusion. In connection with their pretend play, some preschool girls are already skillful in verbally engineering the ostracism of other girls and some have learned to resist being ostracized or left out by making themselves socially desirable—that is, by being especially good at appearing nice. (p. 50)

“The worker honey bees are armed with serrated, straight, barbed stingers, so that when a worker stings, the barb, needlesharp [sic] organ remains firmly anchored . . . in trying to withdraw the stinger, the bee tears its internal organs and dies” (Honey bee, n.d., section III, A1). The stinging barb is meant to go in the body, and stay in, as is the barb of middle school girls, which may manifest itself in unseen ways in years to come. What part of the bully is pulled from her body and left in the victim? The stinging bee soon dies, but the pain of the sting is amplified by the discharge of toxin (Honeybee, p. 4). What amplifies the sting of the female bully? In a honeybee hive, the old queen may leave the hive to establish a new colony.

“At the old nest meanwhile, the first queen to emerge disposes of the other queens (by stinging them) before they have a chance to emerge [from their cells]” (Honeybee, n.d. p. 3). Why do we sting our own gender? What possible threat do they pose? Must we kill them? In

killing them are we not limiting the potential of our own gender? What drove our society to overlook the female version of aggression? As females, have we not all been a part of this madness? Research concerning the “girl world” culture, including middle school girls’ identity, language, dress, and, pecking order has given us a new way to view this age group in our society.

Belonging of Bees and Bullies

I recall an incident during Sydney’s kindergarten year, when she was not accepted by the other four girls in her class. We lived in another small rural community and Sydney commuted the thirty miles with me every other day to attend kindergarten, while I taught Family and Consumer Sciences, Physical Education and fulfilled my duties as the middle and high school principal. One brisk fall day, on the way home from school, Sydney was unusually quiet; she generally reported to me with much enthusiasm what she and her fifteen classmates had played and learned that day. She finally spoke up to tell me that the girls would not play with her. I knew that these girls were a tight knit group, as they had grown up in the same little town for the past 5 or 6 years; I felt I had to do something, whether I was principal or not. The counselor, who was assigned to our school on Wednesdays, said she would visit with the girls about having friends. This appeared to solve the problem for that school year. What if this had happened to a child whose parent did not see the sting of rejection? What would be the effects of this sting? It was through this incident that I realized the strength of girls’ covert actions.

A middle school girl’s need to be accepted by the group can overpower what she knows in her heart to be right, but she may not feel confident in her abilities to stand up to the “queenbee.” Just as a performer wants the acceptance of the audience through applause, a middle school girl desires the comfort of being accepted by being given the unspoken

approval of the “queenbee.” The spoken approval from the queenbee would be supreme; it would help cement one’s status within the hive. “In order to *be*, we need to *be with*. There is something incomplete in purely individual presence. Belonging together with others completes something in us” (O’Donohue, 2002, p. 258).

A girl interviewed by Rachel Simmons (2002) states, “I think it was just that having friends that were part of this cool group was the most important thing. I would have done anything, to some degree, to be friends with them. I don’t know why” (p. 214). I believe that we all, as females, long to be as powerful as the queenbee at some point in our lives. Adolescent girls express their belongingness to a group by their friends, their dress, their music, their hairstyle, and their language. What is this need to belong?

Even in schools, there are some groups that are more acceptable to belong to, or “in,” than other groups. When I was in junior high school, the number one “in” group to belong to was the cheerleaders. This gave you leverage and undeniable clout! Everyone knew that the cheerleaders had to maintain a mandated grade point average; therefore, if you were a cheerleader, you were automatically dubbed as being smart and popular. Younger girls looked up to you and copied the way you dressed, the way you walked and talked, or anything else they could replicate. These girls longed for a cheerleader to acknowledge them while they dreamt of becoming cheerleaders themselves. Next in the hierarchy of “in” groups for girls, were the athletes, particularly the girls’ basketball team athletes. Being an athlete meant that you could do things other girls could not, like date a member of the basketball or football team, which was frowned upon if you were not an athlete since you did not have equal status. Even cheerleaders did not enjoy that equal status; cheerleaders were to be smart, outgoing but somewhat silly, and a bit too feminine. Today, the “in” groups at my daughter’s middle school are the student council and the girl’s volleyball team, but the girls in her

group generally agree that there is no one really “in” group to be a part of because why would you want to spend more time at school than was necessary. Why is this? Why would you not want to remain close to the hive? This runs contrary to what I know to be true of my daughter and one of her friends; her friend is on the volleyball team while Sydney takes pleasure in her after school French Club meetings.

The middle school years are a defining time in the life of a young girl; she is developing physically, socially, and emotionally. The experiences a middle school girl encounters mold the view she holds of herself, the good and the bad. Girls are defining themselves through the development of their identities, finding their sense of self and where they fit in the world. Erickson refers to this stage as Identity versus Identity Confusion.

Identity, as Erikson used the term, refers to the sense of self that we achieve through examining and committing ourselves to the roles and pursuits that define an adult in our society. Identity gives us a sense of who we are, of knowing what is “me” and what is “not me.” (Cobb, 1998, p. 332)

“Most adolescents achieve a sense of *identity* regarding who they are and where their lives are headed” (Ormrod, 2003, p. 69). As a middle school teacher, I have observed adolescents going through this stage. Students are trying to find themselves and where they fit in life, and often want to try something they have no idea how to do, and are very confident in their abilities, such as driving or going somewhere alone. They are “trying on” different roles to see how they fit. As a parent of a middle school daughter this can be a frustrating time, but necessary time, when your child chooses to express her independence in order to “find” herself. Finding oneself often involves developing new peer relationships, as students seem to hang out with other students who have similar interests, and it also involves dissolving peer relationships.

Flying with Broken Wings

Two comments from college-age women whom I had surveyed in September of 2004 in my Educational Psychology classes come to mind. I asked them to reflect back on their middle school years. One female says “I feel that because of these acts of aggression I am a stronger person,” and at the opposite end of the spectrum, another female states, “It made me hate myself and become suicidal later in life” (Miller, September, 2004). What is this contrast of experiences all about? What does it mean to live in such a beehive of chaos? Gonca Esendemir (2001, p. 7) says, “To everyone struggling to find their place in this world, may your journey be filled with peace, love and laughter. And last but not least to those who broke my wings, thank you for making me stronger!” Like the wings of a bee, a middle school girl’s psyche is fragile. A girl’s psyche, if not healed, can lead to a downward spiral as a bee with a nicked wing. Although the adolescent broken wing may not be visible, what can be done to prevent this downward spiral? What does it mean for an adolescent to fly with wings broken?

Girls with a strong sense of self appear to weather the passage from adolescence to womanhood unscathed, but do they really emerge from this time of life with no battle scars? What unseen scars do they bear? Have they truly not been a victim of adolescent bullying? What pulled them through this tumultuous time of life? “To address such questions the phenomenologist explores and interprets many sources of meaning and mobilizes many techniques” (van Manen, 2002b, p. 7).

“Unlike younger children, adolescents tend to keep peer problems to themselves, fearing that their concerns will be dismissed by adults worried more about mortgage payments than meanness” (Stepp, 2000, p. 104). One female recalls walking away from her parents, shaking her head wondering what is wrong with me. “Why don’t my classmates like

me? What's so bad about me? I am a nice person." The parents of this middle school girl kept telling her to "kill them with kindness" and "just be nice to them" (T. Swift, personal communication, January 24, 2005). As girls continue to be victimized, they come to play the role of the victim and may be doomed to internalize that character for the remainder of their middle school and high school years. These girls grow up thinking they cannot measure up, they are not acceptable, and they do not meet society's "gold standard" for adolescent girls.

Our society has set a "gold standard" by which females in the United States are judged. We expect girls to have the right proportions, be feminine, be attractive, be good, be smart but not too intelligent, and portray "white middle class standards." Anything else is considered "less than." Lyn Mikel Brown (2003), the author of *Girl Fighting: Betrayal and Rejection Among Girls* and Carol Gilligan (2003) a psychologist and author of *In a Different Voice* define adolescence as:

A time when girls become looked at, talked about, judged against standards of perfection and relationship ideals. They remind us that girls approaching adolescence are often victims of incest and other forms of sexual abuse. Further, adolescence is a time when girls may experience eating disorders, poor body image, a loss of self worth and suicidal thoughts and gestures. (as cited in Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 57)

Mary Pipher, the author of *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, examines the lives of teenage girls and the expectations that society has of them. She declares, "Girls who are too attractive are seen primarily as sex objects. Their appearance overdetermines their identity" (Pipher, 1994, p. 55). "Adolescence is a critical time when girls are in danger of losing their own voices—when they chose not to speak to avoid revealing that their voices might not match societal standards of perfection" (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 159). Why is it we devalue the voice of girls who do not meet society's expectations? What

has gone unheard? Gilligan (2003) further clarifies the plight of females; “Only when life-cycle theorists divide their attention and begin to live with women as they have lived with men will their vision encompass the experience of both sexes and their theories become correspondingly more fertile” (p. 23). Girls are judged by expectations set by the male gender.

If a middle school girl is determined to be “lacking” in one of the designated areas of perfection, it can be “somewhat excused” by being very strong in another area. Gold is a valuable, shiny mineral that reflects light and catches our eye, just as a middle school girl who meets society’s gold standard. What is a girl meant to reflect? What is of value in the middle? We no longer use the gold standard to gauge our monetary value in the United States, Why is this done to young females? I recall going through the United States mint in Washington, D.C., as a high school student, and a guard stood by the gold brick that was on display. We were allowed to touch it but were told not to rake our fingernails across it as that would remove the gold from the brick. Middle school girls are rendered less valuable to themselves, their families, and society when the fingers of their peers rake across their lives, stealing their self-confidence, their very being, and their souls.

Girls who are insecure are prime targets for more dominant females, much like the grey wolf and its prey. The wolf stalks its prey through the snow, brush, and trees while the pursued white tail doe frantically darts here and there trying to seek a temporary safe haven. The safe haven for the pursued could be a den, dense brush, or anywhere out of the wolf’s sight. If the wolf is with a pack of wolves, the wolves will track, circle, and look for signs that the deer is weakening until the pursued deer is exhausted. Girls are often together in packs, called cliques, and like the wolves, they know there is power and safety in numbers. Girls, in cliques, like wolves, act differently when they are the lone harasser of another. In a

pack, the bully has an audience and is likely to be more aggressive. Out of the pack of wolves evolves the alpha male, similar to the female bully.

There is strength in being a member of a gang of aggressive females. When a deer is hunted by wolves and is cornered, it is helpless and afraid; it will fight back to save its life. The human being will fight back with barbs similar to those of her attackers, whether it's through name-calling, taunts, or belittling comments. Where does the persecuted middle school girl find a safe haven—alone in a bathroom stall, in a teacher's room—where?

Different, Yet the Same

I recall picking up my 6th grade daughter and watching the female cookie cutter versions of her emerge from the school building. They all looked alike. They were in blue jeans and wore t-shirts depicting the latest fad, such as Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle, Hollister, or Aeropostle. They go to such lengths in an attempt to differentiate themselves from each other, by wearing the latest fad in clothing or accessories and wearing the “in” hair color or hairstyle. One of these girls distinguishes herself from her peers, if only for a day by sporting the latest name brand clothing. The following day she is just one of the crowd, as her flock emulates the newest trend. Mediocrity—the more things change the more they stay the same. What is this need to be different yet, the same?

When older children and adolescents begin to imitate the dress codes, expressions, and styles of certain peer groups, this is probably less a search for sameness than an exploration of personal identity and difference from parents and other adults around them. (van Manen & Levering, 1996, p. 162)

Elkind says that in early adolescence “Young teenagers often believe themselves to be completely unlike anyone else” (as cited in Ormrod, 2003, p. 70). They believe that no one else has experienced the same emotions or trauma that they are traipsing through. “By

sharing their thoughts and feelings with one another, students may discover that they aren't as unique as they once thought and gradually abandon the personal fable" that no one has shared in their experiences (Ormrod, 2003, p. 73). What is this need to swarm into cliques?

The cruel world of girls and bullying is just being brought to our attention through a variety of media, although parents and teachers of middle school girls do not need the media to help them identify this blemish on society. The phenomenon of female bullying has been a burden on our society for years; now it is in full bloom and we are having to deal with it, and we are able to investigate it more fully. Positivistic research has always intrigued me but it left me with unanswered questions, thus my turning to phenomenology. These various paths that I have taken converge into a hermeneutic phenomenological way of knowing as I engage my question and it engages me: **What is the lived experience of middle school girls who have been victimized by a bully?**

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

I have discovered that the phenomenological process has allowed me to look back upon the experiences that have made me who I am today. This progression and my reflection on middle school girls and bullying have allowed me to be more effective in my personal life and professional life as a female, a parent, an employee, and a teacher. This reflection has permitted me to be a more understanding and compassionate human being. I am more aware of my surroundings, more sensitive to the world and aware of my "gut instinct;" whereas, prior to this I would have dismissed certain happenings as trivial or coincidence. I can see now what I could not then; I was called into pedagogy in part by my phenomenon to see its educational and societal significance.

My individual experiences with middle school girls, and my middle school daughter have brought me to investigate new possibilities when integrating my own experiences with

my professional background in education. Teaching is a calling much like the ministry.

Reflecting upon the roads that I have traveled, I can see how all of the paths that I have taken converge to bring me to the study of middle school girls and bullying. There is a reason for all seasons.

As the beekeeper continually checks on the bees and their hives in order to achieve optimum honey production, I explore the phenomenon of female middle school bullying, to discover the essence of this phenomenon in order to empower middle school girls. “The experience of being a teacher manifests itself in having children on one’s mind and wondering what one may expect to become of them” (van Manen, 2003, p. 57).

Meaning Beyond a Number

I have turned to phenomenology to explore the lived experience of middle school girls who have been victims of bullying. This phenomenological turning is personal in nature, and yet professional, since my research is through the lens of an educator and a family and consumer sciences teacher. I am dedicated to empowering girls and helping them to be all that they can be. This, in turn, will help these girls become confident, successful, and more productive women in their personal and professional lives. I attempt to understand the meaning of aggression through conversations with middle school girls, their stories, their reflections on these stories, and interpreting the meanings of these stories. What does it mean to be bullied? What does it mean to be a victim? What holds one back from standing up for oneself? Why do adolescent peers, their friends, not rush to their defense? It is my desire to go beyond the cold, hard numbers found in studies and give voice to the individuals behind the statistics and to help empower them.

Layers of Meaning

The intention of hermeneutic phenomenology is to “promote communication about the meaning of human life, possible ways of living—both public and private norms of interpersonal relations, political and social goals and various other concerns about the conduct of life” (Brown, 1989, p. 272). It is through hermeneutic phenomenological research that I “attempt to explicate the meanings [of bullying] as experienced by middle school girls, [in their] everyday existence, [or] lifeworld” (van Manen, 2003, p. 11). My intent is to peel away the layers of what it is like to live in the world of middle school girls, who have been bullied. I have chosen this research methodology as it “maintain[s] a certain harmony with the deep abiding interest that makes one an educator (a parent or teacher) in the first place” (van Manen, 2003, p. 2). Husserl (1970) boldly states:

Scientific, objective truth is exclusively a matter of establishing what the world, the physical as well as the spiritual world, is in fact. But can the world, and human existence in it, truthfully have a meaning if the sciences recognize as true only what is objectively established in this fashion? (p. 6)

My understanding of this research did not come naturally. As an educator I had been entrenched in positivistic research, and I had never taken a philosophy class. Phenomenological research can provide us with a depth of understanding that is not possible with positivistic research. I examine the multi-layers and multifaceted issue of female middle school bullying in order to capture the essence of this issue. Capturing the essence of middle school girl bullying is similar to the “peeling of an onion” (Hultgren, 2003); to reach the strongest, most potent part one must peel away each layer. To attain this essence, I engage in conversation with middle school girls who have experienced being the victim of bullying. Metzger (1992) states, “What we think and what we believe are formed as much by the

stories we've heard as by the books we've studied. Indeed, unless we examine these stories, we may not be aware of the ideas and convictions that regulate our lives" (pp. 63-64). "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forward" (Kierkegaard, as cited in Birren, 1987, p. 97).

Our culture provides us with ways of categorizing and organizing our world; this is how we give meaning to things around us even when we do not fully understand them. We integrate these meanings into our lives, knowingly or unknowingly and do not give them much thought. We take for granted that what we perceive is correct and sometimes the only way to view an idea. Heidegger uses the word *dasein* to refer to "that entity or aspect of our humaneness which is capable of wondering about its own existence and inquiring into its own Being" (as cited in van Manen, 2003, p. 176). Heidegger states that, "It affords us, however, various ways of looking at the items which are constitutive for it" (1927/2003, p. 41). Our culture influences our ability to wonder about ourselves and limits understanding our way of being. To accomplish this mission and fully understand aggression among middle school girls, I must put aside my pre-conceptions and allow myself to open up to new understandings. What are these pre-understandings of bullying and middle school girls? My pre-understanding of bullying prior to my engagement with this phenomenon here, was that it does not hurt that long or that much and it does little damage. As females we all experience bullying and we survive, but what are the long term effects? As a parent I now have a beginning realization of the damage inflicted. Boys duke it out and get on with their lives—do girls do the same?

"All interpretive phenomenological inquiry is cognizant of the realization that no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond change" (van Manen, 2002b, p. 7). My observations of female middle school bullying, as a

middle school student, the parent of a middle school daughter, and as a teacher and principal are specific to the interpretation of my life experiences and the meanings I have attached to them throughout this exploration. I bring these pre-understandings forward to be aware of them as I interpret the experiences I will encounter with adolescent girls.

Tending the Hive, Exploring the Phenomenon

The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence—in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive relieving and reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notation by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (van Manen, 2003, p. 36)

I follow van Manen's (2003) methodological structure of human science research to conduct my study. Van Manen views hermeneutic phenomenological research as a "dynamic interplay among six research activities" (p. 30):

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- (3) reflecting on the themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole.

Using van Manen's guidelines for hermeneutic phenomenology as my methodology, in Chapter One I have turned to the phenomenon from the multiple perspectives in which I have experienced bullying, rich with the description of human experience. This has served to open up the phenomenon of bullying. In Chapter Two, through my writing and rewriting and use of metaphor, I explore the phenomenon of bullying more in depth. I examine the

etymological meaning of words and review literature and other sources to make my phenomenon of bullying noticeable. In Chapter Three, I describe my methodology and the philosophical grounding for this study. I use the metaphor of queenbees and wannabees to delve deeper into the lived experience of middle school girls and bullying as I question its meaning. In Chapter Four bring forward the themes and insights from my research, that I have discovered as I continue with my quest for meaning through writing and rewriting. Chapter Five addresses the ways in which this research guides our understanding of middle school girls as concerned parents, teachers, and other professionals.

Through examining bullying, and through my research, I go beyond what meets the eye, the obvious ordinariness of bullying to show an essence not yet seen. I turn to the busyness of the bee to provide further insight and meaning.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE QUEEN OF MEAN: EXPLORING THE PHONEMENON

“Bee”-ing—In the Middle

The metaphor of queenbees and wannabees and the adolescent struggle for power came together after I read Rosalind Wiseman’s (2002) book *Queenbees and Wannabees*, and I heard her speak about middle school girls and bullying. The idea of using this metaphor was not apparent until I had used it as one of the metaphors in my first writings. “New metaphors are capable of creating new understandings and, therefore, new realities” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 235). It is my desire to bring to light “new realities” concerning female bullying to help educators with this phenomenon.

Gradually, I developed a basic knowledge of bees, mainly honeybees and bumblebees, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that “North Dakota’s honey production totaled 31 million pounds last year, tops in the country for the fourth straight year” (State is Tops, 2008). As I continue reading about bees, I am drawn by the ways in which this metaphor helps to illuminate the lived experience of being a female adolescent victim of bullying. “We claim that most of our normal conceptual system is metaphorically structured; that is, most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 56). Lakoff and Johnson state:

Metaphors that are outside our conventional system, [are] metaphors that are imaginative and creative. Such metaphors are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience. Thus, they can give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe. (p. 139)

It is through the metaphor of bees that I attempt to open up and understand bullying and middle school girls' struggle for power.

The word bee derives from the Old English word *bifian* and the German word *beben*, which means “the quivering insect” (Onions, 1966, p. 84). I find it interesting that bees were thought to quiver; I associate the word quivering with fear, as a victim of bullying might quiver in fear when being bullied. How does this quivering get masked?

Howland Blackiston (2002), the author of *Beekeeping for Dummies*, adoringly states:

Once you get to know more about bees' value and remarkable social skills, you'll fall in love with them too. They're simply wonderful little creatures. Interacting with them is an honor and a privilege. People who love nature in its purest form will love bees and beekeeping. (p. 7)

I question whether I would grow to have the same affection for these buzzing, fuzzy, yellow creatures—although I have become more appreciative of their contribution to our food supply through their role in the pollination process. It is interesting that other adults would ask the same of me, and my affection for teaching middle school students, as they did of Howland Blackiston and his love for bees. People would declare to me that these students are egocentric, yet needy, and pesky! It is these characteristics that make them so endearing. Parents of middle school students lament this stage of life, and hopefully say that their children will grow out of it quickly. I believe, as does Blackiston of bees, that if adults knew more about these students and understood them, they would grow to love them as I do and realize that teaching and guiding these students is a privilege.

Middle school girls, like bees are in the middle, from plant to honey. Bees are an important element in the final product; plants are to honey as children are to adults. Each is misunderstood and under-appreciated by those who would most greatly benefit from them. If

middle school girls are not encouraged, guided, and nurtured, a part of them remains undeveloped; as with a hive that has not been tended by a beekeeper, little or no honey will be harvested. This makes me pause and wonder; what has been overlooked and undiscovered in the world of active middle school girls?

I recall teachers bemoaning the fact that these students were so odd. They often did not fit into their own bodies or even have control over their bodies; they were gangly and awkward, and they were inclined to be very social beings. One might even say they were busy as bees. With what are these buzzing girls busy?

During adolescence young people have to deal with the changes that come along with puberty. Inhelder and Piaget (1977) who further expand on this busyness say, “The fundamental problem of adolescence is the fact that the individual begins to take up adult roles” (p. 435) and “begins to think of the future” (p. 436). “The adolescent is able to analyze his own thinking and construct theories” (p. 437). Elkind (1981), a devotee of Piaget, goes on to state:

For the first time, the adolescent can take himself as an object, evaluate himself from the perspective of other people with respect to personality, intelligence and appearance. The adolescent’s self-consciousness about himself is simply a manifestation of this new capacity for introspection. Now that the adolescent can, so to speak, look at himself from the outside he becomes concerned about the reactions of others to himself. (p. 102)

New research is shedding light on the development of the brain in adolescents and how this development affects them. Strauch (2003) cites a study conducted by Francine M. Bene that focused on the development of myelin in the brain. “The brains of teenagers were still being enveloped in myelin. In fact, the myelin jumped a whopping 100 percent during

the teenage years” (p. 53). “Myelin, acts like insulation, keeping the brain’s electrical signals on their intended paths along the axons and increasing their speed” (p. 52). Bene discovered that the two areas of the brain undergoing myelination were the hippocampus and the cingulate gyrus, which act as relay stations. “The hippocampus is one of the primary areas of the brain for sorting out new memories” (p. 53) “[and] the cingulate, involves emotions” (p. 54). Could this be why adolescent girls are so “flighty,” and when given a list of things to do only remember the first item on the list? How does knowing that adolescent brains are still “under construction” explain the work of buzzing female bullies?

Adolescent girls are busy with life, discovering their niche and finding their way around in it, just as bees are busy going about their appointed tasks which ultimately provide us with that sweet liquid gold called honey. What do these buzzing and very social middle school girls provide our world with as they dart from flower to flower (person to person)?

Within the bee world, there are three different castes: the worker, the drone, and the queen; “Each has its own characteristics, roles and responsibilities” that in some way contribute to the production of honey (Blackiston, 2002, p. 23). What is the caste system of the middle school girl’s world? Who fills the role of the worker? The drone? How are the workers and drones able to survive or thrive without the unspoken direction of a queen?

The Queen–Bee Phenomenon

The vocation of beekeeping is as old as bullying, and as my knowledge of middle school girl aggression grows, I am developing a basic understanding of bee life. An early cave painting in “Spain, circa 6000 b. c., shows early Spaniards hunting for and harvesting wild honey In centuries past, honey was a treasured and sacred commodity” (Blackiston, 2002, p. 11); it was considered the nectar of the gods. The methods of beekeeping changed in 1852 when the interchangeable–frame hive was introduced; this modern frame was used to

replace the typical hive for honeybees, just as technology has changed the method of bullying, as I will explain later in this chapter. Of all the types of bees, the honeybee is revered as the best pollinator. The honeybee is considered an outstanding pollinating insect because it

shows flower fidelity. Several thousand years ago the Greek philosopher-scientist Aristotle observed that when a honeybee went to the field it would move from one clover flower to another clover flower and it would not, under normal circumstances, go from a clover flower to a flower of another plant species. Since pollen can fertilize an embryo only of the same species (Morse, 1980, p. 120)

Adolescent bullies demonstrate fidelity, also. What brings about this flower/female victim fidelity?

Onions (1966) defines fidelity as faithfulness, stemming from the French word *fidelite* or the Latin *fidelitas*. Fidelity is further defined as (1) “Formal honest or lasting support, or loyalty, . . . (2) approving when you copy the detail and quality of an original, such as a picture” (Cambridge dictionary online). The female bully reflects fidelity, in that the bully targets the weaker, less self-assured, the socially outcast, the “odd girl out.” Olweus (2004) says:

The typical victims are more anxious and insecure than students in general. Further, they are often cautious, sensitive, and quiet. When attacked by other students, they commonly react by crying (at least in the lower grades) and withdrawal [sic]. Also, victims suffer from low self-esteem, and they have a negative view of themselves and their situation. They often look upon themselves as failures and feel stupid, ashamed, and unattractive. (p. 32)

Sanders and Phye (2004) further emphasize the bully's fidelity to the odd girl. They state that bullies target victims who are physically weaker and often have other "physical disadvantages," such as being disabled, overweight, or physically unattractive (p. 23).

In the opera *One False Move*, female fidelity is demonstrated as Joanne, a new girl at school is "the odd girl out." Joanne is made fun of by girls higher up the social ladder. She is wearing the same sweater that popular Amy has in her wardrobe. Amy, the school diva, raves about Joanne and the sweater while gullible Joanne says, "You have such good taste in clothes, you always look so good!" (Kandor, 2003, Scene 1). The tone of Amy's voice indicates that she really means just the opposite, but Joanne is listening only to the words. Innocently, Joanne takes in the poisonous, yet sweet attentive nectar the girls give her. Meanwhile, behind Joanne's back, Amy and her friends dub her a "hick, a loser, and a copycat." The lyrics from *One False Move* illustrate the mindset of the odd girl out:

Odd Girl Out. No one wants to be her. Watch and you will see. It's the worst thing that can happen so they follow every rule religiously. Odd girl out, happens in an instant. Odd girl out, watch and you will see it's the worst thing that could happen, and I hope and pray today it won't be me. (Kandor, 2003, Scene 1)

Adolescents are self-conscious under any circumstances, and to be scrutinized by a bully can only add to one's anxiety and insecurity. Elkind (1988) says:

Young adolescents also construct what I call an 'imaginary audience.' Now that teenagers can think about their own and other peoples' thinking, they nonetheless make a characteristic error. They confuse what they are thinking about with what other people are thinking about. Because of the dramatic changes taking place in their bodies, in their feelings and emotions, young people concentrate upon themselves. Consequently, they assume that others are as concerned with their appearance, their

feelings, and their thoughts as they are. This is the imaginary audience, the belief that others are as concerned with us as we are. (p. 113)

Sue Monk Kidd (2002) gives an example of the “imaginary audience” in her novel *The Secret Life of Bees*. Lily Owen, a 14-year-old girl, declares that her father was unconcerned about her clothes that she had made in her home economics class and wore to school each day. The dresses were “cotton print shirtwaists with crooked zippers and skirts hanging below my knees, outfits only the Pentecostal girls wore. I might as well have worn a sign on my back: I AM NOT POPULAR AND NEVER WILL BE” (p. 8). Lily deplores:

There was nothing I hated worse than clumps of whispering girls who got quiet as I walked passed. I worried so much about how I looked and whether I was doing things right, I felt half the time I was impersonating a girl instead of being one.

(Kidd, 2002, p. 9)

The adolescent imaginary audience, whether real or a figment of the adolescent imagination, is none-the-less difficult to rise above.

What does a shunned middle school girl feel when she is NOT accepted into the inner circle? What is it like for adolescent girls to not know where they stand among their peers or so-called friends—to desire the approval of girls higher up on the social status ladder which is just beyond their grasp—to go to school each day questioning themselves? Is your makeup just right? Are you wearing the right clothes? What do adolescent girls feel when their speech is carefully monitored to avoid being mocked and belittled? What power is being wielded?

The Queen–Bee and “She’s all That”

Female adolescent fidelity to the queen remains strong while she is fruitful, providing for workers’ needs until she is usurped by another queen. Everyone wants to be

associated with the newest and best, and stand beside the winner. Nobody wants to be associated with a “has been,” “a loser,” “yesterday’s news,” or a girl who thinks that she is “all that.” A girl who is sarcastically referred to as “she’s all that” means that she really thinks she is hot stuff; she thinks she is the best. On the flip side of this term, it can be used in a positive way, meaning that she really is all “it;” she is the coolest! Just as the bee is attracted to the colorful, beautiful, blossoming flowers, adolescent girls are attracted to the latest, strongest, showiest, and “popular” queenbee, and they will follow her direction blindly while “dissing” the old queen.

The “cool” and “loser” labels in girlhood are depicted in the movie, *She’s All That*. Taylor Vaughn was the girl everyone wanted to be and is the girl every guy wants. She expected to be elected the prom queen with no difficulty and no competition when, in reality, she was a sarcastic version of “she’s all that,” with her former friends mocking her self-centeredness behind her back. Laney, a former nerd, had been remade into a “she’s all that” girl (of the positive nature). Taylor’s friends flocked to their new queenbee, Laney, when she was nominated as a prom queen candidate. Taylor was elected prom queen by winning 54% of the student body vote, but her ego was deflated when the DJ announced that Laney had captured 46% of the vote. As in a beehive, the queen becomes less effective over her lifespan. When she no longer fulfills her obligation to the hive, a new queen is introduced. Two queens cannot rule together; the younger queen kills the older queen.

In the movie *She’s All That*, the queen has become ineffective and outlives her usefulness. The “hive” decides to introduce a new, more vibrant queen who better serves the colony. The workers introduce a new queen, whose fresh smile and new perspective breathes life into the “hive.” The introduction of a new personality appears to be just as important to the livelihood of a beehive as it is to the social lives of middle school girls. Bees will freely

leave a queen when she no longer provides for the needs of the hive, as with middle school girls when they have determined that the queenbee no longer suits their needs. They will leave a queenbee if they feel that she is not performing up to their expectations and follow another group of bees with a vivacious queen.

Despite not having experienced the intricacies of apiary science (beekeeping) first-hand, I have experienced being a wannabee and even a queenbee. I have lived the social order that makes girls bully each other, choose a queen, label some girls as workers, and exploit their strengths and literally buzz about their shortcomings. As part of the “hive,” I did not realize what was going on; the flurry of the individuals disguised the real shape of the swarm. It would morph as the situation dictated, sometimes stretching to engulf more space and other times contracting as a means of self-defense. Bees actually increase their odds of survival by swarming when there is overcrowding in the hive. Swarming is when “50% of the colony packs up with the queen and takes flight” in search of a new domain (Blackiston, 2002, p. 144). It is difficult for a predator to focus on an individual, and attempts to capture a single bee are unsuccessful. Middle school girls use this tactic as they begin their long and arduous journey from childhood to adulthood. By “swarming,” they can disguise their true action, making it difficult to identify the perpetrator of aggression; they also can find solace in not being different, being part of the crowd. “Boys tend to choose ‘fight or flight,’ and girls are more apt to choose ‘tend and befriend,’ seeking group support which is more nurturing and less aggressive” (Lane, 2005, p. 43).

The weekly dramatic and dark evening soap opera, *Desperate Housewives*, might be likened to the female adult version of middle school bullying. The “tend and befriend” can easily be recognized when the women of Wisteria Lane are gathered around Lynette’s table playing poker in the middle of a Wednesday afternoon, talking about Edie. Edie obviously

had been excluded from this small swarm; she did not quite fit the mold of the other worker bees on Wisteria Lane. She is now considered too rich and too good looking. Edie's history of not being accepted stems back to her youth when she was considered too poor and unattractive to be included in this exclusive clique, and now that she has money and beauty she is again being barred from the group she desired to be a part of in her teenage years. In her youth, Edie was deemed not good enough, and now it is as though she is too good, a threat to the queenbee and her worker bees. "Girls who are too attractive are seen primarily as sex objects. Their appearance over determines their identity. [They] doubt that they are liked for reasons other than their packaging" (Pipher, 1994, p. 55).

In 1990, Eder's longitudinal study found that girls with lower status tried to associate with more popular girls, although the popular girls repeatedly avoided the girls deemed to have lower status. It seems as though the term clique is used to deal in social power, and the members of the clique loosely determine who is declared acceptable by the group and who is excluded. A clique is similar to an exclusive country club; to be a member you must meet the specified criteria at that point in time. Membership in an exclusive country club gives adolescent females tremendous power to set the rules for inclusion.

The wisteria plant has dense clusters of flowers in the spring, and like other plants does not discriminate as to what type of insect pollinates its flowers. One more queenbee and her workers in the hive would increase the production of honey. Only one queenbee is permitted in a honeybee colony, like Wisteria Lane. The queen is responsible for laying eggs for the colony and producing "various chemical secretions that control the social order in the beehive" (Morse, 1980, p. 128). Middle school girls manipulate the social order at times by being vengeful. Underwood (2003) says:

When seeking revenge, nothing may satisfy more than hurting someone in the arena in which you yourself feel most threatened. In addition, social aggression is covert, thereby maximizing the effect/danger ratio (Bjorkqvist, 1994) and complying with strong gender stereotypes dictating that girls do not fight and that women's anger is something that must be managed and controlled. (Rueter, Watts, & Zinnecker 1990, p. 141)

What allows adolescent girls to have power over their “worker bees”?

The Secret Lives of Bullies and Bees

The worker bee and the victim carry a weighty burden, often heavier than they should bear. “A worker [bee] is just over a centimeter long and weighs only about sixty milligrams; nevertheless, this female insect can fly with a load heavier than herself” (Kidd, 2002, p. 257). Her heavy burden is carrying pollen and nectar; this work is usually done by younger workers. Worker bees are all females who are given various tasks in the hive depending on their age (Blackiston, 2002). The worker bee does the majority of the work for the colony.

The middle school girl who is a victim of bullying also carries around an emotional load heavier and potentially more devastating than other middle school girls. The effects of this emotional load may spill over into adulthood, limiting her from being all she can be and even shortening her life. It seems that no matter what the victim has to offer the Queenbee and her attendants in waiting, it is not enough. Time and time again, she returns only to be sent away to come back another day with more to offer, much like the worker bees. But the worker bees know what is expected from them. Each time they return with pollen or nectar, they are sent out again to repeat the task. The adolescent girl cannot understand what is required of her in order to belong to the “inner circle.” She continues to guess what will

permit her to gain entrance into this highly revered clique. Finally, she gives up and accepts the clear but subtle message that she will NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH!

This demanding ritual affects the bee physically but has little effect on the worker bee, who lacks intellect and emotions. But it has a profound effect on a middle school girl, however, who, just by nature, is at a very vulnerable stage in her young life. Simmons (2002) relates the story of Tracy; her torment started in 5th grade. Tracy was forced to eat lunch alone after being told by the other girls that she really wasn't a 5th grade student. (Tracy was advanced one grade because of her superior academic skills.) This ostracizing continued throughout middle school. She was told by her peers that she was stupid, her jokes were bad, and her clothes were all wrong. Tracy had migraine headaches and did not want to attend school; in her words she would rather "Die than go back to school" (p. 218). Tracy ended up being hospitalized for her depression for several weeks. "Nobody called" (p. 219).

The path taken by adolescent girls during their middle school years has a great deal to do with shaping their destiny. The threat of being excluded from the popular group at school can be overwhelming and takes its toll on an insecure adolescent. The middle school girl may relegate herself to the existence of worker bee, her role in life is dictated by others.

The young worker bees are referred to as nurse bees; they feed the uncapped larvae as well as tend to the needs of the queen. The middle school girl may also be seen as a young worker bee, trying to fit in and tending to the needs of the "queen bee" of the middle school. As the worker bee matures, her role also changes from nurse bee to nectar and pollen gatherer, to that of a worker bee who finds herself cleaning the hive in her old age. The hive is a dark place, devoid of light; the old worker bee will toil in this darkness for the remainder of her life. One of the tasks of the old worker bee is to propolize the hive; propolis is "a sticky resinous material that bees collect from trees and plants and use to seal up cracks and

strengthen the comb” (Blackiston, 2002, p. 282). Propolis is used to ensure that the hive is closed off from the outside environment. The middle school victim may face the same fate as the aging worker bee. She once saw herself as a productive member of society, but as the bullying continues, she begins to withdraw and become a loner, questioning her existence and her role in the “hive.” She becomes isolated and begins to live life in total emotional darkness, much like the aging worker bee living in the hive. As the aggression continues and she spends more time in emotional darkness, the middle school girl may begin to “propolize” her entire world. Sealing all of the cracks in her developing self so as to not let anyone or anything in, she has been hurt by her female peers and is taking all necessary steps to ensure that her soul is not bruised and battered again. The study by Roberts and Coursol (1996) found that victims do not report being bullied because they fear retaliation and lack support from adults. “Partly due to their avoidance behaviors, victims experience decline or even failure in academic performance” (Sanders & Phye, 2004, p. 25).

Queenbee Communication

Bees communicate through chemical compounds known as pheromones. “The queen produces the most complex pheromone She uses this powerful and seductive perfume to attract a retinue of worker bees that lick and groom her and carry chemical signals back to the rest of the hive” (Dalke, 2003, para. 2). The middle school adolescent queenbee emits unspoken signals that are just as controlling as the pheromones of the bee, from the “look” to totally ignoring the shunned girl as if she were a speck of dirt on the floor. It is as though her existence has no meaning whatsoever.

An “alarm pheromone” is left behind as a marker by the bee after an individual is stung through her clothes. This marker stimulates defensive behavior in other bees ensuring that the beekeeper launders her clothes after working with the hives (Blackiston, 2002, p.

251). Adolescent females mark themselves, primarily once they have been victimized, and make themselves an easy repeat target. Unknowingly, the adolescents marks herself as a target and the more she is victimized the greater these behaviors become more ingrained.

Namie and Namie (2003) write:

The way the Target walks, carries herself, sits, stands, uses hands, and uses interpersonal space is scrutinized by the bully, perhaps without the Target's awareness. Fear or intimidation can be signaled by a hesitant walking pace, short stride, or actually walking backwards to attend to what the more powerful person is saying. (p. 45)

The victim is injected with bee venom that is made up of at least nine distinct compounds, each with its properties. Sammataro and Avitabile (1998) identify some of the compounds as melittin that bursts blood and mast cells; phospholipase A₂ that depresses blood pressure; hyaluronidase that glues connective tissues together; apamin, a neurotoxin that causes tremors; mast cell degranulating peptides that release histamine from the mast cells and causes pain, and histamine that cause burning and itching. Anonymous rumors leave the middle school adolescent helpless, unable to identify the source, and thus not able to refute any of the claims! To do so would surely prove that the rumor was true in the bully's mind. Exclusion from a group makes the victim question her own self worth. Just as bee venom appears to be a nondescript mixture of fluids, the aggression of middle school girls, when viewed from the outside, appears to be a number of nondescript actions taken by middle school girls. Each bee venom compound may not be fatal in itself, but to the "right" person this combination of fluids may cause lethal anaphylactic shock.

The Bystanders

The social order within middle school girls is compared to a hive of bees, with a well-established queen and other “worker” bees performing their appointed tasks to ensure that the queen is protected and that the hive or swarm continues to flourish. When a bee is no longer a contributing member of the hive, she often will commit suicide. If the bee does not commit suicide or leave the hive, the other bees will kick her out or will kill her to remove her.

Longgood (1985) states, “Human societies have no monopoly on ingratitude and treachery” (p. 12). This treachery is displayed in the ways in which middle school girls treat each other. If a middle school girl falls from favor with the dominant group, she could find herself driven to extreme behaviors, including committing suicide. Barbabra Coloroso (2003), an author and national speaker regarding bullying, says, “At least sixteen children every year in the United Kingdom choose death over being battered by their peers” (p. 54). Colorosa also states that, in the United States, “Roughly one out of every thirteen U.S. high school students reported making a suicide attempt in the previous twelve months—a rate that has tripled over the last twenty years” (p. 54). No statistics exist regarding how many are related to “bullicide” (p. 54).

Longgood (1985) notes the contradiction of bees:

To perplex us more, if the hive is violated, or a rough hand thrust within, the bees will attack almost en masse. But an individual bee can have a companion next to her slaughtered or tortured and she will neither assist nor pay attention. (p. 28)

This same contradiction can be seen in the bullying phenomenon with adolescent girls. They will rally around someone they know, and support her to the bitter end. If their lives or someone close to them is threatened they will attack with very little provocation. But, if it is the “untouchable” girl in the middle school class, no one will come to her aid; they will stand

idly by and watch the whole demeaning drama play out. These are bystanders, “The third group of players in the story. They are the supporting cast who aid and abet the bully through acts of omission and commission” (Colorosa, 2003, p. 62).

“Scientists believe that bees, next to humans, have the most elaborate social structure and specialization of labor in the animal kingdom, one far more complex and sophisticated than formerly thought” (Longgood, 1985, p. 15). Regarding the social order Longgood (1985) asks, “Is there a power structure similar to that found in human societies? Is there delegation of authority? Accountability?” (p. 172).

Float Like a Butterfly, Sting like a Bee

Girls are exceptional masters of deception when bullying; they mask the clout that they control. A quote from Muhammad Ali appropriately describes the hidden power middle school girls brandish: “Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee” (as cited in Bishop, 2005, p. 139); “his hands can’t hit what his eyes can’t see” (this last phrase, we added as kids). What are we not seeing? If it cannot be seen, how can it be put into words? Adults pay little attention to bullying and label it as a phase girls go through “because girls hide their ability to hurt others” (Simmons, 2004, p. 107). How is it possible that a living being of such beauty, grace, and seemingly innocence metes out pain?

LeeAnn Womack’s song *I’ll Think of a Reason Later* (2004) expresses the calculating behavior of females’ struggle to express their anger.

It may be my family’s redneck nature

Rubbin off, bringin’ out unlady-like behavior

But I don’t like her

She may be an angel who spends all winter

Bringin’ the homeless blankets and dinner

A regular Nobel Peace Prize winner

(I'll Think of a Reason Later, MCA, 2004)

Our culture tells girls to be nice all the time, so girls learn that jealousy and competition are babyish, selfish, and wrong. As the old girlhood saying goes, “Sugar and spice, and everything nice, that’s what little girls are made of.” But are they? What are they really made of? I prefer the saying sugar and spice and not so nice, that’s what little girls are made of. “If something is wrong good girls had better hide it—just like they try to hide their negative feelings” (Simmons, 2004, p. 143). As girls we are taught to be kind and nurturing; good girls are not mean and do not fight. We are discouraged from confronting or showing anger toward others; after all, to do so would mean that we would have to get dirty and we might muss up our dresses. So we resort to behind the back type of retaliation. And because this revenge is at times difficult to describe, or the victim has to point a finger toward the bully, the victim remains silent. “When you grow up in a society that tells you to be nice all the time, you not only fear saying you’re upset—you probably don’t even know how” (Simmons, 2004, p. 48). What does an adolescent victim feel like when she has to mask her true feelings? Is this why female victims of aggression suffer in silence? How can they be prompted to come forward with their wounds?

I have experienced the emotional pain when stung by a queenbee; you question yourself, you wonder what you have done to deserve what occurred, and continually ask why? This individual whom I shall call “Audrey” deftly floated around the office suite as though nothing was wrong. Two weeks prior to my oral defense for my preliminary exam questions, what I consider the “manual” for my dissertation was taken from my office, *Researching Lived Experience* by Max van Manen. (It was no secret that I was going to be gone for my defense, as I had asked my graduate assistant to take over my classes for me.) I

knew it would take weeks to get another copy, and I wanted to review the manual before my oral exam, but I had no proof that it was she who took it. Audrey held department meetings and I was not notified of them (she sent out notices via e-mail), or they were held at times when I had to teach a class. There were items I had sent from my computer to the printer that mysteriously disappeared, as well as decorative items from my office that disappeared and then reappeared. That is until I had my lock changed on my office door. Audrey would often shut me down; she made it clear from the day I was hired that any contributions that I would, or could make to the department, would not be worthy of consideration. I so desired to be a valued and contributing member of this clique. At this time I was the odd girl out; I was married with children and my socialization did not involve drinking, a prerequisite to belonging to this circle. No matter what your age, mean girls are everywhere; the rejection and hurt are the same. Mean adolescents grow into adult bullies, but that is the subject of another study.

Media, Books, and Fairy Tales

Our culture is communicating it to us! “How could we not have seen it before? There were so many clues, after all. There was Amy Fisher, Tonya Harding, and Linda Tripp all competitive and jealous and ready to take out their female rivals” (Brown, 2003, p. 1). These under the table tactics have been going on for years, and now females are finally being forced to admit to them. Our culture today is still into promoting the “nice girls do not fight” image, and therefore prolonging its demise. Girls today need to be taught how to stand up for what they believe; they do not need to fight. Girls should be taught to be assertive in their beliefs, not aggressive, in addition to being sensitive to the needs of others.

Fairy tales are filled with female images of women undercutting other women such as the “evil step mother,” and the “wicked witch” in *Cinderella* and *Snow White*. From books to

television we are fed a constant diet of women's jealousy, spitefulness, and constant competition for men, status, and jobs. Where are the sisterhood stories where girls/women are supportive and loyal to each other? Why are there not more movies that promote women supporting each other such as *The Ya Ya Sisterhood*? We need to be advocates for our own gender and rewrite the fairy tales, have female heroines in cartoons, and promote sisterhood throughout the media.

Queenbees and Cyber-bullying

The words "cyberbully," "cyberstalking," and "bullicide" have been added to our 21st century vernacular. "Cyberbullying, is the use of e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, pagers, cellphones, or other forms of information technology to deliberately harass, threaten, or intimidate someone" (Whatis.com, n.d.). "Cyberstalking is the use of the Internet or other electronic means to stalk someone. This term is used interchangeably with online harassment and online abuse" (Wikipedia, cyberstalking, 2005, para. 1). I have discovered, in the literature, that the words "cyberbullying" and "cyberstalking" also are used interchangeably. The following example helps explain cyberstalking: "In Louisiana a 15 year old girl was arrested in January and accused of 'cyberstalking,' posting photos of a male student on a website" (Swartz, p. 2A). "Bullicide is suicide by a kid who has been tormented and bullied for years" (Willis, para. 4).

Bullying no longer stops once young females leave the school, and the image of your typical school yard bully has changed with today's technology. Technology via the internet, allows the "queen of mean" to enter the home of her prey without being invited.

"Cyberbullies, mostly ages 9-14, are using the anonymity of the Web to mete out pain without witnessing the consequences. The problem [of cyberbullying is]—aggravated by widespread use of wireless devices such as cellphones and Blackberrys . . ." (Swartz, 2005,

p. 1A). Home might be considered a safe haven for the wounded middle school “bee,” a place where she can be consoled and nurse her wounds. It is here, the queenbee will sting her victim as many times as her wicked heart desires without being in the same hive as her victim. Bullying on the internet is known as cyber-bullying; it leaves no tell tale bruise but packs a deadly punch to a young girl’s self-confidence. The bruises the victim bears are all internal and unseen. These internal bruises can have long lasting effects, which can extend years beyond the physical healing of a wound. This type of bullying is done through websites like “Xanga and MySpace,” where young girls set up their own blog (on line journals that can be e-mailed to anyone), or they may shoot their evil barbs through e-mails and chat rooms.

Girls are taught not to give out their locker combinations at school, or give their house keys to a friend, but they freely give their password to their trusted gal pal for instant messaging (IM). Then when the worker bee has unintentionally offended the queen, the queen can pretend she is the unsuspecting worker and send unending e-mails destroying the worker from within by causing emotional pain and anguish.

The Sting: A Public Health Threat

Female cyber-bullying is not limited to big cities; it is here in rural America! It has been front page news in our community, sending parents into a potential swarm. In response to an adolescent girl’s “hit list” on Xanga, and in light of the shootings in Red Lake, Minnesota the administration of my daughter’s middle school was prompted to send a letter home to aid in quieting the swarm. The letter states, “School administrators and the School Resource Officer have seen and investigated the websites [such as Xanga]. Although disturbing, they did not contain any direct threats or hit lists.” Resource Officer Grant Benjaminson states, “Xanga is my worst nightmare” (Forster, 2005, p.1). Jeff Weise, the

shooter at Red Lake, Minnesota, is said to have been teased; and on one web posting, he “Slammed fellow Indian teens for listening to rap music” (Forliti, 2005, para. 9). All of this causes me to pause and wonder; what will happen next to hit the national news regarding girls and bullying? Will we ever “wake up” and realize that female bullying is hitting us square between the eyes? Males do NOT have a corner on the market where bullying is concerned. Girls bully, too. The National Education Association’s website states, “Targets of bullies fear going to school, using the school bathroom, riding the school bus, and have physical symptoms of illness, and a “diminished” ability to learn” (National Education Association, *National Bullying*, Section 2, para.1)

Where are the educators? Where are the parents of these girls? Isn’t anybody paying attention to what is written behind all the violence? As parents, we teach our children about good touching and bad touching, sexual predators, drugs, and pornography; yet, many parents have no clue as to the lives their adolescents are leading online. The world of technology has become the precarious playground for the middle school girl.

“In 2002 the American Medical Association warned that bullying is a public-health issue with long-term mental-health consequences for both bullies and their victims” (Lemonick, 2005, para. 3). Lemonick goes on to say:

Victims feel sick more often than their classmates do, are absent more often and tend to have lower grades. They are also more depressed and withdrawn—a natural reaction...but one that can subsequently lead to more victimization. (Lemonick, 2005, para. 6)

What will be the next national tragedy splashed across the headlines? What do we need to do to protect our girls?

Calming the Swarm

In his book, *The Complete Guide to Beekeeping*, Morse (1980) describes one of the most important inventions in beekeeping as the smoker. “A smoker is nothing more than a firepot into which one may place punk wood, straw, hay, leaves, burlap, or another material that produces a heavy smoke when burned” (p. 22). The smoke is used to calm the bees during hive inspection, cleaning, and during harvest. There are many theories as to why adding smoke to a hive is effective in calming the bees; the bees sense a fire and use their wings in an attempt to cool the hive, and at the same time begin removing honey from the hive for later use. The smoke disorients them, or the smoke masks the pheromone responsible for aggressive behavior. In any case the smoke is very effective in preventing attacks by bees. A letter to the parents was sent by Principal Linda Davis of Discovery Junior High School in Fargo, ND on April 21, 2005. This “smoker,” was an attempt to calm the adolescents and parents about potential violence at the school.

My daughter informed me after school that day that the girls in House Number 4 (a House is a group of 100-130 students in one wing of the school) were all a flutter about what could potentially happen that day; I can imagine the flutter only fanned the flames of discontent. “The date 4/20 brings rumors every spring—because of Hitler’s birthday, because it is the anniversary of Columbine, we deal with these issues every year” (Davis, 2005, para. 6). Just as the bee smoker is described as a firepot, so were the emotions of the students at Discovery Middle School and their parents. With the recent shooting at a nearby high school and the significance of the date, the administration could feel the firepot beginning to get out of hand. By having in-school discussions and sending a letter to the parents, the administrators were harnessing the brewing firepot to their advantage, much as a beekeeper would gingerly stoke a smoker to use on the beehive. The much feared day came and went

without incidents of violence or disruption. The letter worked; why and how can be debated. Just as the theory of why a smoker quiets a hive of bees, the important thing is it worked and no adolescent girls were stung. This “smoker” was successful in quieting the middle school bees and their parents. And yet, could this “calming” letter result in a smokescreen, hiding the real dangers that lurk in the bullying world of adolescent girls?

From Slam Books to Modern Cyberbullying

Kayta Gifford, the program manager for the internet watch group “CyberAngel” states the following about cyber-bullying:

It’s a great way to manage a project, and the project is to make someone miserable.

The abuse also follows a victim home, where students often cannot resist checking to see what’s been said lately about them. The anonymity of a Web site also seems to make bullies even more vicious. (Forester, 2005 p. A 16)

Cyber-bullying is the 21st century version of female note passing; it hides the bully’s anonymity and appears to increase the toxicity of the sting. How does it feel to be stung when the queenbee is no where near you? What is it like to be teased, called names, put down, and threatened in your own home? In your own room? Is there no sanctuary for you?

“Anabel, who spends hours on the computer everyday, suddenly began receiving hateful messages on her computer. She traced them to a small group of students from her school” (Lachman, 2005, para. 3). Anabel and her mother told the school principal about this behind the scenes nastiness, but there was little the principal could do to stop it. Anabel was sent to live with her grandmother. The worker bees die after stinging their victims; the queenbee does not die after using her stinger. “In general, queen bees use their stingers only to kill rival queens that may emerge or be introduced in the hive” (Blackiston, 2002, p. 24),

thus allowing her highness to continue to torture the lesser bees. What makes one a rival queen bee?

While on a recent flight, I engaged the elderly lady next to me in conversation; she was a former student in Home Economics at the University of Minnesota. She told me about the “slam books” that they had at the private school she attended. In the 1940s and 50s one wrote the names of one’s girlfriends in the book and beside their name was a description of what you did or did not like about the girl. “Some of the things we wrote were just awful, but you couldn’t wait to read what had been written about you when the book had completed making the rounds” (J. Christianson, personal communication, April 13, 2005). From slam books and passing notes to modern cyberbullying, the “nastiness” of females has evolved with the times.

“The whole fabric of honey bee society depends on communication—on an innate ability to send and receive messages, to encode and decode” (Kidd, 2002, p. 165). The language of cyber-bullying is full of acronyms known only to the bees on the net. The meaning behind some acronyms is obvious, while others are more difficult to decode such as PITA—pain in the ass, FITB—fill in the blanks, and NIFOC—naked in front of the computer (S. Boschert, personal communication, February, 20, 2005). Middle school girls can show their body parts with the use of webcams attached to their computers and demonstrate what KMA—kiss my ass really means. “Adolescents have always had a lingo of their own intended to keep others out, particularly adults. As soon as you have figured out what they mean, they change the meaning of the words or change the codes” (R. Schneider personal communication October, 25, 2005). While doing laundry, I have read notes that were passed to my daughter. As I was reading, suddenly, I would come across something that did not make sense to me. The notes were obviously meant to keep others in the dark. “Children and

lovers likewise have ‘their language’, by which they communicate with each other in a world that belongs to them alone” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 406).

Heidegger and Technology

The previous example of computers, and webcams, Blackberrys, and even cell phones signify how technology plays a large role in the everyday lives of our youth. Heidegger was “preoccupied with the future of Western world and culture which had been dominated by technology” (Moran, 2000, p. 217). Heidegger (1977) says “What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry in technology, but rather there is the mystery of its essence” (p. 28). “Potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology” do not threaten man. Heidegger further explains, “The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth” (p. 28). Heidegger warns us that we could potentially miss the real meaning, as Enframing is a calling-forth that . . . “gathers’ so as to reveal” (p. 19). He says:

Thus, where Enframing reigns, there is *danger* in the highest sense. *But where danger is, grows There is saving power also.* The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing. (p. 29)

Yes, technology has made our lives more convenient, but at what cost? How has technology changed our society? What are these forms of technology doing to our middle school girls? What about our youth is being put in danger? What is being overlooked as a result of technology?

Simmons (2004) interviewed an adolescent girl whom I will call Joni. Joni happened to kiss a boy that Emily had a crush on. Emily instructed all the other girls NOT to talk to

Joni and they started a Web page about Joni. The Web page stated that she was a lesbian, that she had sex with at least 20 other guys and that she was pregnant! She says, “I had Snapple bottles thrown at my head and I was forced to eat lunch in the bathroom by myself . . .” (p. 25).

This humiliation is difficult for me to fathom! What is technology doing to our adolescent girls?!? How deep did this humiliation seer into her soul?

Simmons (2004) continues on to warn adolescent girls, “Behind that blinking box, your ‘friend’ could be three or four people cutting and pasting your conversation to three other people, who send it on their friends, and so on” (p. 146). If the adolescent girl innocently says something that offends one of her friends, she may be in more trouble with more people than just the person she is instant messaging. How has technology taken away the innocence of childhood?

“Bee-ing” Stung: A Right of Passage?

A little girl who never smiles
 ‘Cause I have braces on my teeth
 And I know how it feels to cry myself to sleep
 I’m that kid on every playground
 Who’s always chose [sic] last
 A single teenage mother
 Tryin’ to overcome my past
 You don’t have to be my friend
 But is it too much to ask: Don’t laugh at me
 Don’t call me names
 Don’t get pleasure from my pain

(Colorosa, 2003, p. 41)

This is an excerpt from a poem called *Don't Laugh at Me*, inspired by the agony felt in part by girls who are victims of bullying. When the victim can no longer contain the rage that has been boiling within her after months or even years of being taunted and humiliated, it will bubble over and explode in some form, like the molten lava from a volcano. The hot molten lava destroys all things in its path and scorches things unseen beyond its immediate reach. The fury and defenselessness that one female victim feels spew forth one spring day, in the form of a shooting.

A female shooter? Really, I didn't know there was an incident involving a female victim of bullying at school and . . . a gun? This is a typical response when I mention that there has been an incident involving bullying and a female shooter in the United States. This little known incident occurred two years after Columbine, on March 7, 2001. "Elizabeth Catherine Bush, 14, wounded student Kimberly Marchese in the cafeteria of Bishop Neumann High School; she was depressed and frequently teased" (Infoplease, n.d., para 28). Girls' aggression is more likely to go unnoticed; "Elizabeth Bush... gave none of the signs we now identify as precursors to such violence...she didn't boast or brag about 'pulling a Columbine', she didn't play violent video games, Marilyn Manson [music], or make bombs in her garage" (Brown, 2003, p. 214). Elizabeth will be receiving her education in a "psychiatric facility" over the next few years (Colorosa, 2003, p. 48). What were the unnoticed signs of violence exhibited by Elizabeth? How are they so different from those of boys? Why has this incident not received the same attention as Columbine? Is it because the shooter was a girl? Is it because there were no deaths? Is it because this struggle for power is deemed not as "HORRIFIC" a tragedy as the others? Who decides the magnitude of these

tragedies? Did no one recognize the smaller calamities that led up to this incident? Colorosa (2003) says:

Making a daily practice of shunning and excluding her from their social circles, the bunch of bullies felt no remorse for what they had done. In fact, some failed to see how “just teasing her” could get her that upset. They didn’t get it. Elizabeth, on the other hand, has expressed remorse and has taken full responsibility for her actions. (p. 48)

“Teasing is a fun thing you do with friends—with people you care about. Taunting is a choice to bully someone for whom you have contempt” (Colorosa, 2003, p. 32). The person being teased and the teaser can easily switch the parts they play; the bully and the bullied do not have the capability to do this. The bully clutches the power over the powerless. There is no playfulness in bullying as there is in teasing, and any laughter is directed at the victim.

Educating Others

I recently gave a presentation on bullying at a university I was visiting. The audience consisted of university professionals and a handful of Family and Consumer Sciences students. The women and girls among this group were nodding their heads, and a few even shared their stories of bullying. While some of the women, and men, appeared to be of the mind that bullying is just a part of life that they live through, they expect the same for their children. So what is the big deal with female bullying? I pointed out again that males and females differ in the ways that they bully their peers, and the female “way” is more difficult to put into words and to identify. This did seem to sway some of my audience, but not all. “Perhaps, in a society that values men over women, what women do to each other is simply deemed less important by both men and women” (Chesler, 2003, p. 38).

After giving presentations regarding middle school girls and bullying, I often am asked how specific incidents of aggression can be handled. I generally tell the questioner that each situation is different and each student is unique; although there are some commonalities among bullies and victims. Next, I inquire more about the situation that they are referring to, and I provide a number of suggestions.

These episodes must be dealt with, but they are only a small step in overcoming bullying. I call it the band aid approach; it is similar to placing a band aid on an individual with an irregular heartbeat. This individual needs serious medical intervention; the heart affects all systems in the body, just as aggression has an effect on all of society.

To deal effectively with bullying in our society, we must get to the heart of the matter, the beginning of the problem. Our society must be taught to be sensitive and tolerant of others, not just individuals of color or other ethnic backgrounds. Bullying should not be a rite of passage into the female adult world; it dehumanizes each of us! Maryland State Representative Luiz Simmons who was prompted by his own daughter's victimization states:

Bullying should not be a rite of passage. For a lot of people it's a rite of terror

A lot of these problems stay with people into their adulthood. The effects of bullying are not ephemeral. They are permanent in many ways. (Ward, 2005, para. 3)

Unseen Scars

I recall a conversation with a secretary on campus, who had eczema as a child. Eczema causes one's skin to itch and turns all the more red once it is scratched. At one point her mother pinned mittens to her pajamas to prevent her from scratching herself. In 6th grade her principal asked her what was wrong with her and inquired if she had leprosy! That comment was all that was needed to fuel the gossip for her peers. To this day she has difficulty wearing rings, even her wedding ring, or showing her hand (P. Cossette, personal

communication, October, 2003). In the words of a victim turned bully, “People think it is something one ‘gets over’ but believe me it’s not” (Simmons, 2004, p. 109).

One of the girls Simmons (2004) interviewed had wretched school years during the seventh and eighth grades. She was the only new girl to come to the school. She says, “I was teased about everything: my clothes, my hair, my weight, my long face, and the fact that I had no boobs. Often I would just go home and cry” (p. 161). She even dieted thinking that others would like her if she lost weight; she grew 2 inches but dropped from 178 pounds to 121 pounds! She states, “The past will continue to haunt me and will scar me for life ...my [new] friends will always be there to help me through it. I can’t believe it. Oh my god, I have friends.” Wounds heal, but scars take years to disappear. Must the scars of adolescent bullying have such an effect? What can be done about this? Have we not all felt the sting of the bullying bee? In a sense this is a gender issue, because unless men have an understanding of how this torment has affected the girls/women in their lives, they often do not grasp it. Is it not obvious how bullying limits an individual from fully developing? These girls are like budding flowers . . . only they are not permitted to blossom so that we can enjoy their full magnificence! They will forever remain the buds of a would-be flower.

Will it take a female shooter and an incident like Columbine or an incident similar to Red Lake, Minnesota for our male dominated society to pay credence to what adolescent females have to endure? I am losing patience, and yet I know I need to be patient and persistent in helping others understand this issue. The female shooter incident adds to the significance of “capturing the essence” of middle school bullying.

“Bee”–ing The Best that You can Bee?

History has been written with the focus on men and their contributions; it has only been in recent history that the contributions and trials of women have been noted. Carol

Gilligan (2003) throughout her book, *In a Different Voice*, tells us how women have been left out of research studies, among other things; the results of these studies are still considered the standard today. She feels that women today are viewed and judged through ideals and rules set by men. Gilligan says, “While the truths of psychological theory have blinded psychologists to the truth of women’s experience, that experience illuminates a world which psychologists have found hard to trace, a territory where violence is rare and relationships appear safe” (p. 62). She goes on to say that women have “different views of morality and self” and they “structure” their relationships differently (p. 62). Why are women, today, allowing themselves to be judged by standards not of their gender? “Some feminists have insisted that women are prisoners of a patriarchal system and are, therefore, unable to resist its values and demands” (Chesler, 2003, p. 44). Why are we allowing this to happen? Is it because it’s easier for society/women to maintain the status quo than to rock the boat? I am in agreement with Carol Bly who coined the term “cultural abuse” for those elements in the culture that block growth and development (as cited in Pipher, 1995, p. 293). Sadly, my daughter and her friends, despite having strong female role models, are slowly succumbing to these limiting expectations.

To Bee or not to Bee

Sydney and her friends giggle as they describe the bulging backpacks of the girls who stroll into the girls’ bathrooms at Discovery School every morning, in hopes of capturing the appearance that society has dictated to them. I suspect all of them have been a part of this game, as Sydney came home with eyeliner and mascara on one day and I know she has neither of these cosmetic items. I wish she would have asked me for them; I would have helped her pick them out and purchase them. She could be into worse things. Cosmetics are a

sign of a teenager discovering her way into womanhood. I am beginning to realize the apron strings are slowly loosening.

These backpacks hold make-up and clothing that the girls want kept hidden, and I imagine some of these garments most likely are not allowed by parents or possibly even the school. The girls emerge from the lavatories decked out in forbidden attire. (After all, what adolescent girl wouldn't want to look like Paris Hilton in the Hardees advertisement dressed in a black slinky top and short shorts munching on a big juicy burger. Sex appeal sells more than burgers and these girls know it.) The girls describe this forbidden wardrobe as being "higher and tighter," meaning shorter skirts and shirts; all the clothing is skin tight. When the teachers and principal patrol the hallways, the shirts are pulled down past the navel and skirts suddenly lengthen to the fingertips, per the dress code. These budding women have their faces adorned with dark eye-liner and the mascara of models, making these adolescents appear years beyond their middle school age.

The girls informed me that "most" of their peers carry out this ruse, as the bathrooms are packed and it is difficult to maneuver around in these tight changing quarters. I was not surprised to learn that these girls often would wear each other's clothes for the day (S. Boschert, M. Jensen & M. Taylor, personal communication April 27, 2005). What about the girls who do not have a friend to exchange clothes with or share make-up? Where are they? What does it feel like not to be a part of the bustling in school bathrooms? Flaunting the "right" look has always mattered: it seems that more girls are being "shut out." Pipher (1994) states:

With puberty, girls face enormous cultural pressure to split into false selves. The

pressure comes from school, magazines, music, television, advertisements, and movies. It comes from peers. Girls can be true to themselves and risk abandonment by their peers, or they can reject their true selves and be socially acceptable. (p. 38)

Let us help adolescent girls be true to themselves by appreciating them for what they are, complicated, developing young girls who are “searching out” who they are. Let us help them find who they are by guiding and encouraging them, not slapping labels on them and holding them to unwritten and unspoken standards. What does it feel like to be held to these unwritten standards? These standards can have a negative and often injurious effect on the girls who do not meet them. They are literally the square peg in the round hole. They want to fit in, but their appearance keeps them from being accepted into the group. By not being a part of the group, these girls are ripe for the bullying that is a part of the middle school girl culture. Some of these square pegs in an attempt to fit, shave off their corners and become anorexic, bulimic, or willing to submit their bodies for cosmetic surgery. As the middle school girl struggles to find her identity, it becomes apparent to her that she must fit in if she is to be accepted and avoid the verbal and nonverbal abuse that may await her. Richardson and Rehr, (2001) pronounce that “By feeling peaceful in their bodies, they [girls] can focus on their individual uniqueness as well as recognize the similarities they have to one another” (p. 217). But this is not to be. Girls are in constant competition to out do one another in grades, boyfriends, make-up, perfume, and clothes. It is a game of constant jockeying for first place as a new queen emerges.

Rachel Simmons (2002) says that women must start their own good “Old Boys Network;” “Experienced women have to take younger women under their wings, and girls have to seek out mentors” (p. 185). Women need to foster positive relationships with each other in the office arena, or we will be walking behind men continually in the working world.

Developing healthy female relationships starts in the home and mothers can be positive role models for their impressionable daughters. “Girls learn what it means to be a woman by watching women. They watch their mothers, their aunts, their grandmothers, and their teachers. Besides being physically healthy we must provide girls with a ‘sense of self-respect and a connection with others’” (Forsyth, 1998, p. 3). Janet Reno said recently, “Growing up as a child today in America is even more difficult than raising children” (as cited in Pipher, 1995, p. 285).

Capturing the Essence of “Bee”-ing

As I continue my pursuit for new meaning and understanding I turn to the writings of Heidegger (1927/2003) and Gadamer (1960/2003); these writings provide the philosophic grounding for Chapter Three. “To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible,” to capture a description of the phenomenon while realizing that life is more complex and that a complete description is “unattainable” (van Manen, 2003, p. 18). It is here I turn to Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1927/2003) in an attempt to capture the “Being” of female bullying. Heidegger states:

The characterization of the question of being, under the guideline of the formal structure of the question as such, has made it clear that this question is a unique one, such that its elaboration and even its solution require a series of fundamental reflections . . . The totality of beings can, with respect to its various domains, become the field where particular areas of knowledge are exposed and delimited. These areas—for example, history, nature, space, life, Dasein, language, and so one can in their turn become thematized as objects of scientific investigations. (p. 9)

Moran (2000) says, “Later Heideggerian thinking operates in a repetitive, incantatory way; like a bell tolling, it echoes the same sound over again but with deepening effect” (p. 218).

Moran states that Heidegger is almost “tautological” in his writings. I search for the meaning of bullying by looking beyond the everydayness, to what is “obscured” and still “unilluminated” in the phenomenon. John Tyerman Williams (1995) profoundly explains this search in his book, *Pooh and The Philosophers*:

‘These are the wrong sort of bees.’ Pooh goes on to say these wrong bees make the wrong sort of honey. We can see that Heidegger built the whole vast edifice of *Being and Time* on his insight that Pooh’s rejection of the wrong sort of bees indicated that a wrong concept of being would produce a false philosophy instead of the genuine honey of truth and wisdom. (p. 176)

I continue in my search for the “right sort of bees” in order to extract a deepened understanding of bullying. I search for the essence of bullying by looking beyond what meets the eye.

CHAPTER THREE:

PHILOSOPHICAL GROUNDING AND METHODOLOGY

Being Called to Human Science Research

John Tyerman Williams (1985) says, “A wrong concept of being” was what stung Heidegger into thinking about the question of “Be(e)ing” (p. 175). Was it this same wrong concept of the queenbee bullying the victim that has stung me? I believe so. I am captivated by middle school girls, and as Bishop (2005) pronounces, “The bee master must first of all be a bee lover, or [s]he will never succeed” (p. 41). One must truly love the topic of one’s dissertation or she will not succeed—and I do!

The business of beekeeping runs the breadth from those who have a hobby interest in “bee-ing,” to raising bees as a main source of income. “Those who get into beekeeping often get what is called ‘bee fever’” (Stahlman, n.d., para.1). I have embraced the phenomenon of middle school girl bullying with the same intensity and passion as those who have bee fever. One might say I have “middle school bullying fever.” The more I learn about this phenomenon, the more fixated I have become with the phenomenon of bullying. Bishop (2005) describes how her affection for the apiary world developed:

Determined to have sweet drops of honey and nature on my tongue on a more regular basis, I resolved to host bees on my own property. Keeping bees was clearly the most exquisite way to learn about my land, farm it, and taste its liquid fruits. As visions of sheep and cows faded away, I dropped my head back again and opened my mouth for more honey. That is how my love affair with bees and their magical produce began.

(p. 3)

The essence of bullying is brought to light through the use of the bee metaphor. The busyness of bullies extends beyond the eyes of the casual observer. To study bullying

phenomenologically one must go beyond the obvious, beyond the spoken words and actions of the victim and fully embrace what is hidden. Bees are often studied in well controlled laboratory studies or in the field with modern high tech gadgets. The sounds that a bee makes, the pheromones that exude from the body of the bee, and the dances that this insect performs all mean something. Scientists have studied the actions of the bee and have come up with their hypotheses; in the physical sciences this works as there are no persons with whom to talk. Researchers have done much the same thing with middle school girls, in spite of being a human science arena. They have studied their actions, listened to their language, and hypothesized what it all means, often using well controlled laboratory experiments or complex data collection tools for quantitative analysis. How often have researchers asked adolescent girls to share their own perspectives? It seems so simple, but it is difficult to capture the essence of a phenomenon in a questionnaire or survey. The researcher must spend countless hours asking key questions, listening to the responses, and using his or her backgrounds to develop themes. This type of research does not lend itself nicely to plotting flight patterns, recording the frequency and magnitude of buzzing sounds as is used in the study of bees. Other methodologies are vital in understanding another type of social animal who is present in our everyday world—the middle school girl.

“Bee”-ing Your Best

As I have learned more about the apiary world, I have come to understand that bee fever goes beyond the routine health and maintenance of daily bee life. The experience of bullying among middle school girls also can be understood better by going beyond the statistical data found in books and news releases, to poems, movies, metaphors, and self-reflections. Bullying extends more profoundly, going beyond the physical and verbal acts between the bully and her victim, into the metaphysical. “As a man thinkth so he is.’ Our

inner state, then, is important to both our own personal well being as well as the health of our planet” (Miller, 2000, p. 6).

To explore the lived experience of the bullying victim I have been drawn to the concept of human science research, as described by Max van Manen (2003):

It is the phenomenological and hermeneutical study of human existence:

Phenomenology because it is the descriptive study of lived experience

(phenomena) in the attempt to enrich lived experience by mining its meaning;

Hermeneutics because it is the interpretive study of the expressions and

objectifications (tests) of lived experience in the attempt to determine the

meaning embodied in them. (p. 38)

It is through the lived experiences of adolescent girls who have been victims of bullying that I attempt to explicate deeper meaning.

Through human science research I have used Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to assist in opening up the phenomenon of middle school girls and bullying. Tribe (1982) states that Maslow’s life was “filled with humanitarian concerns. His dream was that through understanding, all mankind would have a better opportunity to live in a society in which he or she was free to reach his or her highest potential” (p. 40). It is my desire to have girls live in a society that permits them to be “free to reach their highest potential.” Maslow spent his later years contemplating why so few people reached the level of self-actualization. Tribe (1982) says:

Maslow felt all falling away from full humanness, from the full blooming of human nature is a loss of human possibility, of what could have been, and of what should have been. Human and personal possibilities are lost. The world is narrowed and so is consciousness. Capacities are inhibited. (p. 40)

What could a hermeneutic phenomenological study reveal and contribute to the adolescent girls' life-worlds? I envision a greater awareness toward victims of adolescent bullying that will bring about a change in how professionals and society view and deal with girls and aggression. I turn to my peers to help with this growing perennial problem. In the words of Gubler and Croxall (2005):

Family and consumer sciences (FCS) professionals are natural prevention specialists because of their background in human development and problem solving. The purpose, focus, and core values of AAFCS [American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences] underscore the potential for FCS professionals to facilitate changes in the amount of violence that occurs in American public schools. (p. 66)

Through human science research, Family and Consumer Sciences professionals, teachers, and other professionals who work with middle school girls can facilitate in educating our world about female aggression, and assist female adolescents in being the best that they can be. This will benefit individual adolescent girls, and will benefit the world as a whole because of a more understanding, caring, and compassionate society.

The Honeycomb, The Foundation

Bees build a honeycomb of hexagonal wax cells “where they can store their food, raise brood, and collect honey . . .” (Blackiston, 2002, p. 63). This is the foundation that is necessary for the bee to store liquid gold, and where the beekeeper will extract the sweet nectar. I use hermeneutic phenomenological research as the foundation from which I will extract new meanings from themes that I have gathered through my conversations with middle school girls. “We gather other people’s experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves . . . they allow us to become ‘informed,’ shaped or enriched by

this experience so as to be able to render the full significance of its meaning” (van Manen, 2003, p. 62).

To conduct my human science inquiry, I seek to interpret and understand the lived experiences of adolescent girls who have experienced bullying. This research is a type of interpretive inquiry focusing on humans in the world and revealing the significance found in everyday life. Interpretive human science values understandings that have come about through reflections on “thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes” (van Manen, 2003, p. 3).

I turn to the writings of Martin Heidegger (1927/2003) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960/2003) in my search for the essence of bullying, concealed underneath the everydayness of what we see and typically comprehend in the world. We become so familiar with what we see each day that what we see and experience becomes almost routine, and we do not look beyond to see the actual deep-rooted meanings. Martin Heidegger (1927/2003) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960/2003) provide the underpinnings for my research, and the concepts for this chapter. Heidegger (1927/2003) allows us to examine the “Being” of a phenomenon, “Being-in-the-world” or *Dasein*. “In the interpretation of *Dasein*, this structure is something ‘a priori;’ it is not pieced together, but is primordially and constantly a whole. It affords us, however, various ways of looking at the items, which are constitutive for it” (p. 41). Gadamer, a student and protégé of Heidegger, permits us to look at language and conversation as the foundation of human existence. He believes that the world actually exists through language. Gadamer (1960/2003) states:

That the general concept meant by the word is enriched by any given perception of a thing, so that what emerges is a new, more specific word formation which does more justice to the particularity of that act of perception. (p. 429)

The two philosophers' viewpoints provide deeper insight into the lived experience of being the victim of bullying.

The methodology used in the study is described to illuminate the use of hermeneutic phenomenology as a fitting venue by which I will bring into “nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life” (van Manen, 2003, p. 57). Is the phenomenon of bullying so well thought out that no new questions or meanings can be derived from it? How does bullying show itself? What is the true Being of female bullying? Moran (2000) states, “The main contribution of phenomenology has been the manner in which it has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of the nature of knowledge” (p. 20). Heidegger (1927/2003) says in *Being and Time*:

The average, vague understanding of being can be permeated by traditional theories and opinions about being in such a way that these theories, as the sources of the prevailing understanding, remain hidden. What is sought in the question of being is not completely unfamiliar, although it is at first totally ungraspable. (p. 6)

Heidegger (1927/2003) goes on to say that we need to look not only at the everydayness of a phenomenon, but what the phenomenon is NOT to understand it fully. What is it that female bullying is NOT? What makes it different from male bullying? Last, I describe my method of engagement for my study.

Of Politics and Philosophy

Heidegger is considered one of the exceptional philosophers of the twentieth century, in part due to his book *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time, 1927/2003). He revived a new awareness in Aristotle, through “recover[ing] the real meaning of Aristotle’s conception of human *praxis*” (Moran, 2000, p. 196). Heidegger’s “Whole life’s work was a single-minded

attempt to reexamine the question of Being; a question he saw as inaugurated in ancient Greek philosophy” (Moran, 2000, p. 195). Heidegger (1927/2003) states that the question of being “sustained the research of Plato and Aristotle but from then on ceased to be heard of *as a thematic question of actual investigation*” (p. 2). “Questioning is a knowing search for beings in their thatness and whatness” (p. 5). For Heidegger, the meaning of Being was to be understood as it relates to time. Heidegger, to be understood, needs to be thought of in terms of the time in which he lived, if that is possible.

Often we think of “great minds” as being morally upright, and had I not read considerably about Heidegger I would not have questioned the moral principles implicated in his work due to his membership in the Nazi party. There was little attention given to morality, or rather the ethical issues in research. The focus on research changed when the physical and psychological abuse became exposed regarding the experiments conducted at the Nazi concentration camps. This abuse resulted in the first ethical principles being established. These principles were called the Nuremberg Code. Since this time, numerous professional groups and the government of the United States of America have developed codes of conduct to guide the ethical conduct of researchers. In the United States, the Belmont Report directs the work of researchers’ conduct with human beings (Merriam, 1998, pp. 212-213).

Prior to continuing with my selected methodology and Heidegger’s philosophy, the question that has to be addressed is his association with the ultimate evils of this century through the Nazi party. After the war and until his death, Heidegger gave no explanation as to his participation in the Nazi party. This troubles me, as the maternal side of my family is proud of our German heritage despite the Nazism; whereas, my paternal side conceals their German background.

Heidegger's Childhood

According to Safranski (1998) the Heideggers were of the middle class; Martin Heidegger was born and spent his childhood in Messkirch, Germany. Conrad Grober paints a picture of Heidegger's potentially problematic childhood:

We know from our own bitter experience how much youthful happiness was destroyed in those years, when the wealthier Old Catholic children rejected the poorer Catholic children, applied nicknames to their clergy and to them, beat them up and immersed them in the fountain—basins to rebaptize them Even Old Catholic schoolmasters divided up the sheep from the goats, pinned the nickname of “black sick” [sic] on Catholic students and, using their fists, made them realize that they could not tread Roman paths with Impunity. (Safranski, 1998, p. 5)

If Heidegger were middle class, where did he find himself when it came to the aforementioned situations? In the words of Colorosa (2003) was he the “bully, the bullied, or the bystander”? How was he bullied? Does the sting of bullying pierce the soul as deeply as that of today? How is it different from the bullying of middle school youth today? What were the symbols/signs that made one stand out as a “poorer Catholic” child? What youthful “happiness” was destroyed in young Heidegger?

Martin and his brother were “sexton lads” and they helped with church services; they “picked flowers to decorate the church [and] they ran errands for the priest” (Safranski, 1998, p. 7). His religious experiences were not all of a negative nature, yet it begs the question . . . How did his childhood experiences have an impact on Heidegger's breaking with Catholicism?

Safranski (1998) goes on to say “Young Martin first experienced the clash between tradition and modernism, [Romans and Old Catholics] and he felt the hurtful aspect of that

modernism” (p. 6). The community was divided. The Old Catholics were considered to be modern and from good families, while the Romans were thought to be outdated and tended to hold on to the past. Although there were more Romans in number, the Old Catholics “belonged to ‘those at the top.’” As an adult, Heidegger believed that Christianity and modern science facilitated the “forgetfulness of Being.” What in Heidegger’s experiences as a child prompted him toward the critique of western technology?

Heidegger and Politics

Heidegger accepted the position of Rector of Freiburg University, and his inaugural address was titled “The Self-determination of the German University.” The Nazis would have misheard this address because the sort of leader Heidegger had in mind in his constantly repeated invocation of the “leaders and protectors of the destiny of the German people was not Hitler, but [Heidegger] himself” (Farias, 1988, p. 31). Heidegger saw himself as becoming the “intellectual leader of the National Socialist movement,” the leader of all the German Universities. In his address he “pours scorn on the traditional liberal notion of academic freedom and reinterprets freedom as placing oneself under the spiritual mission of the German people” (Safranski, 1998, p. 211).

Heidegger voluntarily joined the Nazi party on May 27, 1933 (Safranski, 1998, p. xii). In spite of Heidegger’s influence as a philosopher, I am yet torn by his actions. There is the highly regarded side of Heidegger, as well as and his dark side and political naïveté. Heidegger, as Rector of Freiburg University,

Pledged the University’s allegiance to Hitler and to the cause of National Socialism . . . which was seeking to reorganize the university studies to mirror National Socialist doctrine, with its burning of Jewish texts and organized [sic] witch-hunts of left-wing lecturers and students. (Moran, 2000, p. 211)

University professors at this time were required to sign a pledge that they supported Hitler. He also rejected requests to assist with the dissertations of Jewish students. Moran (2000) says that “Heidegger had dreamed of becoming the philosopher of the New Reich and was even invited to Berlin by Hitler” (p. 218). Was this public commitment to the Nazi party a way to survive professionally and grow as a philosopher, or was he really committed to the ultimate evil of this century? I am bent toward believing that he was oblivious to Hitler’s wickedness during this time. Is this possible? Heidegger followed Adolph Hitler who was named Man of the Year by *Time* magazine in 1939 because he was the most influential man of the century (*Time*, 1939, n.p). There were obviously people in the United States who initially revered, and later detested, Hitler’s coming to power.

Heidegger was quickly becoming recognized as an outstanding phenomenologist. According to Safranski (1998) “Husserl characterizes young Martin Heidegger, whom by then he regarded as his most gifted pupil and whom he was treating almost as an equal partner in the great philosophical project of phenomenology” (p. 70). Heidegger (1927/2003) felt rather than let his book *Being and Time* go out of print, he would delete the dedication to Husserl, a Jew, his teacher, and a former friend. “When asked about the deletion of the dedication to Husserl . . . Heidegger seemed to think it obvious that he had behaved sensibly by deleting a dedication to a Jew rather than letting his book go out of print” (Farias, 1988, p. 32). How could he turn his back on his mentor, his teacher? If *Being and Time* had such an impact on the world, the dedication would not matter, or would it? Since I am not of that era, I am looking back on time. Farias (1988) states, “It pays to realize that the vast majority of German academics, including some of the best and brightest, turned a blind eye to the fate of their Jewish colleagues” (p. 32). Was this what Heidegger had to do in order to continue to

exist? I suppose so; Heidegger's philosophy may never have come to being if he had not succumbed to the times to survive.

His association with the Nazi party is contentious even today. Hans-Peter Hempel, a student of Heidegger's, "Had written to Heidegger about the conflict he was finding himself in as a result of admiring his philosophy and detesting his politics" (Safranski, 1998, p. 228).

I have to come to terms with this same conflict. Heidegger's response was this:

Your conflict remains unresolvable . . . so long as you are viewing National Socialism solely in retrospect from today and judging it with regard to what gradually came to light after 1934. At the beginning of the 1930s the class differences in our nation had become intolerable for any German with a sense of social responsibility...as had also Germany's [economy]. In 1932 there were 7 million unemployed, who, with their families, saw before them nothing but hardship and poverty. The confusion stemming from these circumstances, which today's generation can no longer even imagine, also spread to the universities. (as cited in Safranski, p. 228)

The Nazi Party developed from a National Socialist base, so what really influenced Heidegger to become a member of the Party? Will we ever know? How do I engage in my phenomenological research, and its interpretation knowing Heidegger was a member of the Nazi party? Do I view his philosophy as overshadowing his association with the Nazi Party? Gellner states, "We learn precious little from his thought about the dilemmas of his time. That is the real case against him" (p. 39). And yet, perhaps, that is the biggest lesson we can learn from this time period of Heidegger's life. There will always be evil in the world. How do we wrestle with these tensions today? How might phenomenology be our way of access?

Nazism—Touching My Life

A part of me tends to believe, as does Moran (2000), “There are aspects of Heidegger’s character and philosophical outlook, not to speak of his political involvements, [sic] which are deeply unattractive, but it would be entirely wrong to assess his entire philosophical contribution in this light” (p. 193). Every one of us has short comings, but despite the shortcomings, we must not over-look the positive contributions that we make while on this Earth. Granted, Heidegger’s dark side is looked upon as more than a shortcoming; it is more like a character flaw. Heidegger’s association with Nazism has far reaching effects, even to this day, which is a testament to his philosophical influence. Heidegger’s [philosophical] influence is so world-wide and discussed in numerous books and articles; under-taking his understandings and attempting to grasp his philosophy is daunting.

I recall a story that was told to me by my aunt regarding being a German from Russia and Nazism, and I asked her to put it in writing. The following account is in her words:

[I] was a [7th grader, in the 1950s] it was a history assignment. I had written a paper on the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. I was quite proud of it as I had done a lot of work on the paper and I had typed it neatly, something most kids in those days [the 1950s] did not do. . . . The night before I was supposed to turn it in Dad [my maternal grandfather] read it, ripped it up and I had to write on something else. I don’t remember what I wrote on next. I just remember my paper being ripped up and having to stay up half the night writing another one. We were “Germans from Russia Dad did not want people to think we had anything to do with being from Russia or [the] Nazi[s] . . . or that we were like the Nazi or Russian people. (M. Parker, May 5, 2005, personal communication)

This is only one incident, a fallout, from the Nazi regime. We cannot condemn everyone associated with Germany as being evil. Every dark cloud has a silver lining, and I believe Heidegger's philosophy is that silver lining.

Yet another incident filtered down to touch my life as a result of Hitler and his Nazism. My paternal grandfather insisted that the Millers were of English, Welch, and Scottish descent. It was not until I conducted some family research as an adult, in Iowa, that I discovered that we were indeed Germans! And I am to justify my philosophical grounding based on Heidegger after knowing how Hitler and Nazism affected my family? Perhaps my family and I also continue to carry a little German guilt.

As I stated before, every dark cloud has a silver lining, and I trust that Heidegger's philosophy is that silver lining. I must also consider the culture of that era and the pressures put upon the Germans to conceal their real thoughts in order to flourish (Heidegger was not alone), or for that matter, to survive under the Nazi regime. And, "Any fair assessment of Heidegger's contribution must recognize that it changed the shape of the twentieth-century philosophy" (Moran, 2000, p. 193).

Harvesting the Honey of Heidegger and Gadamer

I am not discounting the fact that Heidegger was a Nazi and the Nazi party was involved in some of the greatest atrocities the world has ever seen; when Heidegger joined the Nazi party, these atrocities had not come to light. He joined the party for different philosophical reasons. What I am doing is weeding out the grain from the chaff, or rather harvesting the honey from the bees. Bishop describes the annual harvest or "robbing of the bees:"

By the beginning of May, the tupelo buds have exploded into blossom, and Smiley's bees are determinedly at work storing tupelo nectar. Smiley is now on an unknown

but daunting deadline, obsessed with harvesting maximum tupelo before the flowers fade away. (Bishop, 2005, p. 75)

I, too, am off working toward a daunting deadline. This deadline is to finish my dissertation and to gather the best of Heidegger and to put his knowledge into action.

I am reaping what is best of Heidegger, his philosophy, and applying it to my research. Heidegger's political activities and his philosophical realm have to be separated. I am taking what is useful for society today. I have come to the realization that Heidegger did what he did to survive; he was human; he could have been executed for his beliefs had he not have followed the Fuehrer. I am also of the belief that Heidegger was enamored with himself and he had a limited view of politics. Finally, I am at peace with myself and Heidegger's philosophy and phenomenology—as long as I continue to question.

Bystanders, people from numerous countries, helped the Jews escape imprisonment and death at the hands of the Nazis. As a bystander I choose to assist those who are victims of bullying by harvesting the best of Heidegger. Perhaps illuminating his idea of care—as being in the world—will help adolescents learn to be(e) with each other in different ways.

Cura

Care is interpreted by Heidegger (1927/2003) in *Being and Time* through an old fable.

Cura, (Care), the first potter, shaped a lump of clay with her own kindness and compassion. But since 'Care' first shaped this creature, [clay] she shall possess it as long as she lives. And because there is dispute among you as to its name, let it be called 'homo,' for it is made out of humus (earth). (p. 198)

Let us form the lives of middle school girls with "care." They may possess "care" as long as they live and continue to pass "care" on to future generations. "Care" can take numerous forms as Heidegger refers to the "ambiguity" of care (p. 199).

I demonstrate care, as do many other teachers in instructing middle school students by listening to them when other adults do not have the time to nurture and guide these students. This care was shown during a few free minutes at noon hour, while supervising a study hall, or at times before the students filed onto the bus at the end of the school day. The caring goes beyond answering questions about class content; it gives teachers insight into the humanness of each student. This humanness reveals a unique and developing being, an individual who is no longer just another warm body in class. As female teachers and mothers we can be role models for adolescent girls. In what other ways can this ‘care’ be passed on to our middle school youth? These young people have an identity acknowledged by an adult. I have often thought that teachers who are fortunate to coach have ample opportunity to exhibit caring beyond ways that the typical classroom teacher does not. Middle school girls need to be taught to care in order to demonstrate this humanness towards others. The ambiguity of care towards other girls can be exhibited by showing compassion through tutoring their female peers who struggle with learning, and by including girls who otherwise would be ostracized because of the way they dress. Care could also be demonstrated by including unpopular girls into the inner circle, and by looking beyond what meets the eye to the very heart of the individual. We all yearn for a bit of care as exhibited by the golden rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

“Opposites [such as] ‘carefreeness’ and ‘gaiety’—are ontologically possible only because Dasein, *ontologically* understood, is care” (Heidegger, 1927/2003, p. 57). Heidegger states:

The disclosedness of the *Mitada* [coexistence]—*sein* of others which belongs to being-with means that the understanding of others already lies in the understanding of being of Dasein because its being is being with. This understanding, like all understanding,

is not a knowledge derived from cognition, but a primordially existential kind of being which first makes knowledge and cognition possible. Knowing oneself is grounded in primordially and understanding being-with. (pp. 123-124)

Middle school girls need guidance in understanding themselves before we can expect them to coexist peacefully with each other. They must understand how they would feel if they walked in the shoes of the victim. This is to care. “The perfection of human being—becoming what one can be in being free for one’s own most possibilities (project)—is an accomplishment of “care” (Heidegger, 1927/2003, p. 200). Through Heidegger’s *Cura* I will seek to understand and promote the caring coexistence of middle school girls.

To the Things Themselves

Husserl (1859–1938) assisted in establishing the groundwork for phenomenology. “Husserl’s project of getting back to the ‘things themselves’” (Moran, 2000, p. 194) was carried on by Heidegger in his own distinct manner. Heidegger’s life’s work “Was a single-minded attempt to reexamine *the question of being*,” Being as it relates to time (Moran, 2000, p. 195). According to Heidegger, human existence takes place in time, between the past and the future and is “limited” by death. Heidegger has established the framework for phenomenology as it is used today. According to Heidegger (1927/2003):

The expression ‘phenomenology’ can be formulated in Greek as *legein ta phainomena*. Hence phenomenology means... to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself. That is the formal meaning of the type of research that calls itself ‘phenomenology.’ But this expresses nothing other than the maxim formulated above: ‘To the things themselves!’ (p. 34)

I relate to Heidegger’s (1927/2003) explanation of the term phenomenology where he associates it with the “appearance or symptoms of an illness.” When the human body is ill, it

indicates it is ill by showing symptoms; symptoms are an indication of an illness or disease that “does not show itself” (p. 29). He states that “Something that does *not* show itself initially . . . is concealed It can be covered up to such a degree that it is forgotten and the question about it and its meaning altogether omitted” (p. 36). Perhaps this could happen to female bullying.

Heidegger rejected the traditional definition of metaphysics, which involved simply describing things as they are. His “Central insight is that traditional metaphysical understanding is actually a sedimentation of a kind of everyday set of assumptions about reality,” and these assumptions need to be explored in depth (Moran, 2000, p. 197).

Regarding being in the world and *Da-sein*, Heidegger (1927/2003) states:

Essential structure of Da-sein first makes possible the insight into its *existential spatiality*. This insight will keep us from failing to see this structure or from previously canceling it out, a procedure motivated not ontologically, but “metaphysically” in the naïve opinion that human being is initially a spiritual thing which is then subsequently placed “in” a space. (p. 56)

Along with building upon Husserl’s phenomenology, Heidegger revived an interest in ontology. “Phenomenology is the way of access to, and the demonstrative manner of determination of, what is to become the theme of ontology. *Ontology is possible only as phenomenology*” (Heidegger, p. 36). “Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, in *Being in Time* . . . map[s] out the transcendental conditions which made human existence (Dasein) possible” (Moran, 2000, p. 197). Ontological phenomenology is existential. It is concerned with the lifeworld, and how we exist in it. Pollio, Henley, and, Thompson (1997) state, existential phenomenology teaches us that human experience

is not a static thing; rather, it is more accurately described as a sensibly changing perspectival relatedness to the conditions, possibilities, and constraints of the world. It is always intensely personal and only infrequently transparent to itself; the meaning of one's experience frequently changes as it is described and /or reflected upon. (pp. 28-29)

Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, acknowledges Heidegger's ontological view of hermeneutic phenomenology. Gadamer views hermeneutics as the art of interpretation, a bringing together of traditional hermeneutics, philology, and phenomenology. Gadamer's (1969/2003) book *Truth and Method* reinforces Heidegger's ontological and hermeneutic focus with phenomenology.

Gadamer's Hermeneutics

"Human beings express their experience of the world through art, science, law, medicine, architecture, etc., and especially through language" (van Manen, 2003, p. 14). Language is used as an instrument of communication and hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of language. "Language is the medium within which he [sic] lives, grows and projects his possibilities . . . for being in the world . . . and provides the platform to jump momentarily beyond himself" (Huebner, 1999, p. 149). According to Moran (2000), hermeneutics "Always signifies an ongoing, never completable process of understanding, rooted in human finitude and human 'linguisticity'" (p. 248). Our language and speech are rooted in the past, and yet we have our own ideas and experiences impinging on the interpretation of words. This allows us to bring new meaning to the words; language connects the old with the new. Language helps us establish our way of being in the world.

Hermeneutics is understanding; it includes our pre-understandings and misunderstandings. Two people who are about to engage in a conversation "presuppose that

the two speakers speak the same language” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 385). Presuppositions can inhibit and slow down the process of understanding; presuppositions must be clarified before understanding can be achieved in a conversation. Gadamer feels that all interpretation includes the possibility of a connection with others and that there “can be no speaking that does not bind the speaker and the person spoken to” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 397). This statement reveals the power of the spoken word; children recite the chant “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me.” This causes me to wonder as to the unseen damage a middle school girl may conceal behind the mask of a smiling face. Realistically the words may do more damage and eat away at the adolescent spirit. In comparison, the physical wounds restore to health quickly.

Words not only bind one to another person, but they connect an individual to her world; words can empower or disempower. Gadamer (1960/2003) says:

We fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking on twists and reaching its own conclusion...but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. No one knows in advance what will ‘come out’ of a conversation. (p. 383)

Adolescent girls are innocently led down a path of destructive conversation. These interchanges, though damaging, lead to new insights and thoughts that were not derived before. “Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding” (Gadamer, p. 385); it occurs where people enter into agreement, however one sided.

When I have presented information on the subject of female bullying to parents and other professionals I am being led down an unknown path. I cannot foresee the questions that will follow, nor can I “get inside the heads” of my audience to see how they are interpreting my message. Although the questions they ask are indicative of what they are thinking, these

questions provoke even more questions after one gives thought to the presentation, somewhat like Socratic teaching. This causes one to contemplate the possibilities of bullying through dialectic. I hope my study will inspire educators to enter into dialectic discussions to educate others about the destructiveness of female bullying and help heal this disease that is eating away at the future of adolescent girls.

Gadamer, believes as does Heidegger, that the Greeks comprehended the matters themselves “as coming to light in speech” (Moran, 2000, p. 249). “Gadamer is attracted to the emphasis in Heidegger’s later philosophy on truth as an event of being, a coming into being of something new, akin to the kind of relation in art” (Moran, 2000, p. 250). To comprehend Gadamer, one must consider his views on the horizon of understanding, historicity, language, and dialectics.

As each individual has her interpretation of art, each individual brings her own understanding to the words of the writer. Gadamer feels that there is a merging of horizons, the writer’s standpoint and the reader’s standpoint. “The horizon of understanding cannot be limited either by what the writer originally had in mind or by the horizon of the person to whom the text was originally addressed” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 395). The horizon of understanding a phenomenon is limitless; I intend to broaden the horizon of middle school girl bullying.

Gadamer (1960/2003) states, “The fusion of horizons that takes place in understanding is actually the achievement of language” (p. 378). “References to the original reader, like that to the meaning of the author, seem to offer only a very crude hermeneutical criterion that cannot really limit the horizon of a text’s meaning” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 395). We can only surmise the author’s original intent, for we will never fully know it. It is similar to constructivist learning—students bring their own knowledge to the

table and add the new knowledge the teacher provides—creating new meaning. This new meaning may not be fully understood by others. Gadamer considers that understanding and interpretation are one in the same.

Just as it is impossible to fully understand the hurt a bullied middle school girl feels, it is impossible to limit the horizon of understanding. The interpretation of what the writer meant is endless and will change with time; everyone brings her own experiences and understandings that guide her in the interpretation process. This interpretation will change as individuals dialogue with each other and have new experiences. Essentially, everyone who has interpreted the same writing could have a different understanding of what is written. Just as it is with bullying and middle school girls. Middle school girls comprehend the hurtful written codes and language used on their computer blogs, cell phones, and Blackberrys within their cliques in different ways. Adults may be oblivious to this grave communication and pay little heed to it.

The historicity of a work of art or the written word cannot be reconstructed from the past and fully understood, for it is not the original. It is only a replica of the past. In teaching middle school girls how to act when confronted with a bullying situation we can not replicate the original drama, or predict a future situation. It is through reflecting on the bullying experience that the victim and I come to an understanding. Gadamer has us examine things in terms of aesthetics and historicity, and he believes that Hegel's view of historicity "consist[s] not in the restoration of the past but in *thoughtful meditation with contemporary life*" (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 169). He would have us examine a bullying incident by considering the historicity and how bullying is affected by today's world to arrive at an interpretation. What is society's view of female adolescent bullying? How have our expectations for female adolescent behavior changed—or have they?

Interpretation is not merely a reproduction of language, “a second recreation.” It is as though it is appearing for the first time. “The concept of *interpretation* can be applied not only to scholarly interpretation but to artistic *reproduction*—e.g., musical or dramatic performance” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 399). This is why I have brought poetry, music, and opera into the interpretation of bullying.

“Language is something other than a mere sign system denoting the totality of objects. A word is not just a sign It is also something almost like a copy or image” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 416). Language is a way for us to communicate. Yet, language, or a mere word can have many interpretations. Language is used to have dialectic discussions to discover the truth concerning a phenomenon. Dialectic interpretation is influenced by the rate at which words are spoken, facial expressions, the tone of one’s voice, and the situation that surrounds the words. We cannot control how a reader is influenced by the written word. Although, by carefully choosing words, phrases, and punctuation one can more readily influence the interpretation of the reader. This is how I hope to influence our understanding of bullying and the limitations that bullying has on all females.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Methodology

I return to the question that engages me, **What is the lived experience of middle school girls who have been victimized by bullying?** The phenomenon of bullying is a lived human experience that includes body, language, place, and relationships. I engaged in conversations with five middle school victims of bullying to capture the essence of being a victim of bullying. As I engaged in these conversations, I attempted to keep in mind van Manen’s (2003) warning, “To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible” (p.18). It is through these conversations that I create “A strong and rigorous human science text [that] distinguishes itself by its courage and resolve to stand up for the

uniqueness and significance of the notion to which it has dedicated itself” (p. 18). I seek to discover the “is” ness of being a victim of bullying.

I follow the methodological guidelines (phenomenones) established by Max van Manen (2003) in an effort to discover the “is” ness of Being a victim of bullying. Van Manen has established a framework of elements for conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research (p. 30).

- 1.) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- 2.) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- 3.) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- 4.) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- 5.) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relationship to the phenomenon;
- 6.) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

Each component is intended to move the researcher forward, but not necessarily in a linear process. At times the elements in this research process overlap into a hermeneutic circle.

Robbing the Bees

“Truth (discoveredness) must always first be wrested from beings. Beings are torn from concealment. The actual factual discoveredness is, so to speak, always a kind of *robbery*” (Heidegger, 1927/2003, p. 222). As beekeepers prepare for the annual honey harvest, I prepare for harvest by reviewing the methodological guides van Manen uses for phenomenological research. The smoker or Bee-Goo, (a form of butyric acid) is blown into the hive to extract the bees. Left behind is the syrupy, thick, sweet, liquid-honey. I, too, extract from the middle school girls’ stories of their bullying to discern the truth. I do not use

a smoker or Bee-Goo, but rather, the ‘care’ of phenomenological rendering to extract their narratives.

Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world. I have chosen the topic of adolescent bullying, which parents and teachers have encountered for years. Van Manen (2003) explains that “To orient to a phenomenon always implies a particular interest, station, or vantage point in life So when one orients to a phenomenon one is approaching this experience with a certain interest” (p. 40). My love for teaching middle school students, and being the parent of a middle school girl have given me the inspiration for this journey. In Chapter One I lay the foundation for the phenomenon and embark on the development of the metaphor of bees. Middle school girl bullying is expanded upon in Chapter Two through music, additional poetry, and life–world examples. Philosophy, opera, and television are also used to uncover the phenomenon of bullying and middle school girls. I continue investigating these experiences as we live them rather than as we conceptualize them (van Manen, 2003). Chapters One and Two, and the philosophical underpinnings in Chapter Three provide the platform for my entering into conversations with bullying victims.

Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it. My experiences as a middle school girl, a teacher and principal, and those of my daughter are an integral part of my phenomenological inquiry. I continue to reflect upon these life–world experiences as no one else can. Van Manen (2003) states, “My own life experiences are immediately accessible to me in a way that no one else’s are” (p. 54). I continue to observe and ponder. What will become of these experiences in our lives? What will we make of them—growth or stagnation?

To begin my search for understanding, I contacted the school boards that oversee the middle schools where I desired to work with the students. I received their approval after meeting with them to explain my study (see Appendix A).

The superintendents contacted the principals and the guidance counselors at each school to inform them that I would meet with the girls in grades 6-9. Each student had the opportunity to participate in my study if they had been bullied. If they chose to participate they filled out the form and circled “yes” they would like to participate. (The guidance counselors handled this in each school.) Parental approval and the assent (see Appendices B and C) of the students followed. Parent and student permission included an in-depth explanation of the study and probable questions. I explained that participation in this research would involve 3 to 4 in-depth one-on-one conversations. These conversations would be audio recorded. Each potential participant would volunteer information about her experiences, and when needed, I would ask her to clarify her experience. Accurate descriptions are necessary for rich descriptive data. The individual conversations would take place at the school in a private room. In the words of van Manen (2003) I “borrow” other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences” to obtain a better understanding, a deeper meaning of the victims of bullying experiences (p. 62).

The conversations provide descriptive data regarding how girls are bullied thus, investigating the phenomenon as middle school girls live it. The participants were given a sample of the questions (see Appendix D) I would ask during the conversations. Further questions flowed from the dialogue as it unfolded. Some of the initial statements/questions were: Tell me more about your experience with bullying. What is it like to experience bullying? Initially, how did you react? What drew the bully to target you? Gadamer

(1960/2003) states, “Contrary to the general opinion, it is more difficult to ask questions than to answer them” (p. 362). He also says:

We cannot have experiences without asking questions. Recognizing that an object is different, and not as we first thought, obviously presupposes the question whether it was this or that. . . . The openness essential to experience is precisely the openness of the being wither this or that. It has the structure of a question. . . . The knowledge of not knowing. (p. 362)

Questioning as a part a conversation is a basic part of phenomenological inquiry; it opens up new possibilities for meaning and understanding. These questions are derived from the conversation itself. They are not necessarily structured in advance.

The participants in this study are five middle school girls, from five different small towns in the mid-west in grades 6 through 8. The schools vary as to how they categorize their middle school grades. Some of the middle schools range in grades from 5th through 8th, while other middle schools include the 7th through 9th grades. During this study, these girls ranged from twelve years to fourteen years of age. I was in contact with these budding young girls over a time period spanning from 3 to 9 months. Each girl, was asked: “What bullying meant to them?” The bees easily defined what they saw as bullying. As each girl is introduced, her description of bullying is given. I met 3 times with each girl in the guidance counselor’s office, or the school board meeting room. One parent preferred we initially meet in a public place and not the school and I complied. Each conversation lasted forty-five minutes to an hour and one-half.

Some of the participants were asked to provide a written response to further clarify, and define their personal bullying experiences. When asked to supply a written reply to further explain their bullying experiences in their own words, I received a diversity of

answers. These responses ranged from a colored picture in a coloring book (this picture was of a blond mermaid perfectly poised on a pillow inside a sea-shell), to a brief description of the bullying that had been endured, to no description at all. The written responses reiterated what the girls had already revealed. .

As the conversations flowed, I continued to explicate my phenomenon metaphorically. “Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 193).

Reflecting upon the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon. After each conversation I listened to the audio-tapes and made note of the comments or ideas that needed clarification during our next conversation. I transcribed each tape verbatim before meeting again with each participant. I also sent each tape and transcription to Dr. Hultgren for her review.

I made notes of emerging themes in the margins. “Phenomenological themes may be understood as the *structures of experience* . . . in analyzing a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what themes are the experiential structures that make up that experience” (van Manen, 2003, p. 79). Van Manen believes that there are different methods that can be used by the researcher to uncover themes. The first method that he describes is “Isolating Thematic Statements.” This can be done by grasping the overall meaning from what each adolescent has revealed to me. I chose to do this by selecting phrases that stood out as potential themes, and also read each sentence or cluster of sentences and wrote down notes as to what meaning I gained from each reading.

Another method is “The Collaborative Analysis: Research Seminar/Group.” Each member of the group reads a draft describing their experience with the phenomenon; the

participants then share their views of the experience. “Thus themes are examined, articulated, reinterpreted, omitted, added or reformulated” (van Manen, 2003, p. 100). This allows the participants to “resonate” with what has occurred or to explain why her experience does not “resonate.” I did not use this method with my participants due to the confidentiality agreed upon for this study.

The method I preferred to use is as van Manen describes “Interpretation through Conversation.” The middle school girls were partners with me in investigating potential themes as our individual conversations unfolded.

To guide me in reflecting upon bullying there are four existentials that I kept in mind: lived space, lived time, lived body, and lived human relation. These four existentials are different, but they are not separate entities in themselves. No matter what we are researching these four entities are a part of our lifeworld and contribute to our thematizing. Van Manen says, themes and meta-themes give perspective and “order to our research and writing” (2003, p. 79). Themes represent what our conversations have in common; I looked for associations between the texts and within the texts. The revealing of themes involves reading, reflecting, and rereading, and most of all—writing and rewriting. Writing is essential to phenomenological studies.

Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting. Through the process of writing and revision I attempt to engage the reader, and create a text that draws the reader into the essence of being bullied. “The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner” (van Manen, 2003, p. 10). The writing process makes this a hermeneutic phenomenological study. It is hermeneutic in that it examines the interpretation of the meaning of the text; it is phenomenological in that

these meanings deeply describe the lived experiences of middle school girls who have been bullied.

I realize that the narrative version of a bullying experience can never rival the experience itself! I seek to evoke as close a response in the reader to the reality of being a victim of bullying as is humanly possible. “Writing has the methodological advantage that it presents the hermeneutical problem in all its purity, detached from everything psychological . . . this meaning of what is spoken exists purely for itself, completely detached from all emotional elements of expression and communication” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 354). In the words of Gadamer, “I will stop here. The ongoing dialogue permits no final conclusion. It would be a poor hermeneuticist who thought he could have, or had to have, the last word” (p. 579).

Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon. As I engaged in my research regarding the lived experience of middle school girls being bullied, I attempted to maintain a pedagogical orientation to my subject. “School is a place where children explore aspects of the human world” (van Manen, 2002a, p. 72). Adolescent girls depart from playing with “Barbies” to dealing with school bus backseat bullies. Through the school girl-grapevine they might learn about sex, or become aware of and perhaps even experience the effects of alcohol and drugs. This betwixt and between time of life is made all the more complex because girls are having to deal with their ever changing bodies and the standards that society has set for the “ideal” teenage female. One day she may consider herself to fat, too tall, too short, too underdeveloped, or too whatever It is within this complex and ever changing adolescent world that I will explore bullying. Because this study is initiated in a school, it does not by design give it a pedagogical bent. What makes it pedagogical is its concern with how things can be made better for those who are affected by

understandings the study reveals. In this case, I draw out pedagogical insights in Chapter Five that can be used to change bullying practices in schools.

Pedagogy is not something that can be ‘had,’ ‘possessed’ in the way that we can say that a person ‘has’ or ‘possess’ a set of specific skills or performative competencies. Rather, pedagogy is something that a parent or teacher continuously must redeem, retrieve, regain, recapture in the sense of recalling. (van Manen, 2003, p. 149)

True pedagogy, like a first rate teacher, goes above and beyond the call of duty. One might not be able to fully describe pedagogy, but one recognizes it when one sees it.

When you love your work that much—and many teachers do—the only way to get out of trouble is to go deeper in. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard our own spirits but also to serve our students well. (Palmer, 1998, p. 2)

Van Manen (2003) believes that phenomenology provides educators with an understanding “that sponsors a form of pedagogic practice that is virtually absent in the increasingly bureaucratized and technological spheres of pedagogic life” . . . he calls this “pedagogic thoughtfulness” and “pedagogic tact” (p. 154). I refer to this as the “gut instinct” of an educator. It is when a teacher knows something is amiss when a girl’s grades suddenly plunge, or when a naturally vocal female becomes quiet and withdrawn. The teacher cannot explain why these things occur but seeks to understand why they occur.

A former student teacher could not forget about the “thuds” she kept hearing on the floor above her apartment followed by the loud crying of a young child. A pre-school girl was being physically abused by her step-father. A young elementary boy was very cautious in his mannerism and speech when I spoke to him; his mother had left cigarette burns on his right forearm. This is the “gut instinct,” “pedagogic thoughtfulness” and “pedagogic tact” of

an educator. This instinct can lead an educator to take personal action and collective political action. This is what my study should lead to: educators speaking up about bullying to change these practices in schools.

Van Manen (2003) says that true phenomenological writing must meet four pedagogical requirements.

1. The text is oriented in such a way to maintain connection to the pedagogical implications of the research.
2. The text maintains strong pedagogical interpretations of the phenomenon.
3. The text is rich and thick in content. This content uses narratives, existentials, and phenomenological descriptions that emphasize the pedagogical experience.
4. The text needs to be deep. This is what gives the “lived experience” meaning.

(p. 151)

I see myself as an educator, and I strive to bring about pedagogic understanding through my research and writing with text that is deep and rich. I offer pedagogical recommendations in Chapter Five for working with and teaching bullying victims from the insights I have learned through my study.

Balancing the research context . Through my writing I have explored the phenomenon of the lived experience of being a middle school victim of bullying, including my own experiences. I have sought out commonalities and ideas in these experiences that could construct for the reader what it is like to be a victim of bullying, and bring new meaning to that experience. For many middle school girls bullying is a standard part of their world. But what is behind this everydayness of bullying which remains unseen? I gather these unseen parts and consider them with the whole. In the words of van Manen, I bring these elements to closure in an attempt to balance “the research context by considering parts

and the whole” (2003, p. 31). These insights, I hope, will lead to improved practice among parents and professionals. Human science research is a practical science, and because of this I make connections with my research findings and the world today. My interpretations/linguistic transformations are the culmination of what van Manen (2003) calls “reflective writing” (p. 38).

Human science is a practical science. “Whereas hermeneutic phenomenology has often been discussed as a ‘mere’ descriptive or interpretive methodology, it is also a critical philosophy of action” (van Manen, 2003, p. 154). Phenomenological work calls people into action; it compels in people a righteous indignation and calls them to take action.

For teenagers in the past, sexual harassment was just something that was endured—it happened to everyone at sometime. Society is now aware of what sexual harassment consists of and because of the awareness we now have about sexual harassment, we hopefully experience less of this issue. I foresee the same circumstances concerning middle school girls and bullying. Once society is aware of the devastating and potentially long lasting effects of bullying, female adolescents will no longer be limited by this complexity.

Extracting the Honey/Engaging in Conversation

“The longing of a people is caught in the web of their language. Dreams and memories are stored there. A language is the inner landscape in which a people can belong” (O’Donohue, 2002, p. 253). I extract this inner landscape of the victims of bullying through questioning and being a participant in their conversations. It was with great anticipation that I looked forward to my conversations with the participants of my study! Now I share with you who they are and the truths their stories reveal. What truths will their stories explicate? Extracted honey is by far the most popular style of honey . . . wax cappings are sliced off the honeycomb and liquid honey is removed from the cells by centrifugal force” (Blackiston,

2002, p. 199). The force that extracts the meaning of their experiences (liquid honey) is found in the words themselves. Chapter Four extracts the honey.

CHAPTER FOUR:

EXTRACTING THE BITTERSWEET HONEY: FROM WORDS TO THEMES

“Bee”-ing Touched and Touching Lives

We cannot separate what is to be known, from ourselves. In bringing relationships back into the picture of how we know, feminist theorists also show that we cannot separate what is to be known from *those* around whom we have formed ourselves. (Atwell-Vasey, 1998, pp. 35-36)

In my exploration of the lived experiences of adolescent girls being bullied, I find in Atwell-Vasey’s words the importance of recognizing the relationship of the bullied to the bully. A part of the bully is forever implanted in those who have been bullied. This embeddedness shows itself as “hegemony, the process through which dominant groups impose their conception of reality on all subordinate groups; hegemony is accomplished through the mind, body, [and soul]” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 15). As I continue with the “Bee” metaphor, the extraction of honey is a way to show the illumination of the themes brought forward, bittersweet as they may be. It is through the “Bee” metaphor that I attempt to secure a better understanding of what remains hidden, what we do not know about having been bullied. Reflecting on these themes as they have developed has permitted me to unlock and view the phenomenon of bullying as though I have been given new “vision.”

This “new vision” allows me to understand bullying with a more in-depth and careful perspective. Throughout the conversations with the participants in this study, I sought out patterns that lie beneath the episodes of bullying. This is the language of “metaphoricity” as described by Gadamer (1960/2003, p. 75). As I converse with these promising females, their sensitivity about lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived relationality slowly begin to

appear, encouraging me to look beyond the obvious. Van Manen (2003, pp. 102-105)

describes these four elements:

1. *Lived space (spaciality)* is felt space. [It is more than] mathematical space; it is the space in which we find ourselves, [and] it affects the way we feel.
2. *Lived body (corporeality)* refers to the phenomenological fact that we are always bodily in the world. In our physical or bodily presence, we both reveal something about ourselves and we always conceal something at the same time –not necessarily consciously or deliberately, but rather in spite of ourselves.
3. *Lived time (temporality)* is subjective time as opposed to clock time or objective time. Time appears to speed up when we enjoy ourselves, or slow down when we feel bored . . . or when we are anxious.
4. *Lived other (relationality)* is the lived relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them.

These four existentials help bring the phenomenon of bullying forward in more visible ways.

Van Manen (2003) believes that, when one is dissecting the lived experience of a phenomenon, as with having been bullied, the pre-eminent place to start is with the life of the person who is doing the dissecting. “Swammerdam dissected and inspected the biggest bee and its entourage under a powerful lens, presenting undeniable ovarian proof that the king was in fact a queen” (Bishop, 2005, p. 53). It is with a new lens that I view bullying. I grew up in a different era when female bullying was not even acknowledged; although, I have no doubt bullying did occur in its various forms. Frequently, those who have been bullied turn into the bully. I am sure I was no different, having been bullied and then be(e)ing the bully. Now I attempt “bee”-ing the one who extracts the bittersweet lessons learned from the queenbees and the wannabees.

The Source of Honey . . . The Participants

As I continue on my journey to understand female bullying, I am affirmed by Adrienne Rich's definition of truth "not as any one thing, but an increasing complexity," as described in *Girl Fighting: Betrayal and Rejection among Girls* (as cited in Brown, 2003, p. 9). In this section, I introduce the participants in my study. To maintain the confidentiality of each participant, the girls have been given pseudonyms. Through the conversations that were conducted with these girls, I realize their truths were incredibly evasive, ever-changing, and complex.

Morgan. Morgan and her parents are the first individuals to agree to a conversation with me. Morgan is pretty, petite, and a very articulate young adolescent. She appears as anxious as I, her hands, at times, trembling as her voice. I reassure her that all the information she reveals to me will be kept in strict confidence. My comment seems to calm her as I turn on the audio-recorder. I hope this nervousness will not allow her to forget to reveal something that either of us deem important. In the words of (Gadamer 1960/1975, p. 383), "No one knows in advance what will 'come out' of a conversation." Morgan is in 8th grade. She is a member of the dance team, an honor student, and the manager of the junior high football team (this school, considers middle school students as junior high students). She appears extraordinarily self-confident, despite her nervousness, for someone who has endured bullying.

This young adolescent wears glasses; she is the only individual in her class to have glasses. She also wears purple flower earrings which are her favorite. The Queenbee and her cronies made fun of her. They called her four eyes and Magpie. Morgan enjoys hunting, but does not eat the fruits of her labor, and she is the only participant that lives on a farm. Morgan is the only participant to openly declare that she might be moving to another school

district next year and live with her grandparents due to the consequences of being bullied.

The conversations with Morgan have led me to believe her definition of bullying would include name calling, the betrayal of freinimies (friends who are really enemies), feeling lonely, and being physically bullied.

Bethany. I was anxiously looking forward to visiting with Bethany. She appears to have such a positive nature and always has a smile on her face. She shares that it is her biological family, her church family, and her faith in God that have helped her through these difficult times. Bethany is home schooled; she attends school part-time for band and choir classes. Her definition of bullying is: “People can pick on you or . . . put you down. [They] just make you feel left out, or making you feel bad about the way you look.” Bethany continues to describe what it means to be bullied:

If you didn’t have all the new stuff that was coming out, the new shoes, the new clothes. By saying that you’re not thin enough, or you don’t have the stuff that the popular kids do, or are not as popular.

Bethany is the daughter of a minister, and that alone, at times, causes her difficulties with her peers. Bethany works part-time and is a pleasant smiling girl at her work place. She is the youngest of two siblings who are home-schooled.

Liza. Liza appears not to have the same level of self-confidence the previous two participants bring into a room. She is in 6th grade, and her mother attends each of the conversations with Liza. Liza was adopted in 3rd grade, which may account for some of her identity issues. During our second meeting, she gives me a colored picture from her coloring book and smiles as she hands it to me. I understand this to mean that she is beginning to trust me, and gratefully I take the colored mermaid picture. Liza states her definition of bullying: “Being mean to someone, calling names, or making fun of someone.” She continues to

describe an incident where she was made fun of . . . “Well, if I wore a shirt that someone else had they would say that I couldn’t wear it anymore.” Liza is a member of the girls’ basketball team. She enjoys her cats, playing in her backyard swimming pool and jumping on her trampoline.

Rhonda. I can tell by her reluctance to enter the room that she does NOT want to be here. Her mother stays for the beginning of each meeting that Rhonda and I have together. As Rhonda relays her stories, her mother wipes the tears from her eyes as well as Rhonda’s. As she leaves each time, she kisses her daughter on the forehead and quietly says goodbye. (She had to leave, since she works at the school Rhonda attends. Rhonda’s definition of bullying is more specific. She states: “Making fun of others . . . doing [making] what you want them to do . . . verbally or physically.” Her definition of verbal bullying is, “Like yelling at someone, cussing at [someone].” And her definition of physical bullying is, “Like um fighting.” She appears to have a tough exterior, but then her guidance counselor describes her as a victim of bullying, and now, she appears to be(e) the queenbee. Her hair is dyed black, and the color blue stands out among the strands of hair on either side of her face.

Andrea. Andrea, too, is initially hesitant to talk. She has braces, and is in 6th grade during our first conversation. When we initially meet, I perceive her as being older. Our last conversation is the day before she is going to start 7th grade. She defines bullying this way:

Like saying stuff about them, picking on them, ignoring them, just picking on them basically. Like writing them notes, saying stuff, ignoring them, teasing them about people [calling them names].

Andrea and Rhonda are the adolescents who attend the two largest schools in the county, and both of these girls have been cyber-bullied. Andrea admits being depressed, and it was her father who discovered that she was being bullied, via notes that were written to her. Her

father found them stuffed into her school back-pack. But, it was her mother who notified the school administration. Andrea participates in volleyball and enjoys hanging out with her friends.

Harvesting the Power of Honey

At times, it is difficult for my participants to relate their experiences to me. The confidence levels of these participants blossom as they allow their honey to be fully extracted. These burgeoning beauties are positioning themselves to stand up to the queenbees of the world! They are becoming empowered.

Hultgren refers to the “vulnerability of the face” and becoming too “narrowly [focused] on what *we do* in the call *to care*” (1994, p. 180). She continues on by stating, “Caring is something that we must continually redeem, retrieve, regain, and recapture each time we are called to be in caring encounters” (p. 180). It is my hope that my face demonstrates trust [care] each time I meet with one of my middle school participants. This trust permits the confidence levels of these participants to fully open up and blossom, and allow their honey to flow. “Life, [being bullied] seemed to follow an expected pattern, never discussed, but known by all” (Jackson, 2007, p. 12).

As Rhonda says to me, “I am okay wearing whatever I want to wear. If I want to wear pajama pants and a baggy t-shirt [to school], then I will. If I want to wear what I am now [a necktie with pins and gloves with cut-off fingers], then I will. I really don’t care.” This independent, headstrong adolescent is willing to demonstrate to the world her self-assurance [her own brand of honey]. The flavor and color of honey extracted from these tweens and teens vary as do the types of plants that bees pollinate. Humans, indeed, do depend on the bee to pollinate, to fill their dinner plates.

Bees have the power to pollinate. “The most prominent definitions of power share a common conception of power as a *relationship of domination as power-over*” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 36); this is a relationship which is recognized as inequality. “Power involves the ability to affect another, to cause another to act, think, or speak in a particular way” (Kriesberg, 1992, p. 37). The participants in my study were often made to feel “less than.”

Liza was taunted by the queenbee who told her that her (brown) sweatshirt looked like the pizza burgers that were served for lunch at school. Liza stood up for herself saying, “It doesn’t matter what my sweatshirt looks like.” During my conversations with Liza, she is always extremely soft spoken; she takes the first step in regaining a fragment of her self-confidence. She takes back a piece of herself. She is slowly removing the “sting” from her swollen, red, and injured soul. The real Liza is coming back into the world. Courtney McCready, age 16, relays the following:

There are people in this world who are going to hurt you, some purposefully, some accidentally, and some who won’t even realize they did it. They may make you start to doubt yourself or others, but if anything you should doubt them. (Patnaik & Shinseki, 2000, p. 42)

Rachel Simmons (2004) declares, “Life is long, but you [who have been bullied] are stronger than you think” (p. 180). Those who have been bullied, to become “whole” again, must re-establish their self-worth and begin believing in themselves once again.

The extracted themes (the honey) these young girls liberate are harvested during thematizing and create new meanings, fresh understandings. I contemplate the ways that these themes will bring insight to addressing educational issues. In thematizing, van Manen (2003) states:

Theme is the process of insightful invention, discovery, disclosure. As I

arrive at certain thematic insights it may seem that insight is a product of all of these: invention (my interpretive product), discovery (the interpretive product of my dialogue with the text of life), disclosure of meaning (the interpretive product “given” to me by the text of life itself). (p. 88)

A motivational poster I once saw, and do not remember where, states “Vision is the art of seeing the invisible.” Let us attempt to view the invisible.

Hultgren (1989) posits:

The major goal for phenomenological research is to achieve awareness of the different ways of thinking and acting—a search for new possibilities—that lead to greater human autonomy and a better situation for those who are affected by a course of action—[students, teacher, and adults]. (p. 120)

Our competitive human society is just the opposite of the social collectivity of the bee culture. We revel in assertiveness and being number one; every endeavor of the bee is intended for the common good of the hive.

Palmer (1983) affirms, “We are also creatures attracted by power; we want knowledge to control our environment, each other, ourselves” (p. 7). Humans generally are not driven by the desire to demonstrate the self-sacrifice and the allegiance demonstrated by bees . . . the survival of the hive.

Efficiency and hive demands and not personal status or job assignment determine her [the queenbee and her workerbees] roles throughout life and into death. We know of no prima donnas or egotists [or divas] in the hive. Scientists believe that bees, next to humans, have the most elaborate social structure and specialization of labor in the animal kingdom, one far more complex and sophisticated than formerly thought. (Longgood, 1985, p. 15)

Humans have a complex social structure. This includes the power of a hierarchy, the ability to make one feel “less than.” Humans have the ability to make one feel welcome, or to make one feel left out. According to Underwood (2003): “Ostracism can range from subtle inattention to extreme behaviors such as banishment, and it is described as beginning in preschool” (p. 242). The themes that follow reveal the way in which ostracism wields its power.

The Sting and Longing to “Bee”—long

The Queenbee from Hymettus flew up to Olympus with some fresh honey from the hive as a present to Jupiter, who was so pleased with the gift that he promised to give her anything she liked to ask for. She said she would be very grateful if he would give stings to the bees, to kill people who robbed them of their honey. Jupiter was greatly displeased with this request, for he loved mankind: but he had given his word, so he said that stings they should have. The stings he gave them, however, were of such a kind that whenever a bee stings a man the sting is left in the wound and the bee dies. (Bishop, 2005, p. 139)

This quotation allows one to contemplate the “power” of the sting, whether one is in pre-school or middle school. The bee has the power to impale; this occurs when the bee is greatly distressed and her abdominal muscles allow the release of the seemingly insignificant and serrated barb into human flesh. It is more than a barb, because there is a venom sac attached to it. The barb and venom are left to fester in the body. This sting is mildly bothersome for most individuals, while deadly to others.

I never envisioned the powerful impact that one word, or the glance of a knowing female could inflict. Lacking the sisterhood of female companions is fatal. Brown (2003) describes sisterhood “as having a compassion for openness to, and generosity toward those

girls and women who are different from us” (p.194). “Next to food, water, and for some girls, a full-length mirror, friends are the most important part of a girl’s existence” (Simmons, 2004, p. 79).

Longing to “Bee”—long . . . Cliques and Adolescent Chicks

Suffering from the sting, adolescent girls are quietly shut out of the clique; the choice to belong, or not to belong, has been taken away from them. These girls have no chance to demonstrate their worthiness or to contribute to the group and the world. This brings to mind the tears shed by Liza and Rhonda, and the grief-stricken looks on their mothers’ faces as the girls reveal their stories. As Hillary Rodham Clinton (1990) states, “For the first time, I understood the words of the writer Elizabeth Stone: “Making the decision to have a child—it’s wondrous. It is to decide forever, to have your heart go walking around outside your body” (p. 8).

I felt as though my heart was walking in agony as I listened to my participants. Bethany describes having been bullied physically: “People would hit me, like tackle me. I would be outside and they would knock me down or just punch me. [It was] like people didn’t want me there.” Despite her extroverted friendliness, however, Bethany felt “unwanted” after having been called “brat,” “teacher’s pet,” and “home-school baby.” Other incidents of bullying are not as obvious. Andrea states, “People [were] ignoring her, [and she] lost all of her best friends.” She describes being ignored as, “Whenever I would walk by, they would walk somewhere else and start whispering and look at me and start laughing, and write notes with like, stuff in it calling me names, and saying that everything was my fault.” Morgan was betrayed by her best friend with whom she shared her secrets. She says that her friend “just doesn’t even want to listen [to her anymore, and that she is] kinda afraid that she will tell my secrets too.” Morgan states that she feels “hurt and sad, and,

kinda felt left out.” One can only imagine the heart-ache these girls felt in wanting to be accepted by the clique.

Tim McGraw’s song, “*One of These Days*” (1997), conveys the pain and angst of longing in the eyes of the bullied, the windows of the soul:

Sticks and stones didn’t break any bones
 But we never left well enough alone
 And one day [s]he ran away from home, you see
 And I passed [her] him as [s]he walked away
 And in [her] his eyes I heard [her] him say
 One of these days you’re gonna love me
 You’ll sit down by yourself and think

(*One of These Days*, Curb Records, 1997)

In addition to the desire of belonging, the loss of belief in oneself is a silent, unnoticeable effect of being called names, but it is deafening to the soul. Bullying slowly chips away at one’s self-confidence, bit by bit, piece by piece. Slowly the soul has nothing left, but to continually question, the price of longing to “bee”-long. O’Donohue (2002) articulates, “We are victims of longing, and we cannot come home” (p. 268).

Bethany wanted to return to her dwelling and not return to school. She felt “unwanted.” She states, “I just wanted to go home and just not come back.” “Home is where we go to be what we are” (van Manen, 2003, p. 102). Bethany desired to go to a lived space where she was sought out and comfortable, a place where she wasn’t constantly questioning. “The school [the hive] is special in the same sense that home is special: it is where we provide children with time and space to explore the world without becoming fully part of it” (van Manen, 2002a, p. 71). In Andrea’s words, “I came home crying one day and my dad

noticed that I was crying, [my] dad found the notes in my backpack.” Notes are yet, another form of bullying, that is, at times, not obvious. Adolescent girls need to experience the lived space of school, to grow and develop to their full potential, to spread their wings and fly, as bees gathering honey. Andrea, when asked how she felt as the queenbee attacked her character by calling her names, states the same word: “unwanted.” The intensity of being “unwanted” heightens the adolescent’s questioning or coveting belongingness.

From where does this concept of belonging originate? O’Donohue (2002) says, “It seems that the whole origin of belonging is rooted in the faithfulness of place” (p. 6). As children we are born to our parents; we are given a name; and as we grow, we belong to a specific home. “This place is full of presence and meaning for us” (p. 6). The home and one’s school provide young females with memories and a sense of rootedness that affect their future. Bees search for pollen to make honey. Adolescent females seek their niche in this world; as bees do, adolescent girls battle their own types of inclement weather, wind, and human pesticides.

Teachers and Recognizing Longing to “Bee”—long

Teachers can ease the struggles of adolescent girls. Morgan declares, “Either teachers don’t see it or they don’t want to see it. I prefer to talk to my guidance counselor, and I’m afraid of Mr. Preston [a teacher at her school].” How often do we, as teachers, let students pass by us as they enter our classrooms and not greet them with a warm hello or call out their names? Wormeli (2005) states:

[Students] are our priority. Educator and Invitational Schools originator William

Purkey illustrates this when he substitutes the word student for customer in an excerpt from an *L.L. Bean* training manual: “A student is not an interruption of our work . . .

the student is the purpose of it. We are not doing a favor by serving the student . . .

the student is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so” (p. 25)

Rhonda, after being called a “dirty Jew [who] should be hung,” did not report the incident to the administration. She says, “They wouldn’t do anything about it. I’ve been there before [talked to the principal] and they usually don’t do anything to anybody who goes in there [to report a bullying incident]”. One other bullying episode resulted in another girl yelling at Rhonda, and no teachers acknowledged the altercation. She says, “No one was [going to stop it], they kept eating lunch.” It is important for each student to know that she is recognized and is a part of the school, or class.

Liza is ostracized as her peers play games during recess, such as dodgeball, kickball, mapball, and even a game of catch. She says, “If I want to play the games with them they would say no, like they have too much [sic] people.” Liza states that “Yes, we do have teachers that monitor [the hallways and recess time] but I just don’t care, and I go and play with my brother.” “We listen patiently to the whole story [being told by a student] because the important thing is the interaction, not the information” (Wormeli, 2005, p. 25). Bolen (1999) says, “Sometimes facing what needs to be said and needs to be done becomes an unexpected turning point not an end” (p. 61). The students with outstanding marks are rapidly identified by the instructor as being a part of the class or a specific group within the class, but what becomes of the others? Some students demonstrate their be(e)longingness through class activities and discussion, while others yearn to be(e) identified.

Just as the pollen contributions of the individual bee are not recognized, the individual gifts of the young girl remain unidentified among the group. “I’m left out, I’m just sitting there and when someone has been talking I would talk. Sometimes they would say, ‘so’. . . or, like if I make up a joke, they would only laugh at someone else’s joke and not

mine.” Liza continues her description of longing to belong when she is ignored by a group of her peers. She tells a joke, and her words fall on deaf ears. The joke is not laughed at by the other girls. She is left with the peals of her own laughter ringing in her ears. She continues to be ostracized. She looks at me sadly and casts her eyes downward as she relays her story. She has tried to tell the queenbee and her workerbees how she feels . . . but the exile continues. Bolen, (1999) declares, “If one woman [girl] speaks her truth there is a strong possibility that she speaks for others who are silent or speaks for a silenced part in others” (p. 64).

Onions (1966, p. 336) defines “exile” as “forced removal or ushered from one’s country.” This exiling occurs often on the bus as Liza rides back to the school after basketball games. “I just sit with someone . . . but, I just look out the window while they’re talking [to each other]. They just leave me alone cuz they don’t want to talk to me.” Alone, she is forced into silence; she listens to her music on her MP3 player. Liza stares out the muddy bus window; she has no space on the bus in which she really belongs. It is as though she is “walking alone in a foreign and busy city [that] renders a sense of lostness, strangeness, vulnerability” (van Manen, 2003, p. 102). If she can be said to inhabit a space at all, it is as “the bullied,” and even then, it is only a temporary residence; her true space is isolation. The bullied becomes the space in which she finds herself, alone, shunned, and forgotten. Coloroso (2003) says:

The most difficult to detect from the outside, relational bullying is the systematic diminishment of a bullied child’s sense of self through ignoring, isolating, excluding, or shunning. Relational bulling can be used to alienate and reject a peer or to purposefully ruin friendships. Relational bullying is at its most powerful in the middle years (p. 17)

On another occasion, Liza was invited to a birthday party by a classmate. At this party, she was told that she “would be much prettier if she straightened her hair.” The girls promptly marched her into the bathroom and proceeded to straighten her hair. Liza has shoulder-length, naturally wavy hair; she was happy to have her hair straightened, but the beauty she longed for was only temporary [as was her acceptance].

Girls who are not attractive are scorned. The rules are reinforced by the visual images in soft-and hard-core pornography, by song lyrics, by casual remarks, by criticisms, by teasing and by jokes. The rules are enforced by the labeling of a woman like Hillary Rodham Clinton as a ‘bitch’ simply because she is a competent, healthy adult. [Thus, adolescent girls] shrink their souls [and their bodies] down to a petite size. (Pipher, 1994, p. 39)

“Even as Britney Spears proclaims to girls, ‘your body is your best asset,’ the definitions of girlhood are changing; what it means to be female is newly contested territory” (Brown, 2003, p. 27). “What they mean is that today’s woman [girl] can be strong and independent as long as she’s drop-dead beautiful, self-effacing, and non-threatening to men” (Brown, 2003, p. 28).

Girls who watch prime time are ‘likely to see a beautiful, young, thin, white woman who is intelligent and independent but at the same time adheres to traditional gender stereotypes such as focusing on appearance and being motivated by a desire for romantic relationship. (Brown, 2003, p. 26)

Obviously, there are many signals given by our society that indicate to girls how important appearance is in defining their social acceptance. By the time they reached the movie theater, Liza’s hair was as wavy as the ocean; it was no longer straight. Liza states that

she felt “pretty confident” when the girls had straightened her hair, and that she liked the way it looked. She states that she “was not afraid” to let the girls style her hair. Fine (2001), says:

A girl learns early on to judge her self-worth according to narrow standards of physical attractiveness and to put the needs of others before her own. As a result, a recent Commonwealth Fund study found that girls are twice as likely to suffer from depression. (p. 11)

Pipher (1994) proclaims, “Girls struggle with mixed messages: Be beautiful, but beauty is only skin deep” (p. 35). Liza was now considered “less than” and did not fit in with the girls who were “all that” because her hair was different and “frizzy” as they claimed at various times. From the sting of the queenbee and her workerbees, the swollen welt eventually diminishes, but not the longing to “bee”-long.

Longing to “Bee”—long and the Power of the Queenbee

As I search the long noisy, school corridor on one of my visits, I quickly walk to the exit. I could not bear the sound of my footsteps in the darkened hall, for no one else heard these footsteps, just as the teachers appeared not to see the bullying. The buzz of a single bee cannot be heard among the swarm of bees. One can be(e) in a classroom among other female adolescents, yet be(e) alone. “The queen plays a vital role in maintaining the colony [cliques]. The mere presence of the queen motivates the productivity of the colony’s cohesiveness and stability” (Blackiston, 2002, p. 25). Andrea has received “about ten notes; written by one girl.” She states, “Nobody would put their signature [on the note] except for her [the queenbee].” Andrea kept the notes in her backpack, “Cuz people were saying that the janitor was looking at [the] notes that were thrown in the garbage or something like that, so I was going to bring them home and throw them away.”

The queen produces pheromones to maintain control of the workerbees; the Queen is the heart and soul of the hive. Without her, the hive would not survive. “Social aggression might also serve as a way for children, girls . . . to reassure themselves about their own belongingness and acceptance by excluding others” (Underwood, 2003, p. 94).

There is a deep need in each of us to belong to some cluster of friendship and affinity in which the games of impression and power are at a minimum and we can allow ourselves to be seen as we really are, we can express what we really believe and can be challenged thoroughly. This is how we grow; it is where we learn to see who we are, what our needs are, and the unsuspecting effect our thinking and presence have on other lives. (O’Donohue, 2002, p. 262)

Rhonda arrived in her school district when she was in sixth grade. To this day, she is continually left out of the clique by her female classmates; yet, she desires to be a part of this trendy group. She states that “They [other girls] just pick out every single thing that they can. They judge you; they judge the person that comes into town or give them a hard time [because] they don’t look like them [the other girls in town].” She says, “If you are not exactly what they want you to be, and how you look, and how you dress, they will pick on you, they will talk about you. I was kind of a nerd because instead of wearing jeans I would wear pajama pants and a baggy t-shirt to school.” She says, “The girls here they like to gossip a lot and that starts fights a lot because [they] talk behind someone’s back. Chesler (2003) states, that Brown and Gilligan in their 1992 work, describe the price (white) pre-adolescent girls pay for daring to disagree with other girls. They are “. . . ridiculed, talked about, and rejected” (p. 99). The smallest moments can have the biggest impact on a child’s life. Van Manen (2002a) states:

Atmosphere belongs to all aspects of human existence: to things (a spiritual painting, a cozy chair), to space (a peaceful setting, a landscape, a happy beach), to events (a festive graduation, a solemn speech), to time (a happy harvest, a thankful ending). Or better still, for each specific object or quality, atmosphere or mood is the way human beings experience the world. (p. 70)

Morgan, who longed to belong was picked on in front of her entire class by the queenbee, which added to the degradation. “I felt that she shouldn’t have picked on me, cuz I have been living (in her hometown) longer than her [the queenbee] and she didn’t know anything about me and stuff. I was really humiliated and mad at her.” This “picking incident” resulted in Morgan running out the school, and hiding under a car in the parking lot.

Don’t forget that the person you see in front of you is not yet complete. We can’t hold their digressions and experimentation against them. Students can dress ‘Goth’ and still graph equations. Be the wise adult who doesn’t accept the façade students present to the world as the final declaration of who they will become. Be mindful of the gold inside and that what we do today will likely impact their growth for years. (Wormelli, 2005, p. 26)

The old saying, “Time heals all wounds” is not necessarily true in all cases; the stereotypes of girls and women continue. Fine (2001) states: “Stereotypes about women are so ingrained in the fabric of our society that we rarely take the time to step back and examine how we treat girls and what we expect from them” (p. 18). Is it any wonder, then, that in their yearning to belong, they are not seen and become invisible.

“Bee”—ing Invisible, An Outsider

Midway on our life’s journey, I found myself

In dark woods, the right road lost. To tell
 About those woods is hard—so tangled and rough
 And savage that thinking of it now, I feel
 The old fear stirring; death is hardly more bitter.
 (Palmer, 2000, p. 56)

Bullied adolescent girls, at times, may have wondered if they were on the right path, having to deal with the unknown. At times, death may have been “hardly more bitter.” “Girls have tried to kill themselves because they were grounded for a weekend or didn’t get asked to the prom” (Pipher, 1994, p. 57). The unknown, what lies ahead in the dark woods, can cause one to trip and fall as one struggles through the time of adolescence. The participants in my study had to deal with the “sting of longing to belong,” in addition to the pain of being invisible. An adolescent girl tells Pipher (1994) that she was

Wandering about in the woods reading poetry and feeling in touch with the central core of the universe. She was elated by the sunlight dappling the leaves, the smells of wild plum blossoms, the blueness of the sky and the trills of the meadowlarks. The feeling of the moment is all that exists. (p. 58)

Yes, indeed, the “feeling of the moment” seems to be all encompassing for middle school girls, whether they are “lost” in the woods, or blissfully “wandering” in the woods. The moments of having been bullied appear to be deeply imbedded in their memories, not to be forgotten in the circle of life.

Bolen (1999) declares the healing power created by a circle of women:

A member’s alcohol, abusive relationship, emotional, or physical problems
 A circle can be a major caring influence when the situation is honestly and compassionately faced, and the truth is spoken that helps what the circle can do.

One woman's [girl's] problem is a variation of another's past history or a reminder of another's painful childhood. . . . (p. 57)

The bullied "are out of it, they don't live in the right neighborhood, don't go to the right church, or they come from single parent families" [they are struggling to survive in a world in which they are not accepted] (Wiseman, 2006, p. 50). The girls who have been bullied have felt lost, just like the elderly workerbees who have been turned away from the hive, with no pheromones to guide them through the woods. The workerbee and the bullied wander, seeking a place to light. Are they on the right path? Will they survive? "The wanderer is one who gives priority to the duties of longing over belonging. No abode is fixed" (O'Donohue, 2002, p. 45). In her longing to belong, the adolescent remains inconspicuous.

"Bee"—ing an Invisible Rider

Liza was new to her community in third grade. She was adopted by her foster parents, and began her life at school as an inconspicuous outsider. She is still on the exterior for most occasions, unseen, buzzing on the outside of the window pane; her fragile wings gently touch the glass. She was not from this small hamlet where her parents have lived for years. Liza states that she "felt left out" as the other girls gathered together and chatted in school, or on the bus. I inquire of her as to whether one of her coaches sat with her when she sat on the bus alone, invisible. She simply responds "No" and gazes downward. Her position among the hierarchy of girls could have been elevated, making her visible, had someone shown interest in her: "The power of teacher recognition and belief in [a student] is truly inestimable" (van Manen, 2002a, p. 89). She was invisible, and often she sat alone on the bus. "Riders [on the bus] put spatial relationships to use in creating and maintaining social boundaries" (Jewett, 2005, p. 43). The wannabees actively showed Liza how undesirable she was by shunning her.

I asked my own children where they sit on the bus. They only ride the bus in town when the weather is terribly cold and windy. Both of my children state the same thing: The older students sit in the back, and as one moves toward the front of the bus the students are younger, and in the elementary grades.

Junior high riders who board early were accustomed to relinquishing their hard-won backseats to high school backseaters. The social hierarchies [are] common to school bus culture, though [they] represent a slight departure from the social organization typically found in schools (Jewett, 2005, p. 43)

According to Jewett, the core group of individuals who occupies the backseats, “Generated and limited the conversations that set and maintained social and spatial boundaries” (p. 44). Eddie, an 8th grader, describes these females as “Queens or somethin[g],” and like most of the other students who describe this back seat group, they are a clique that is not well liked, but maintain a tight leadership circle. “Yet, acting tough on the school bus means talking tough—in ways that push the boundaries of normative constructions of adolescent femininity” (Jewett, 2005, p. 49).

During the school day the bus is a susceptible arena for bullying. Paula, a female adolescent, interviewed by Jewett (2005), pronounces:

There’s lots of fights on my bus. I used to be afraid when I was younger. People talk lots of crap. But I’m one of the oldest ones now, so there’s nothing to be afraid of on my bus. There’s one girl who fights all the time on my bus. Everybody is fighting with her, cause she starts crap with everybody. And then she blames it all on everyone else that they’re ganging up on her. (p.133)

As creatures of habit, we like the familiar; it provides us with comfort on a bus or in the classroom. We often gravitate to the same desk in a classroom or the same seat on the

bus, establishing our territory, thus making it easier for the teacher to learn the names of her students. As we establish our area, we become at ease and, without words, communicate to other students that “this is my space.” Through doing so, this allows each person to become acknowledged, to be given a name, a persona, to be seen. Large numbers of students in a classroom are invisible until they make themselves visible. This invisibility is felt by bullied students; they are still there but remain unseen.

“Bee”—ing an Invisible “Nothing”

Andrea exemplifies this invisibility and consequent destruction to her self-concept:

I don’t know how to explain it. Um . . . like you’re not there . . . and . . . walking away from you . . . like totally making you feel like you’re nothing, you are not anything, you’re not there It just didn’t seem like it [that I was there]. It seemed like the world didn’t notice me. They wouldn’t like [do or say] anything

Onions (1966, p. 663) defines nothing as “not anything.” The sting of being reduces one to “nothing.” O’Donohue (2002) says, “One of the most crippling prisons is the prison of reduced identity” (p. 101). “Lived other (relationality) is the lived relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them” (van Manen, 2003, p. 104). Despite being invisible, what lived space do the bullied adolescents occupy? Their presence must be felt in some manner, like the wind. Are they struggling against the wind like the workerbees, heavily laden with nectar and full pollen baskets on their hind legs, attempting to return to their hive? The expression “busy as a bee” is an understatement. Brown (2003) says:

[Adolescent girls live] in a culture that tells girls and women that meeting a beauty ideal is all-important and they can willfully re-create their bodies; it’s no surprise that

they would gossip and make judgments about failures to meet such physical ideals—as a weapon to undermine or control other girls. (p. 27)

Morgan states that she was betrayed by her best friend. Her best friend told Morgan's secrets to the "wannabees." "As a result most relational aggression occurs within intimate social or friendship networks. The closer the target to the perpetrator, the more cutting the loss" (Simmons, 2002, p. 17). Morgan's best friend talked as little as possible to Morgan in school or out of school; her presence was too small to be perceived. She, too, was invisible. Morgan was called a vegetarian and teased because she loved to hunt; she did not like to eat the fruits of her labor, unlike the workerbee. (In the winter the bees survive on the honey they have stored away.)

"And in a culture in which even 'best friends decide that you aren't cool anymore and they don't want to be friends anymore,' it's hard to count on anyone to stick up for you or 'have your back'" (Brown, 2003, p. 119). Chesler (2003, p. 83) says, "The raw feelings of hurt and shame, the 'backstabbing' rumors, the betrayal of trust, the loss of one's reputation, the sudden falling away of human society, amount to a loss of one's own existential footing." Females are often the target of betrayal by other females. "As most women know, a woman can make life hell on a moment by moment basis" (Chesler, 2003, p. 36). In the book *Girlfighting: Betrayal and Rejection among Girls*, Brown (2003) describes how girls wear a mask that "feigns feelings" that girls who have been bullied do NOT have:

Girls are telling us that deep social significance and meaning are attached to actions adults barely notice, like "ignoring" others, "doing nothing," and "hiding feelings." They are telling us that what they are encouraged to call love and friendship is contingent on the disappearance of a core part of them-selves; that acceptance and inclusion by others is connected to self-effacement and fraudulence. (p. 77)

I observe first-hand Morgan's predicament during the numerous occasions I substitute teach at her school. The queenbee and her cronies would huddle in a circle, while Morgan was left on the fringe of the circle to pretend she didn't care. "When a critical number of people change how they think and behave, the culture does also, and a new era begins" (Bolen, 1999, p. 3). The telling and re-telling by individuals about their bullying experiences can slowly bring about a new era.

"Bee"—ing an Invisible Outcast

Morgan has been an outcast since 6th grade and has considered fleeing to a neighboring school district to avoid further bullying. Each school I have visited exhibits this venomous sting. What is it like to have your best friend no longer be your best friend? Is it possible to have this "sting" die away over time? The loss of her best friend pushed Morgan further outside the circle surrounding the Queenbee, waiting on the Queenbee's every demand.

Jean Shinoda Bolen (1999) states:

My focus is on the meaning of women's [middle school girls'] circle and their formation and maintenance because women [girls] as a gender have a natural talent for them. The circle is an archetypal form that feels familiar to the psyches of most women [girls]. It is personal and egalitarian. From what I have heard and observed, I believe that many women [girls] yearn to belong to a women's circle. (pp. 6–7)

Morgan is an attractive young lady inside and out; she stood up for herself on a number of occasions, but it did no good. She is on the honor roll and an athlete; yet, she remains invisible outside the circle of power. Bolen (1999) articulates:

A circle is a shape with an unbroken circumference and a symbol of wholeness.

The boundary edge or line defines the circle. Once it is broken it's no longer a

circle. This boundary must be intact for it to be a circle, and for it to be safe

What is said in confidence is held in confidence, [and Morgan's secrets were not].

Plain and simple. It is otherwise a meeting of women who do not trust each other, a gathering of women in whose company one wears a persona and social armor. This is not a sacred circle. (pp. 49–50)

Today, Morgan still wears this armor, while buzzing outside the ring. Morgan's first middle school bullying incident resulted in her hiding under her substitute teacher's vehicle in the school parking lot. Other teachers in the school had heard the door slam as she left the building. The substitute teacher heard Morgan crying as she huddled under the car. This incident was the result of a girl who was new to the school, choosing to pick on Morgan in front of the entire class. In Morgan's words, "They like teased me about my pony tail and earrings that were purple flowers; they were my favorite. I got better grades than the bully and they called me magpie." This "picking" was, in part, because Morgan was the first person in her class to wear glasses, and the Queenbee promptly dubbed her "four eyes."

Barbara Coloroso (2003) states:

Each one [target] was singled out to be the object of scorn and thus the recipient of verbal, physical, or relational aggressions, merely because he or she was different in some way. Bullies need targets on whom they can heap their aggression, and the differences identified as the justification for the attacks are spurious at best, contemptuous at worst. (p. 42)

Coloroso has a list of reasons why a bully "feels the need to put someone down in order to feel superior herself (or to confirm her already superior status)" (p. 44) in her book *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*. Reason number sixteen is "The kid who wears braces or glasses" (p. 44).

“Bee”—ing Invisible, and New Stuff

Bethany, too, wore glasses, but that is not the context of her having been bullied. “I ask her how she was made to feel left out?” She responds by stating, “They make you feel bad about the way you look, and if you didn’t have all the new stuff that was coming out, like the new shoes [Eitnnes, a brand of tennis shoes], the new clothes [or they would] say that you’re not thin enough.” When asked how she felt about being bullied, she states, “confused.” What is this confusion? Here is another worker bee being stung by the queen, or tossed out of the hive to find another hive willing to accept her. What is it like to be unwanted, to be thrown out like yesterday’s trash and forgotten?

Girls are under more pressure than they have ever been, according to the National Girl’s Rights Survey (Fine, 2001, p. 5). Fine pronounces:

Even though today’s girls are confident and ambitious, the vast majority say they are frustrated by outdated stereotypes that stand in their way. They also feel pressure to conform to narrow and often conflicting expectations imposed on them, restrictions that the girls say only become more limiting and defined as they get older. (p. 5)

According to Pipher (1994):

Girls, who are the happiest, manage against great odds to stay true to themselves. But all girls feel pain and confusion. None can easily master the painful and complicated problems of this time. All are aware of the suffering of friends, the pressure to be beautiful and the dangers of being female. (p. 73)

It’s no wonder girls state that they feel unwanted and are confused! Heather Johnson Nicholson, Ph. D., director of research at Girls Inc., affirms: “Sure go ahead and study to be a brain surgeon. But first, be sure the chores are done, look pretty and thin, keep your voice down and make everyone around you happy” (as cited in Fine, 2001, p. 5).

If we do admit to having judgmental stereotypes we rarely realize how slowly and cunningly they influence our behavior. I took a deep breath, as my son stated the following of another fourteen year old male, “He is a chubby chaser.” This was in reference to his friend’s choice of female adolescents. “In order to stop blindly reinforcing stereotypes, we need to focus on how they’re subtly invoked in our everyday interactions and can sabotage our ability to live together as a community” (Wiseman, 2006, p. 85). Girls tend to find themselves in communities of difference as well as sameness.

“Bee”—ing Different

Megan felt she was unlike her peers. She says, “It [bullying] has so many effects on me, my grades dropped, I didn’t have many fiends at all, and I felt really bad all the time, and I felt pressure to fit in with everyone, and to dress a certain way, to just look a certain way.” Megan had grown up with her peers, yet, she felt “different.” I ask Rhonda, who did not grow up in the community in which she now lives, the following question: “What makes one an outsider?” She quietly responds: “They don’t fit into any of those cliques.” She was referring to the prep, jock, Goth, and Emo cliques at her school. Rhonda’s being of a different faith was not a problem when she first arrived at school in the 6th grade. Her religion soon became an issue, however, when Rhonda tried to protect another student from being sexually molested in a car by a 17 year old male. The students who bullied Rhonda were Catholic and Protestant, while she was Jewish. She was bullied because her religion was new and something “different.” What, then, is put in question by difference? As Derrida (1978) says:

A community of the question is, therefore, within that fragile moment when the question is not yet determined enough for the hypocrisy of an answer to have already initiated itself beneath the mask of the question, and not yet determined enough for its

voice to have been already and fraudulently, articulated within the very syntax of the question. (p. 80)

Garbino and de Lara (2002) state, “The U. S. Department of Education reports that 77 percent of middle and high school students in small Midwestern towns have been bullied” (p. 1). I wonder how many have been bullied as a result of religious difference?

Coloroso (2003) relays:

A young German naval attaché, Georg Duckwitz, leaked in advance to the Danes the Germans’ plan for the deportation of Jews. Georg Duckwitz committed this act of conscious disobedience to save lives, willing to accept whatever penalty might be imposed as a consequence. If only some of the bystanders had been willing and able to do the same for kids [who are bullied]. (p. 72)

“Xenophobia, is the fear or hatred of anyone who is different” (Garbino & deLara, 2002, p. 79). Garbino and deLara state:

If school personnel, families, and the community fail to do anything about this way of thinking, and the behavior that follows it, then all adults are complicit in enabling appropriate and dangerous behavior in the school. (p. 79)

“[Religious] bullies in any community depend on your silence and your reluctance to air the community’s dirty laundry. It’s their insurance policy” (Wiseman 2006, p. 94).

“Strong families are able to deal with conflicts, and band together in mutual support when bad times arise” (Garbino & de Lara, 2002, p. 30). The kiss Rhonda’s mother gave her daughter indicates her willingness to help with her bullying burden.

The sexual attack situation, previously mentioned, turned on Rhonda. During the first interview after Rhonda had left for class, her mother indicates that she was holding a lot of information from me. She wears a mask of toughness. Rhonda appears to be a hard-hitting

girl in her own right; she is large for an eighth grade student and wears her mask with pride. The counselor had warned me that Rhonda had been bullied, but had recently turned into the Queenbee diva. The former Queenbee was dethroned by her sisters.

In Rhonda's situation, the girl who was sexually attacked started to call her names. Rumors were rampant; "whore" and "bitch" were just two of the unsettling names she had to endure. One day in class she was kicked by a boy because she was the protector of the girl who was attacked. This brought about being called another ugly name. "Girls use backbiting, exclusion, rumors, name-calling, and manipulation to inflict psychological pain on targeted victims" (Simmons, 2002, p. 3). Underwood (2003) quotes the work of Eder: "In her ethnographic work with junior high school students in the United States, Eder (1990) noted that for girls, ritual teasing and insulting were more related to communicating about norms for behaviors" (p. 141).

Rhonda has changed her appearance, masking her invisibility. She has colored her hair black, wears a lip-ring on her lower lip, and wears gloves with the fingers cut off. She is most likely to be seen wearing blue jeans versus pajama pants, helping to mask her difference. She is giving up her individuality to fit into the "norm" of the school. Rhonda is now more imperceptible. But while bullying happens in school, it also has a long reach into the home through cyberspace.

"Bee"—ing Cyber-bullied

Today, the face of the bully need not be seen to harm a female adolescent. Pain is inflicted via the Internet, cell phones, and Blackberries. The term "YouTube" provides our youth with videos and pictures on the internet, while "MySpace," "FaceBook," and "Xanga" are personal blogs via the internet (where one can voice one's opinion anonymously). These formats in cyberspace mete out untold damage to the reputation of an adolescent girl. The

home of an adolescent may no longer be a refuge from the schoolyard bully. Wikipedia (2008) states:

Cyber-bullying involves recurring or repeated harm willfully inflicted through the medium of electronic text. In order for it to be cyber-bullying, the intent must be to cause emotional distress, and there must be no legitimate purpose to the communication. Cyber-bullying can be as simple as continuing to send e-mail to someone who has said they want no further contact with the sender, but it may also be threats, sexual remarks, pejorative labels (i.e., hate speech). Cyber-bullies may publish personal contact information for their victims at websites, or may attempt to assume the identity of a victim for the purpose of publishing material in their name that defames or ridicules them.

No matter how bullying is defined, it includes having “power” over another individual, and the bully need not walk through your front door to wreak her havoc.

Who’s that girl standing apart from me

Why she’s my friend or she used to be

I told her everything I know, who I like and so and so

And then one day, right out of the blue

She no longer liked me, she gave me no clue

Why have you left me, have I done something wrong

I remember our friendship like it were a song

Even though now all she does is stare

I can’t help but wonder

Does she remember all the memories we share.

(Simmons, 2004, p. 81)

Rhonda and Andrea have experienced the agony of Cyber-bullying. This form of bullying is so new that it is not even mentioned in many of the books on bullying. Cyber-bullying came from a girl who Rhonda thought was her friend. She says that the cyber-bully, “Threatened to hurt you [her] the next day, and that her cousins are going to go after you [her]. Rhonda’s cyber-bullying was done outside of school, from the bully’s home. She states that the “Administrator and guidance counselor can’t do anything about it, so she did not report it to them.” Rhonda dealt with the cyber-bullying by instantly “blocking” the bully from appearing as a contact on her computer.

Andrea’s bullying was dispensed from a girl she considered to be the “leader of the group and her friend.” Wiseman (2007) states:

90% of middle school students have had their feelings hurt online; 75% have visited a Website bashing another student: 40% have had their password(s) stolen and changed by a bully (who then locked them out of their own account, or sent communications posing as them: and only 15% of parents polled knew what cyber-bullying was. (p. 6)

Andrea’s mother was standing behind her, reading over her shoulder as she was being cyber-bullied on the MSN Website. The girls were instant messaging [IM] each other. Andrea was concerned about this girl because “[I] thought she had been drinking, and smoking, and supposedly took a pill. I didn’t want her to get hurt or anything cuz she’s my best friend so . . . yeah . . . so I didn’t like tell on her . . . my mom saw it on MSN.” Andrea’s mother had her keep the communication going so that she could contact the parent of the other girl. Her mom then called the girl’s mother and told her what had transpired. During this phone call Andrea could hear “her friend” saying “I hate her” in the background. I inquired as to how Andrea felt “when her mom forced her to do this? “I don’t know . . . I didn’t really care. I

was mad, but I didn't care." I asked Andrea why she didn't care; she responded by saying, "Cuz I thought that she did it (drinking, smoking, and taking a pill) and needed to get caught so she's stop[ped]. I mean she is only in 5th grade."

Kids forward messages and humiliating photographs (superimposing a person's face on another person's body is a favorite) via cell phone all the time. Cyberbullying—bullying via modern technologies such as e-mail, blogging, live journals, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging and camera phone—is an epidemic. (Wiseman, 2006, p. 115)

Girls used to make use of bathroom walls to "trash" each other; technology has advanced this trashing to the cell phones, camera phones, and computers. "For example, a student uses her cell-phone camera to take a picture of a classmate changing clothes after gym, then uploads it onto her computer and forwards it to friends along with cruel commentary" (Wiseman, 2007, p. 6.) Personal snail-mail from the post-office used to be a welcome sight to see and read. The bullied must dread the thought of opening their personal mailbox, their "inbox," on the computer. The Queenbee may remain hidden behind the screen of a cell phone, Blackberry, or computer. It appears obvious that the big schoolyard bully of the past has evolved as our technology has developed.

According to Heidegger (1977), "Technology is a means to an end. The other [definition] says: Technology is a human activity" (p. 4). The computer, today, may be used to write and send letters to another individual, despite its impersonal use, just as text message on a cell phone. There is no handwriting to gaze upon, no personal signature, and no special stationery to write upon, but the message remains unfriendly. It does not have the human touch of a handwritten letter. The personal touch is lacking, and now, we are able to send anonymous messages. Heidegger (1977) says, "We will master it [technology]. The will to

mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control” (p. 4). Heidegger continues:

Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is not set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example; uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy, which can be released either for destruction or for peaceful use. (p. 15)

The technology of the computer, the cell phone, and the blackberry may be used to destroy or build up. What kind of protective supports prevent destruction?

“Bee”—ing a Protective Support

All of us can be protective supports for adolescent girls to prevent bullying whether we are parents, teachers, relatives or friends. Children cannot stop bullying by themselves; they require the assistance of adults at home, in school and in the community to break this cycle of violence. Olweus (as cited in Sanders & Phye, 1993) says, “Vigilant supervision of such places [schools, buses, and playgrounds) by adults and peers does lower incidents of aggression” (p. 195).

“Bee”—ing a Parent

My daughter, Sydney, was able to share with me the bullying episodes that she endured with her so called “friends,” or rather frienimies. I am glad she did; I believe this sharing helped to sooth the indignity and pain. I believe this “sharing” helped free her from the long-term stifling effect that can affect a girl from being all she can be(e). Each of the girls in my study was able to talk to her mother about the bullying meted out by friends. In Bethany’s case, I ask her if there were other adults that she was able to talk with, and she says: “There is this lady at church, and she is about 3 years younger than my mom and I can talk to her about anything.” In Rhonda’s situation, her religion seemed like something she

was not proud of, something to hide, yet, Rhonda's mother supported her. Morgan relied for support from her mother also, and she had help from her school guidance counselor. Liza sustained support from her mother and her elementary principal; she did not attempt to seek out the guidance counselor. As with the previous four adolescents, their first confidants regarding any type of bullying were their mothers. Andrea's support came from her father at first, but, she too, had her mother's support. It is during these perilous times we retreat to who and what we know best, our mothers and our homes, our safety, and security.

Chelser (2003, p. 50) states: "Girls and women genuinely want to bond with each other; they want each other's intimate companionship and the pleasure and protection it may afford them." Women are taught to care for, nurture, and protect their children.

When adults don't spend time with youth, or when youth are excluded from decisions that affect them directly, it sends a powerful message that they are not respected or valued. Similarly, youth who are left alone to socialize themselves become the stepchildren of a vast media culture. In this role, when surrounding adults are largely absent, they become more susceptible to the insidious presence of an advertising culture that overwhelms them with messages that to fit in, they should eat fast food, drink soda, buy expensive clothes and worry excessively about appearance. Across a wide array of topics, . . . the media works against goals of helping youth. (Nichols & Good, 2004, p. xi)

"We're wise enough to be able to articulate the problem(s) but we can still feel overwhelmed by our own emotional reactions and powerless to make things better for our children" (Wiseman, 2006, p. 39). I believe this does not make us bad mothers—it makes us normal, everyday, caring mothers. We call upon teachers, then, to become "in-loco-parentis" in our absence.

“Bee”—ing a Teacher

Teachers often spend as much, or more time with children than their parents. They can help monitor the bullying situations to assist in bringing out the potential in each budding girl. Sanders and Phye (2003) proclaim that bullying “most predominately, occurs in schools” (p. 1).

No school day can be repeated. It may seem a cumbersome ritual to shake each child’s hand twice each day, and with a warm smile and comment. But whether the greeting is a physical or a verbal handshake the teacher who makes the effort *touches* each child. The quiet and “easy” child can remain untouched for quite some time.

(van Manen, 2002a, pp. 31-32)

The concern for a child’s individual rights and protection from abuse have supported giving bullying more serious attention in the United States. “It’s important not to dismiss girlfighting [sic] as unimportant or trivial—something we’re more likely to do with relational forms of aggression. As researchers and girls tell us, relational aggression has very real consequences and often precedes physical aggression for girls” (Brown, 2003, p. 214).

Morgan has been bullied in a relational way and in a physical manner. Morgan explains how the teachers and the principal treated her.

Other times they hide my books in their lockers, or put them in the classroom.

One time they took my backpack and put it in Mrs. Cullum’s room; it had my cell phone in it. I was scared that nobody would believe me, that my backpack was gone with all my books and schoolwork. I was scared to tell anyone that it was missing—even the teachers. I told my English teacher, and she convinced me to tell the principal about the incident When I went to the principal he seemed annoyed by it, and kept working on his computer. He didn’t even seem to be listening to me.

Morgan was ignored, invisible to educators who are put in charge of her care. Andrea, also invisible, recalls an incident concerning one of her friends and the lack of responses by a teacher and principal.

We are just walking back and forth in the halls (yelling at each other). It was just like one day where it started out . . . I forgot what she did to one of my friends, but then she started bringing up that one incident in the car. (Andrea tried to protect a girl who is attacked by a male in the backseat of a car—Andrea was able to pull him off of the girl.) No one [noticed the yelling], they kept eating lunch I don't think they noticed [the principal and the science teacher].

Bethany, tells me about another bullying incident that occurred on the playground at school.

She punched me and I punched her back. [Then] she just pulled me to the ground.

And she took off her glasses and stepped on them and blamed it on me. And so I told the outside teachers [playground supervisors], and they didn't do anything. Like they didn't care, they didn't care if someone got hurt, or a broke arm or whatever.

Where does this inattentiveness to female bullying come from? Are teachers afraid to discipline students, or do they choose to remain indifferent because they would be required to “do” something? It is vital that teachers are trained to recognize the obvious physical and verbal attacks, including the “unseen” quiet manipulation of female bullying. Educators need to respond to bullying in productive ways, such as girl to girl discussion groups, conflict resolution, and looking at the imbalance of power and discussing ways to correct this imbalance.

Van Manen (2003) discusses how adults bring children into this world and abandon them, or do not know how to love them, or parents that love their children, but the children

suffer from neglect, or child abuse. Thus, there is a need for laws to protect children. Van Manen (2003) states:

The same kind of scenario can be sketched for teachers. It seems easier to talk about pedagogic incompetence than about competence. (We might boldly say that those who do not find the topic of competence difficult do not know in a serious way what they are talking about.) What makes it possible for us to speak (theorize) of competence when it come to raising or teaching (educating) children? It means that we are able to do things in children's lives and that we are able to do things right. (p. 157)

“Bee”—ing a Friend, or Frienimie

If educators cannot, or do not want to be protective supports for females who have been bullied, is this possible for friends? Friends and peers can be another line of defense in bullying. Girls can be encouraged to report bullying incidents and not consider it tattletelling. Friends who bully are not really friends at all—they are “frienemies”. Liza experienced the ache left by her fake friends. She describes the bullying that she had to endure while shopping after a frienemie's birthday party:

They said that I don't have good taste like picking out a pair of pants. There's a pair I picked out for someone because she was looking for a pair of pants. And that one girl that bullys me said, “You don't have good taste like everyone else does.”

Liza often clung to her mother as I conversed with her; her self-esteem was slowly chipped away with each bullying encounter. Liza turned to her younger brother as a protective support. Andrea exemplifies the issues of lack of self-esteem and frienimies. I inquire as to how she felt after a bullying incident. She says:

It stunk, it makes me sad all the time. I was depressed, never happy. And I lost my other best friend, so I had pretty much nobody, except . . . and then I had another friend and um she was always trying to make it up to them [the queenbee and her cronies] and ask them if she could have another chance while she was telling me all this stuff about them. But, then she'd go right away when I wasn't there, and start being all nice, and asking them if she could have another chance with them. I believe Kimmie wanted to be a friend to Andrea; she just didn't want to be the new "target."

Andrea, Bethany, and Morgan, turned to the males in their classes to be their protective supports when their friends turned into enemies. Andrea says, "I hung out with boys a lot, because they are a lot easier to get along with, and I guess a lot of them [girls] liked them, liked the boys I hung out with." Although, Andrea's male friend turned on her after she told a joke. "He got really mad so then he became best friends with [the] people that hate me and some people are saying he is going out with her [the queenbee]." Bethany turned to Max for support and she says, "I would walk home with Max and I would tell him [about the bullying]. Morgan was picked on during track practice; she reveals that two boys kept telling the female bullies, "Leave her alone, she hasn't done anything to you." She says that while walking in the mall with a guy friend, "They just screamed when they walked by us." Rhonda did not indicate that she had male protective supports, but she notes, "They don't have all the drama girls have in friendships."

Bystanders rarely recognize their potential to stop female bullying. The end result of this continued drama could be depression, dropping grades, or even worse—suicide. There are no innocent bystanders where bullying is concerned; the bystander has the power to stop the bullying. Colorosa (2003) states, the "four reasons for not intervening:"

1. The bystander is afraid of getting hurt himself.
2. The bystander is afraid of becoming the new target of the bully.
3. The bystander is afraid of doing something that will only make the situation worse.
4. The bystander does not know what to do. [S] he has not been taught ways to intervene, or report the bullying, or to help the target. (p. 67)

These reasons appear to be legitimate reasons for not coming to the aid of the bully; these students are protecting themselves from being bullied. “These excuses help poison the social environment increasing the likelihood that bystanders will side with the bully and eventually assume the role of the bullies themselves” (Colorosa, 2003, pp. 67-68).

Girls “Bee”-ing Powerful

Despite a mother’s feelings of powerlessness, mothers and girls are not powerless. Many of these girls, including my daughter, at times do not realize how strong they really can be(e). Why do they do this—give away their power? Pipher (1994) says:

Psychology has a long history of ignoring girls at this age. . . . Simone de Beauvoir believed adolescence is when girls realize that men have the power and that their only power comes from consenting to become submissive adored objects. (p. 21)

Coloroso (2003) adds to this view of power; she explains the “brick-wall” family. This is a family that views, “Order, control, obedience, and adherence to rules and a strict hierarchy of power” (p. 77). Brick-wall families create bullies who abuse power by bullying others.

The Buzz of Power

It is the buzz of the workerbee, and the pheromones of the Queenbee that keep the hive in working order, but this is not necessarily true of our society. Pipher (1994) states:

By junior high [and middle school] girls sense their lack of power, but usually they cannot say what they sense. They see that mostly men are congressmen, principals, bankers, corporate executives. They notice that famous writers, musicians, and artists are mostly men. But they don't focus on the political—their complaints are personal. (p. 41)

Morgan felt powerless that the teachers and administrators would not believe her if she told them about the incident of bullying. In addition to telling the English teacher and the principal Morgan told her parents about her backpack being stolen. Her backpack and all of her stolen items, including her cell-phone were then returned. She says this has happened before; the queenbee and her followers would hide her things in classrooms, or other empty lockers. As a result of this prank the bullies were given in-school suspension for a half of a day. Pipher (1994) says:

What girls say about gender and power issues depends on how they are asked.

When I asked adolescent girls if they are feminists, most say no. To them feminism is a dirty word, like communism, or fascism. But, if I ask if they believe men and women should have equal rights, they say yes. When I ask if their schools are sexist, they say no. But, if I ask if they are ever harassed sexually at their school, they say yes and tell me stories. If I ask who is more likely to be a principal, they say a man.

If I ask who has more power, they say men. (p. 41)

In Bethany's case, she turned to the teachers for support. She states: "The outside teachers, they were just standing a few feet away from us and didn't do anything, and when we stopped fighting I just went and sat by myself." She told the female principal who replied, "Forget about it and work it out yourselves." Do we really live in a society that is ignoring bullying and promoting the powerlessness of women? Girls are learning to shut down; they

aren't important enough to even be HEARD. Adolescent girls who have been bullied are learning many unintended lessons. They are being forced to figure out how to take care of themselves. "The problem with this philosophy is that the solutions children come up with on their own are not always healthy, and often lead to escalating conflict rather than its resolution" (Garbino & de Lara, 2002, p. 17). "The answer is less about the will of adults or the control over kids than about appreciating girls' need to have control in their lives, to feel important, to be visible, to be taken seriously, to have an effect" (Brown, 2003, p. 201).

Power, Taking it Back

Despite the powerlessness of bullying, girls can stand up for what is theirs—power and the right to be heard. Adams (2005) states in *Geographies of Girlhood Identities In-between*: that Girl Power means that girls can do everything that boys can do. "That we're as good as boys and sometimes better. Girl Power signifies a cultural shift in describing what constitutes today's ideal girl" (p.102). Cheerleading is now recognized as a sport in over 20 states; cheerleading and Title IX have influenced pro-female policies. "Varsity Cheerleading, one of the leading cheerleading companies in the United States captures the spirit of Girl Power in their opening poem for their 1999 catalog."

I am not arrogant.

I am confident.

I am not a daredevil.

I am daring.

I am not a beauty queen.

I am an athlete.

I am not a stereotype.

I am my own person.

I am not interested in the past.

I am living for the future.

I am not afraid of success.

I am afraid of nothing.

I am not another face in the crowd.

I am the one others wish they could be. (p. 103)

This poem leaves us with a POWERFUL statement about girls, but what types of power are given to adolescent girls? And, at what cost? (Adams, 2005).

Although none of my study participants is a cheerleader, Morgan, Andrea and Liza are athletes. It seems even in athletics, males reign supreme. Rhonda is an example of taking back “her power.” I ask her if she had been bullied over the summer, and she says, “No, I haven’t had any dealings (with bullying). We decided that it was stupid fighting over no reason anymore, we just started communicating more.” Earlier in this chapter, I spoke of Liza trying to recapture a bit of her power. It is a struggle for girls to regain what has been taken away—or never have had. Andrea chose not to fight to regain her power; she has befriended a younger girl who is also on the volleyball team. School counselor, Diane Offerdahl says:

[Bullying] has never been right, that we do have the power to change it and we need to. We [females] all need to focus on our own behavior. We need to stand up for ourselves when it’s necessary and stand up for others too, but always respectfully.

(Klootwyk, 2008, Section C, p.1)

“Positions of power and powerlessness,” writes B. Davies, are achieved through talk, through social practices, and through social and architectural structures” (as cited in Jewett,

2005, p. 40). Girls speak in a different language that even boys have difficulty decoding, as the next section reveals.

The Clique: An Unspoken Buzz of Code Language and Code Silence

A clique is a powerful circle when it consists of female adolescents. The language used by adolescent girls wields an unspoken power, and bullies take advantage of this. Young females do not announce to the world of which clique they are an unspoken member; it is something that is just known amongst of the divas (the queenbees and often the most popular girls in the clique), and they have no difficulty with decoding. A few of these divas, at times, are crowned with the title “she’s all that.” The meaning of this term fluctuates, depending on who is bestowing this crown upon the other girl’s head, another clique member or an outsider.

Each incident of bullying can make an adolescent feel “less than.” This experience of being “less than” can be obvious. For Liza, this involved the desire for straight hair, while Bethany was not thin enough. Rhonda’s feeling of “less than” is a result of being a nerd in 6th grade. The adolescent females’ feelings of being “less than” can be obvious, or hidden.

Liza tells of a time in gym class. “We were playing in gym [softball], and I like throw the ball and they always catch it and they say, “You throw like a girl.” She says, “Well, they think they throw like guy[s]. [They think they throw] better than I do.” The hidden code is saying, it is better to be strong and throw the ball like a male athlete, or to be a good female athlete.

“Cliques provide protection, elevate one’s status, and teach outsiders a lesson” (Brown, 2003, p. 94). At times, these divas, who “bitch slap” (a term for a hard slap on the face) each other, appear to be above the law, thus there is no recourse for the bullied. This is the world of the queen divas and their ‘frienemies’ (friends yet enemies). They rule with an

iron fist to control the hallway gossip, the birthday parties, the sleepovers, and the cafeteria politics without uttering a word. Liza reveals how she felt left out at a birthday party. “When I’m like sitting there reading, they don’t even MIND (her emphasis) that I’m just sitting there alone. I go to a lot of birthday parties, but, I’m just . . . [I] get over it. There were 4 other girls at this party.”

To most adults, these girls look, dress, and act in the same manner, but one must take a closer look. There are queenbees and wannabees (workerbees), and their roles, as in the hive, are different in the clique. Just as the queenbee in a hive can be identified because she is the largest bee and lives at the center of the hive, so too, can the middle school queenbee. She, too, is at the center of the clique with her wannabees circling around her, and in some way, even though it might not be in physical size, she dominates the wannabees. The power of the queenbee and her clique reigns supreme.

Andrea tells of the code of silence, or circle of silence. She says her friend Kari has called her and that she was talking to the leader of the group [the queenbee], and she said, “I didn’t say anything.” You can even call everybody and they will say that I didn’t say anything. “So, I just dropped it” says Andrea. I inquired as to how this code of silence was reinforced. She quietly says, “I don’t really know. I just kind of dropped it after they just kept on telling me to talk to other people.” [At this point, I believe Andrea knew she was being ostracized from the circle of girls, and no matter whom she asked, she would not get an answer concerning who was talking about her, or what was said.]

Physical size may be a form of dominance, as is being in a higher grade at school, being popular, and having the “in things.” Each is unspoken, a form of nonverbal communication and intimidation. “It has been said that only man has a form of communication superior to that of the honey bee” (Blackiston, 2002, p. 21). Bees not only

communicate via their pheromones; they also use implicit body language. Workerbees dance in code. The round dance and the waggle dance are used to indicate to the other workerbees that a food source has been located. Code words are unavoidable in the world of pre-teens and teens. The words spoken by these buzzing girls are only known to them. I ask Rhonda what the term “Emo” means, and at first, she responds with a physical description: “It’s black, tight pants, kind of Goth, a bit more girly, and cutting yourself.” During our third conversation, she states that “Emo” means emotional. Silence is deeply ingrained in the social world of a female.

Anger is rarely articulated and every day of school can be a new social minefield that realigns itself without warning. During times of conflict, girls will turn on another with a language and justice only they can understand. Behind a façade of female intimacy lies a terrain traveled in secret, marked with anguish, and nourished by silence. (Simmons, 2002, p. 3)

Andrea had been bullied for several years, yet her parents were alerted when her father discovered numerous notes in her backpack. The notes she had been hiding all year were no longer silent. After having kept this secret for such a long period of time, her physical appearance and demeanor had changed. This code of silence affects her lived body. Andrea states: “It was frustrating because where ever I would walk there would be girls whispering and laughing. [I] felt frustrated, because they were talking about me, and I didn’t know what I did. I didn’t ever smile and I always like had an angry look on my face, and I was depressed.” This soul-crushing aggression ruins the workerbees’ self-esteem and social status; queenbees’ unspoken rules operate in their own hive and their own world.

The stillness of girls also affects their lived relationality. This silent treatment can be extremely cruel, especially when they glance at you and give you that knowing look ; “We’re

talking about you and you can't do anything about it," or as Liza says, you know they just called you a "b'ach"; or they whisper loud enough for you to hear them call you "f-ugly" groans Andrea. Yet, girls can mete out injury without speaking a word, whether it is in the hallway, the classroom, or on the school bus. Morgan states, "I think that they are going to make fun of me [if I tell somebody], and then it will just get worse, the bullying"; and the stillness continues. Yes, it is easier to spot physical aggression versus social aggression. This silent buzzing is difficult for adults to name, not to mention identify, for the buzzing is unending. Simmons (2002) states:

As we push girls harder and expect more, girlhood's codes will continue to divide them from one another. These codes have confused, shifting meanings. They are built on a second layer of truth hidden beneath a deceptive exterior. They leave girls ever suspicious of what is really being said and who will be branded next, leaving deep fissures of trust between them. . . . Friendships are corroded in the silence that is a weak substitute for what must be expressed, for what is real and human and yet feels so sinful. (p. 127)

Friendships involve being able to communicate with words that have the same meanings. The codes and words are ever changing. You never know what's right, or what's wrong, who is in or who is out, or what is good or what is bad. This makes the world of a middle school girl all the more unsettling.

"Bee"—ing Worthy, In the Clique

do not tease

your individuality

by just

trying to be

different.

only in the end

will you see—

conformity is the mindless expression

of self-conscious frailty

which undermines

the ability to be different.

(Esendimir, 2001, p. 58)

Each adolescent girl is unique but, at times, feels it is necessary to hide her individuality. These budding young women have the need to feel that they “fit” in to the clique and desire acceptance. The “worthiness” can be a part of the stillness, or code of silence. The term worthy means, “Having worth or value, or sufficient worth” (Onions, 1966, p. 1013). To be “worthy” is vastly different in the girl world! Rhonda articulates, “To make you worthy you have to deal with them, and tough ‘em out . . . and they will, it’s like a respect-honor thing.” Bethany felt that to fit in and be worthy, meant that you had to be popular, thin, and wear the latest clothes and shoes, [and most likely use the proper words].

Competing with or rejecting girls becomes a way for a girl to separate, distance herself from the inferior ‘others’ unworthy of her friendship, adult approval, or male desire. In a culture that values masculinity and the characteristics that go with it, separating from other girls—separating from an inferior, weak femininity so incapable of attaining real power and control—is the way to gain the power of maleness for themselves. (Chesler, 2003, p. 31)

Morgan did not seem to be worthy of her teacher’s recognition after being intentionally tripped. She says:

I was purposely tripped [by a girl] and that's how I injured my pinky.
and now it's crooked. Sometimes, I hold my shirt over my hand [to hide it],
sometimes I have to wear my pinky brace during sports.

Wormeli (2005) believes that a teacher can bestow "worth" upon a student by calling out a student's name. "Hearing their name may be the only proof these students have that they are worth having their name remembered by a respected adult" (p. 25). Each school and Queenbee have their own definition of "worth" that the bullied must decode.

The Sting of the Drone

Throughout this journey as I have been developing themes, the honey of adolescent girls often includes cliques. I have become aware that female aggression appears in different forms versus the aggression demonstrated by males. While boys will torture each other with noticeable acts of violence, girls manage the opposite. Aristotle discovered, while observing the bee, "That if one nips off a drone's wings and then lets it go, the bees eat off the wings of the remaining drones" (Bishop, 2005, p. 46). Blackiston (2002) states:

Once the weather gets cooler and the mating season comes to a close, the workers will not tolerate having drones around. After all, those fellows have big appetites and would consume a tremendous amount of food during the perilous winter months. They are literally tossed out the door. (p. 31)

In physical education class, Morgan was tripped; she broke the pinky on her right hand. This finger remains crooked, a perpetual reminder of female bullying. If she had belonged to a clique, this might not have happened. It was not the girls, however, but the boys in her class who helped Morgan to her feet as she wiped away the tears. None of the girls came to her rescue. When I ask her about this incident, she states, "I think the guys see, like how . . . like how the other girls treat me, and see that it's really mean [it hurts

emotionally and physically], so I think they just want to help me. Somebody trips me and it's sad." An adolescent interviewed by Brown (2003) declares:

Girls are sometimes called "brutal," "mean" and "tough" and they get "carried away" at times. In fact, according to Brandy, white and working class girls can fight just as bad as boys, but they fight better, because they don't get the little wussy punches, you know they really punch, girls do, they have the power.
(p. 112)

Girls do have "power." The power over others to bully is a supreme power, and it, too, is invisible! The female physical form of aggression seems to be overlooked by other females and teachers. The female bystanders, the Wannabees, choose not to get involved, to overlook the situation as though it did not happen.

Rhonda and Andrea feel that boys just physically fight it out and get over it. They do not appear to have cliques, while girls continue bullying practices. Rhonda says that guys are more physical due to their egos, while girls do more "trash talking" (back biting). It appears as though girls do not forget or forgive as quickly as their male peers. Bethany states that it is just easier being friends with boys. These girls, the buzzing bees, are on a mission to search and destroy, to divide and conquer, and they do so within their tightly knit network of so-called friends. The Queenbee swarms and leaves the colony with numerous workerbees and drones. Underwood (2003) says:

One way that girls may harm each other is by manipulating their romantic relationships as well as their other friendships. Perhaps because girls report valuing attachment and care in their romantic relationships more than do boys, stealing someone's boyfriend or otherwise engineering a romantic betrayal might become a particularly lethal form of social aggression for adolescent females. (p. 172)

Throughout my study, there have been drones involved in each hive. Several of my participants have stated that they prefer to be friends with drones, as there is none of the “drama” that goes along with being friends with the wannabees and the struggle to be accepted by the queenbee. Rachel Simmons (2004) quotes of one the girls she interviewed: “The guys in my grade were always so laid back and chill (this term means easy going) that I decided to start hanging out with them. Before you know it, I had the best friends you could ever ask for” (p. 186). The adolescent bees seem to prefer the straight forwardness of the drone to the passive-aggressive treatment of a queenbee.

“Bee”-ing Ignored

To receive recognition literally means to be known. Someone who recognizes me thereby acknowledges my existence, my very being.

This is not the same as fleetingly noticing people whom one passes in a busy street. Recognition is inextricably intertwined with selfhood and personal identity. (van Manen, 2002a, p. 38)

The physical act of being recognized requires one to be aware of what is occurring around one’s being, and being able to express what is seen, and to put what is seen to words and feelings. These feelings include the inadequacy of being recognized. The bullying of these girls is not fully being taken into account today by adults who observe this cruel societal reality.

Teachers may not all agree on what specific qualities a school should hold, but no teacher will deny that school is a special place, and that therefore, pedagogically speaking, children should experience its corporeal, temporal and spatial dimensions in a positive manner.

(van Manen, 2002a, p. 70)

The buzzing of girls, at times, is almost inaudible. This inaudible buzzing, according to van Mannen (2003), [Is] “knowledge on one level and yet this knowledge is not available to our linguistic competency” (p. 113). Lacking words to describe female bullying is one of the issues yet to be dealt with in our world, predominantly by adults. I rarely am at a loss for words, particularly when I have to describe something very close to me, or important to me. Yet, I, too, have difficulty describing this phenomenon that anguishes my very soul. Bishop (2005) says, “Native North Americans at that time [1621] had never seen bees or honey and had no words for them” (p. 36). Gadamar (1960/2003) so eloquently articulates, “How can we possibly understand anything written in a foreign language if we are thus imprisoned in our own?” (p. 402).

Bethany’s voice reflects the frustration and hurt she felt when the “outside” teachers [paraprofessionals and teachers] responded to her bullying complaints on the playground. She speaks of telling these grown women what had occurred, but these women were busy with their own conversations. They told her they “didn’t see what happened, so it doesn’t matter,” and, “I can’t do anything about it.” Those with a bit more compassion would inquire what had happened. The female principal was confronted with a physical fight between Bethany and another girl, to which she responded that the “girls were to forget about it and to work it out between themselves.” Educators are expected to give their full attention to children, not push the concerns of children aside. Attention is being acknowledged; it means you exist; it is a way to show you care! Girls ostracize each other; being ignored by the principal inflicts an unexplainable hurt, a deeper, unseen, injury. Bethany’s situation remained ignored, hidden behind the walls of her home.

Slowly, Healing Bullying

When individuals see a bee or talk about bees, they often discuss how they suffer from its sting. Rhonda is dealing with the sting in several ways over the time we meet. “The only one [fight] that ever became physical, one time one person took one of my friends then I got between them, and smacked her against the wall and dropped her on the floor.” Rhonda had been identified by the counselor as a victim of bullying who became the queenbee. During my second conversation, Rhonda says that she now walks away from the bullies, “I guess, if you ignore them, [and] you don’t care they’ll stop after awhile.” At our final meeting, Rhonda says this of bullying, “We just started communicating more [with the bully].” Rhonda is growing through the bullying, and is learning difficult lessons in life. I ask Rhonda what she feels would be effective in stopping this bullying. She pauses, and says, “Like I have . . . honestly, there is no way to stop it. No matter what you do there is going to be some kind of bullying going on.” But, will the scars of bullying and being the queenbee heal? Rhonda is easing herself toward finding her niche in the world and striving to reach her full potential. Bees are given little credit for the many positive contributions that they make to the world, as are female adolescent girls.

These medicinal qualities from the products of the bee can be used to heal the ragged souls and the wounds of middle school girls. It is an opportunity for them to search their inner beings and come to terms with their lives. To fully understand this metaphor and its relationship to female bullying and healing, it is important to comprehend Gadamer’s (1960/2003) “fusion of horizons:”

In this the interpreter’s own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one’s own what the text says. (p. 388)

Each bullied adolescent will use a unique blend of bee balm to heal her inner and outer wounds. The balm of one adolescent may work for others; everyone's experiences are distinct. "A peaceful revolution is going on, a women's [girls'] spirituality movement, hidden in plain sight. Through circles of women, healing women, Might the culture come around?" (Bolen, 1999, p. 85).

Our culture is in no hurry to turn around, yet, a lone principal, in the Midwest, is making a permanent mark toward the demise of bullying. This principal says, "I believe that there is a rising number of girl problems at our school. They know the impact of what they are doing to the other girl. They want power and control" (Klootwyk, 2008, Section C, p. 1). This could be the "ripple effect" that is required to implement female bullying policies in small schools, such as the ones my study participants attend. The principal states:

If a girl feels compelled to miss school, then adult intervention must be taken

If a family comes into school complaining about what is going on with their daughter, we will talk to the girl's friends to validate the complaint. After we talk to those involved, we give out a warning and ask them to stop. If that doesn't work we either suspend them, or involve law enforcement. If the problem continues to get worse the child who is affected is moved to a different class, where the terror isn't located.

Sometimes the intervention focuses on helping the victim as much as it does the offender [the bully]. (Klootwyk, 2008, Section C, p. 1)

In Chapter Five, I make recommendations to aid in bringing an end to bullying, to assist in bringing forth the acceptance of diversity. "For true systemic change to occur, the entire school needs to move out of a state of denial toward a very different state of awareness" (Garbino & de Lara, 2002, p. 202). A plea uttered aloud loses its meaning if there is no one to hear it, to respond to it. "If humankind would only let its fear and prejudice go

[so individuals may hear and see], it would gradually learn the inestimable riches and nourishment that diversity brings” (O’Donohue, 2002, p. 260). We must teach tolerance and sensitivity to our children, for no amount of monitoring, security, metal detectors, armed guards, or other such things can keep our children safe unless they learn to respect others.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE HIVE: IN RETROSPECT

Examining the Bee and the Honey

Many things can wait. Children cannot.

Today their bones are being formed,

Their blood is being made,

Their senses are being developed.

To them we cannot say” tomorrow”

Their name is today.

(Gabriela Mistral, in Bernall, 1999, p. 17)

Since I started this journey, North Dakota has had a number of bomb threats written on bathroom mirrors by middle school “bees” along with other publicized bullying incidents. The majority of schools that I have consulted consider “female bullying” a type of harassment, or even more specifically “sexual harassment,” and have not developed policies specific to female bullying. There are individuals who believe they know what children need regarding their education, “*in loco parentis*.” This term states in the absence of the parent, these individuals appear to know what is best for the child. The North Dakota House of Representatives had initiated a policy about bullying, but it did not make it out of the committee in the House of Representatives, so the problem remains largely ignored. The question I have explored is, **What is the lived experience of middle school girls who have been victimized by bullying?**

On this dissertation path, I have evolved and become more aware, open-minded, and appreciative regarding the creation of honey, teaching, and the struggles of middle school girls. I have become more observant of “girls under the radar” and their tactics. I even have

entertained the idea of acquiring bees as a form of livestock, just as did Holly Bishop (2005), the author of *Robbing the Bees*. In addition, I have come to believe that these fuzzy, duty-bound, yellow bugs are underappreciated; their tasks as pollinator, honey maker, and wax producer are among the many contributions that are over looked by society today. I sense the same thing about girls who have been bullied. Their contributions to this world are not fully appreciated; they are just learning who to “bee,” and have not yet been completely tainted by societal expectations. Also, throughout this journey, I have gained more personal insight as to who I am as a “being”—a mother, a teacher, and a researcher.

On this journey, I have used the philosophic framework of Martin Heidegger and of Hans-Georg Gadamer to bring forth themes, while, at the same time, trying to bracket and put aside my preconceptions of being and bullying. The common themes and language that I have discovered during my conversations have provided existential meaning, as the experience of being bullied has been revealed through lived body, time, place, and relationality. Van Manen’s work has permitted me to call forth the meaning of pedagogy in relation to the teacher, the student, and the subject matter.

A curriculum for being is based on the assumption that teachers are caring, self-motivated, and interested in providing settings for the enhancement of the person whom they teach. Teaching then is not legislated but comes about through the intensity and care of the conversations among persons striving to become more sensitive and knowing. (Berman, Hultgren, Lee, Rivkin, Roderick, & Aoki, 1991, p. 10)

I have used the guidance of Gadamer and van Manen, to open the “Bee” metaphor to assist with adding to the philosophic foundation in Family and Consumer Sciences.

Heidegger’s *Being and Time* assists me in drawing out care and being. This chapter draws

upon the themes that were introduced up in Chapter Four to provide pedagogical recommendations for all those who are entrusted with the education and care of adolescents, in order to address the phenomenon of bullying. Finally, to further this journey into uncharted waters, I provide recommendations for future research.

“Bee”—ing There: A Journey of Care, in Uncharted Waters

In Chapter One I refer to this journey of writing my dissertation as a journey into uncharted waters. These unexplored waters may not be reproduced, like the navigation plan of a ship, for others who desire a similar target of “being there,” because there is no research design or blueprint to follow (van Manen, 2003). Each researcher and each “bee” will encounter different seasons of growth, fluctuating weather conditions, and may find an abundance of blossoms, or hardly any blossoms from which to gather nectar and pollen. Van Manen (2003) says:

Lived experience is the starting point and the end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence—in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (p. 36)

My research has made accessible an additional confirmation of “care” as an integral component to teaching middle school girls, or any students. The conversations with these blossoming flowers, and my search for meaning unearthed in their experiences, reiterate the contributions made by “care” to the human spirit and the soul. One cannot effectively teach without care, or the contributions of the circle. Bolen declares (1999, p. 14):

What the world needs now is an infusion of the kind of wisdom women [girls] have and the form of the circle itself is an embodiment of that wisdom. Marshall

McLuhan's famous expression, 'The medium is the message,' greatly applies to women's circles: a circle is nonhierarchical—this is what equality is like. This is how a culture behaves when it listens and learns from everyone in it.

The Flavor of the Harvested Honey

Extracting the themes (the honey) at times was frustrating, in part, because I knew the pain that pierced the souls of these adolescent girls, as well as my own daughter's soul. Yet, I had to re-read and listen again to their pain through the transcripts and audio-recordings. I recall how difficult it was not to console each girl, or give each of them a reassuring hug. Each of their stories were the same, but some-how different. The mother in me wanted to ease their pain, to make their path less difficult, to tell them things would get better, and to hold their heads high. The five participants' contributions have influenced the flavor of the honey.

Gadamer (1960/2003) believes that the act of knowing is continually changing and evolving. The lifetime of the queen is a mere 2 short years; the workerbee expires within several weeks (Bishop, 2005). The middle school girl is just learning who she is and what she is capable of "bee"-ing. If, what Gadamer states, is accurate, what meaning do I provide for myself, educators, parents, and all others who work with these budding young women?

As I view the hive in retrospect, and step back from my conversations and writings, I look at the meanings that I have brought forth regarding the experience of being bullied. It took a bit of time for these middle school girls to trust me; at times it was like "pulling teeth." Once they felt I was worthy of their trust, the conversations flowed like honey being tapped from the wax honeycomb. This tasting of the honey, and what my research has divulged has

not been a straightforward task. It has taken me back to my years in junior high: deciding upon a new hairstyle, only to change my mind just before the beautician took her scissors to it, or purchasing a dress for the dance, to return it days later for a corduroy blazer and pants. This part of my life and my research are under a new and more powerful microscope, tempered with maturity, thus, given more understanding.

“Bee”-ing and *Cura*

Through my conversations with Bethany, Morgan, Rhonda, Liza, and Andrea I have come to know that these individuals, these relationships, are each built on different levels of care. During each conversation, trust was elevated; at times it rose tremendously. “Like conversation, interpretation is a circle closed by the dialectic of question and answer” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 389). The heritage of *cura* (care) is portrayed in the devoted consideration each beekeeper gives to her apiary, and each teacher to her classroom of students. Heidegger’s chapter on *cura* from *Being and Time* provides us with a very old example of *cura*. Heidegger (1927/2003, p. 242) writes:

When ‘care’ was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. ‘Care’ asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While ‘Care’ and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be the arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: “Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since

‘Care’ first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called ‘homo,’ for it is made out of humus.”

Teachers, like ‘Care’ in the fable, are not the source of the body of a child, but shape the child through their care. The spirit of care has been shown by teachers throughout time, and has substantially thickened and added flavor to the honey of today.

As I previously state, and would so often tell my Family and Consumer Sciences student teachers, to obtain the best from your students you must emanate from your very being the following saying: “Students do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” To have *cura*, the teacher must demonstrate this component. She must walk the walk, and talk the talk, although there is no one preeminent way or best way to show ‘care.’ A teacher demonstrating care for a female who has been bullied, might pull the girl aside and inquire, “I noticed your grades are slipping and I would like to see you after school,” or “I have noticed that you don’t hang around your old friends any more.” These comments would come from a teacher or counselor who is fully aware of the signs that girls emit who have been bullying victims. This individual would continue to watch the victim for additional tell-tale signals, and as needed, alert the principal and parents.

Rhonda demonstrated her ‘care’ through concern for a peer who was involved in “cutting.” Rhonda, talked to her guidance counselor regarding this girl’s cutting herself, and befriended her. Andrea’s father showed his ‘care’ by taking the notes he discovered in Andrea’s backpack and showing them to the principal. The principal alerted the guidance counselor at the school, who talked to all of the girls about bullying. The principal had the girls stay after school for their actions. Care shows itself in different forms.

Donald Smiley demonstrated ‘care’ for his bees. He simply states, as he gently brushes the bees down to the brood frames, and then carries the honey laden frames to his pick-up truck, “Don’t anyone step on my bees, [because they will provide future honey]” (Bishop, 2005, p. 79).

Cura and Pedagogy

Good teachers *are* what they teach.

(van Manen, 2002a, p. 65)

Cura, or to care is an action verb. Pedagogy is a noun that indicates the teaching of children, use of appropriate teaching methods, and attending to the person of each child (van Manen 2003). Van Manen says that a phenomenological hermeneutic text is required to maintain a pedagogical voice; what happens to students today can affect their future. To be assured of a good “honey flow” the beekeeper must keep a vigilant eye over her bees, and give thoughtful meditation to the decisions she makes, while reflecting upon her mistakes. “Within that intent of reflection there is the direct attempt to help students make explicit the assumptions underlying that which is already known—but not articulated” (Hultgren, 1989, p. 135).

“*Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher*” [beekeeper] (Palmer, 1998, p. 10). Great educators combine their subject matter, the students in their class, and their very “selves” into their classroom teaching. Outstanding teachers give their souls to their work; in a sense they lose themselves in it. Good teachers know their students, and, at times can even catch the “queen of mean” in the act. They are aware of what female bullying consists and deal with the bully and the victim. “What is unique in Mrs. Hawkin’s classroom is not what she does but who she is. Warmth and humor and contagious energy cannot be replicated and cannot be written

into any standardized curriculum” (Kozol, 1991, p.51). “It is our role as adults [teachers] to guide young women to form more positive self-identities, which will in turn lead to more supportive relationships with others” (Dellasega & Charisse, 2003, p. 3). Teachers can step forward and let students know that female bullying will not be tolerated in their classrooms. This can be done by establishing classroom rules that are consistently enforced, talking with the girls one-to-one, talking to them in groups, defining bullying for them, or by having them role play examples of girl-to-girl aggression. “If one [queenbee] dominates the circle, it is a problem for everyone. Remember that this is a circle of equals” (Bolen, 1999, p. 64). Girls with their radar screens can detect that which teachers chose to ignore, as well as when they do not enforce the school rules concerning bullying.

Pedagogy: Being and *Cura*

Van Manen (2003) states the following concerning the definition of pedagogy:

We have to accept the possibility that the notion of pedagogy is ineffable, and that no scientific observation or conceptual formulation will lead to an unambiguous definition of pedagogy. If pedagogy is ineffable then it may also be beyond the effort of behavioral teacher competence or parent skill-training, since it is not definable or teachable in a direct or straightforward manner. (p. 143)

I understand van Manen’s struggle with the vagueness of pedagogy; I have made a concerted effort to define it and, yet, recognize the difficulty of succinct definition. It is more than doing the “right thing” with a student. It involves a love of subject matter AND of students. “Tactful educators have developed a caring attentiveness to the unique; the uniqueness of children, the uniqueness of every situation, and the uniqueness of individual lives” (van Manen, 2003, p. 8). To further clarify van Manen’s indistinguishable definition of pedagogy he says that after “living side by side with adults, children soon prompt [within

us] increasingly reflective questions. In other words, as soon as we gain a lived sense of the pedagogic quality of parenting and teaching, we start to question and doubt ourselves.

Pedagogy *is* this questioning, this doubting. We wonder: Did I do the right thing?" (p. 147)

We demonstrate the being of a teacher through caring about what and how we work with children on a daily basis. "Teaching tugs at the heart, opens the heart, even breaks the heart—and the more one loves teaching, the more heartbreaking it can be" (Palmer, 1998, p. 11). *Cura* shows students that they are more than a number in the grade book. As teachers, we identify each student as an individual. Excellent teachers acknowledge students by name; they compliment and recognize their ideas; they REALLY know each student in some manner. There is a sense of connectedness with each student no matter what the subject matter. Such a teacher knows her inner being, because she cares, she opens up her heart—for to teach is to risk being hurt, just as the bee master risks being stung. A teacher who cares will not tolerate bullying, and her students will not be afraid to report to her bullying incidents they have experienced. "When a girl can put the experience into words, it becomes less big to her" (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003, p. 174).

Liza provides us with an example of "bullying becoming less big to her."

Liza was adopted. Her mother was very nervous about me interviewing her daughter, due, in part, because the biological birth mother was attempting to contact Liza. This, in turn, made Liza upset and uncomfortable; thus, I allowed her mother to sit in on our conversations. It was during our second conversation that the buzzing adolescent, and parent, began to noticeably relax. Liza was able to release her honey.

According to van Manen (2002a):

Pedagogical thoughtfulness seems to be a reflective capacity, it is formed by careful reflection on past experiences. And now, in the immediacy of having

to act in this moment, there is an emphasis on “sensing” what is significant in the concrete situation. Pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact depend on the cultivated ability to perceive and listen to young people. (p. 43)

In hindsight, I wish I had the pedagogical thoughtfulness and time to carry out every encounter with students in this manner. Time is very precious when teaching; even the movement [time] between classes must be calculated. Lessons require planning; papers are calling to be graded; meetings have to be attended; and the prescribed curriculum beckons us to follow, as it is written. Yes, teaching is a busy profession; an alert teacher is aware of the buzzing.

Teachers are told the amount of time they spend with each class—say, fifty-five minutes, five times a week. Even though they are competent scholars, they are rarely trusted with the selection of the texts and teaching materials they are to use.

(Kreisberg, 1992, p. 10)

Teachers can give administrators in-put as to the topics they want to participate in at teacher in-services, and they have a choice of classes they are required to take in order to renew their licenses. This is where bullying education can have an impact on how teachers react to female aggression in the classroom, thus, starting a ripple of change, as one tosses a pebble in a pond.

“Bee”—ing Authentic

Lashley (1994) posits:

[Authentic care] means releasing self from indifference and distancing, a posture often found to exist in an administered bureaucratized society. It means finding real meaning in relationship with another, caring deeply, and affirming caring as a foundation for responsible existence. (p. 49)

To fully embrace the “bee”-ing of a teacher, it is impossible NOT to care, yet, the adolescent females in my study encountered inauthentic care. At times, no educators heard their obscure cries for help, or even the more obvious cries. Such an example is Morgan, who was intentionally tripped in gym, and the teacher appeared not to notice. Rhonda discovered this inauthentic care when no teacher addressed the loud name calling in the hallways, while Bethany called upon the playground supervisors and the principal for assistance. These adolescents were met by inauthentic educators. These young girls were alienated from a world that refuses to recognize their full-potentials.

As my conversations progressed with my study participants, I found myself becoming less judgmental, and listened more closely as the five budding bees brought forth their issues to me. I now have a better sense of balance between the “duties” of a teacher and “bee”-ing a teacher. The very “bee”-ing of a teacher allows one to “think, and act outside the box,” and to permit students to color outside the lines! An example of “coloring outside the lines” would be to start a group for middle school girls after school that strengthens their self-esteem and emotional well-being. This group may be led by successful women in addition to teachers in the area. The group can hold programs that address, “the issue of girl-on-girl aggression, and provide insight and successful strategies for dealing with ways girls love, hurt, and can heal one another” (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003, p. 172). Additional topics might be exclusion, healthy communication skills, or possibly a teen or adult mentoring program.

As a 6th grade student, my daughter Sydney attended a similar group after school called “Girl Power.” I gladly signed the parental permission form necessary for her to attend; the goal of this group was to ease the transition from elementary school to middle school. Each student had her photo taken, holding a heart that had “I Like Me” boldly written upon it. This was the beginning of numerous sessions that included: speakers from local

universities encouraging girls to take math and science courses, a field trip to the planetarium, and a session on healthy eating.

Coloroso (2003) says the following two programs are effective in thwarting teen violence: *Safe Teen: A Life Skills and Violence Prevention Program* by Anita Roberts, and *Personal and Social Responsibility and Mastering Anger* by Constance Dembrowsky [no further information is provided as to the effectiveness]. These programs include lessons on self-discipline, anger management, and embracing differences (pp. 180-181). If these programs do not meet the needs of a specific school, the school itself can develop a program after examining the bullying that occurs in the school, and define and adapt the program as needed. Dr. Dan Olweus, the father of [male] bullying prevention has developed a “highly successful program in Norway, that has proven to reduce bullying in schools that have adopted it” (Coloroso, 2003, p. 176). The program developed by Dr. Olweus (2004) deserves to be examined if a school is developing its own bullying program. Dr. Olweus (2004) says:

There were marked reductions—by 50 percent or more—in bullying/victim problems during the two years following the introduction of the intervention program. . . . The intervention program not only affected already existing victimization problems; it also reduced the number (and percentage) of *new* victims. (p. 114)

Presently, there are numerous female bullying programs, but no studies are out concerning their effectiveness. Brown (2003) has created a nonprofit program, “Hardy Girls Healthy Women.” “Hardiness is a concept taken from health psychology to describe people who continue to thrive in stressful circumstances” (p. 218). She also encourages girls to “seek out girl friendly websites like *Zoey’s Room* that provide positive cyberspaces for girls to connect and be creative” (p. 218). Such programs and websites can promote sisterhood. “We shouldn’t be selling girls out to old stereotypes; we should be joining them in creating a

counterpublic [sic] discourse about girls, about power, and possibility” (Brown, 2003, p. 228).

“Bee”-ing Anxious

Girl Power has made a significant impact on my daughter and who she is today. Yes, she still encountered middle school bullying, but it lessened her middle school anxiety.

“When we meet another person in his or her landscape or world, we meet that person first of all through his or her body” (van Manen, 2003, p. 103). It was with great trepidation that I met with Morgan (my notebook, my questions and my audio-recorder in hand). I entertained the thought, “How will my questions and her answers fill one side of this empty tape?” There was no lost space or time!

Because we live in time, there is always an interim period between us and what is coming. When we grow anxious, we fill up that interim with every imaginable disaster. Our fantasy turns wild and dark. Then when the dreaded event comes, it is never as bad as we have imagined and we are hugely relieved. (O’Donohue, 2002, pp. 66-67)

The anxiety of Morgan, Bethany, Lizzy, Rhonda, and Andrea would, indeed, affect the amount of honey they shared and its flavor. I, on the other hand, was still nervous and lost my place among my questions as Morgan revealed her experiences with bullying. I was left with the distinct feeling that she was trying to “figure out what I wanted,” similar to a student attempting to figure out what it takes to get an “A” in the class. “Research suggests that experiencing peer victimizations via disdainful facial expressions and gestures uniquely predicts depression and anxiety for adolescents, even above and beyond other forms of social aggression” (Underwood, 2003, p. 33). These raw “non-verbal” slams inflicted from a drama

queen can start the down-ward spiral of the female bee. Pipher (2001) states that girls will tell her “I’m not good in math.” Her research suggests:

Girls have trouble with math because math requires exactly the qualities that many junior-high [middle school] girls lack—confidence, trust in one’s own judgment and the ability to tolerate frustration without becoming overwhelmed.

Anxiety interferes with problem solving in math. A vicious circle develops—girls get anxious, which interferes with problem solving, and so they fail and are even more anxious and prone to self-doubt the next time around. (Pipher, 2001, p. 63)

In the past, teachers have used red pens to mark papers. This red was as ominous as the red lights of an ambulance, or in years past, the flashing red lights of a police officer’s vehicle in one’s rear view mirror, or the red blood caused by an injury. The red, whether from a ball point pen, gel pen, a colored pencil, or colored marker can have an anxious effect on the body, the soul, and the mind! Personal and familial expectations influence the viewpoints of students, too. The teacher and the student share in the responsibility of the student’s work. As teachers, we are now encouraged to use a variety of different colors to correct students’ assignments, with the hope of calming the anxiety, as the papers of our students are returned to them. Anxiety can lead to being frozen in time; yet, it can lead us forward to growth, thus developing new honey.

I have kept this in mind as I write; I detest succumbing to anxiety and frustration, as they are an unproductive use of time! The motivational words of Francine Hultgren (personal communication, September 20, 2007) have guided me through writing blocks: “You just need to continue to write your way through it.” These words have kept me writing, for there is “power” in the written word and the unspoken word. Heidegger believes that as one becomes accepting of anxiety one becomes fearless. Moran (2000, p. 241) goes on to state,

“But anxiety thus serves to reveal that we are caught up in a structure of care about the world; that is, it is not a matter of indifference for us.”

“Bee—”ing There . . . Making a Difference

I realize that a misunderstood and disregarded phenomenon, as that of bullying, can be brought out of the darkness by one person, as van Manen (2002a) explains:

Two people are walking along the ocean shore when they notice a strange phenomenon. Scores of starfish everywhere have washed up along the sandy beach. Many are dead “An awful sight” the one says, “but that is nature.” Meanwhile the companion has bent down and carefully examines one particular starfish and lifts it from the sand. “What are you doing” asks the first person. “Don’t you see that doing this does not matter?” “Helping one won’t make any difference!” “It matters to this one,” the companion simply says, and continues to carry the starfish back to the ocean waters. (pp. 8-9)

I believe this dissertation topic can make a difference, no matter how large or how small. A ripple effect can be created. I begin by throwing the lone starfish to safety.

Mortenson and Relin (2006) state that it is better “to embrace the simple concept to fight terror with books and promote peace through the pen” (p. 334). I sense that individuals (teachers, students, and adults) will pause and reflect upon what I have put to pen. As I squeeze the plastic bear-shaped bottle, and empty the last of its sweet contents into my tea, I now know the endeavors required—commencing bee to honey, from conversations to meaning.

Recommendations for “Bee”—ing and Care in Pedagogy

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has

(Margaret Mead, as cited in Bolen, 1999 p. 81)

As I continue to write about bees and bullying, another headline captures my attention, “Schoolyard fight leaves girls injured” (Schoolyard fight, 2008, p. 1). This incident, too, occurred in the Midwest, approximately 50 miles from my home. A thirteen year old girl suffered a mild concussion, a fractured jaw, and a broken tooth. A teacher broke up the fight; it was video-taped by the school’s surveillance camera. It is to protect the bully, the bystander, and the bullied that I make my recommendations. The “doing of” phenomenological research implies action must be taken pertaining to the phenomenon.

“Emphasis must be placed on preventing bullying rather than simply responding to events” (Besag, 2006, p. 208). Girls who have been bullied cannot stop it by themselves; teachers, adults, and community members can help. Girls should have the opportunity to be in schools with climates and cultures where girls are not afraid, and that do not tolerate bullying. Elliot Arnonson, states in Coloroso’s (2003) book:

A school that ignores the values of empathy, tolerance, and compassion—or, worse still, pays lip service to these values while doing nothing concrete and effective to promotes these values—creates an atmosphere that is not only unpleasant for the “losers,” but one that short-changes the “winners” as well. (p. 190)

One of the first items to be addressed as a teacher or parent is to see if your school has an anti-bullying policy; then check to see if each type of bullying is covered in the policy: physical, verbal, cyber-bullying, and relational. “Such policies may take the form of policy statements formulated by staff or even by students themselves” (Underwood, 2003, p. 217). Underwood (2003) states that such policies need to be specific and identify what “behavior is acceptable at school,” and specify “strategies that teachers and students should

implement when bullying is suspected” (217). In addition, she feels that “focus programs” should be utilized for the victim and the bully.

In an effort to be proactive, educators need to be made aware of the signs sent out by the victim, spiraling to the ground. The signals given out by my participants include: not having one close friend (being a loner) and longing to belong; appearing to be depressed or sad and being an invisible outsider; “bee”-ing different; and “bee”-ing cyber-bullied.

Longing. Each of the themes unearthed in some way is related to the other, just as the desire to belong is related to being an invisible outsider. I have discovered bullying can be a dis-empowering circle—just the same, it can be a circle of empowerment. As I reflect on what my conversations and writing have made known in relation to bullying, I confirm the need middle school girls have to feel as though they belong as a valued part of the school. Girls, in various ways, make known to other girls they are not wanted. Bethany was physically bullied and felt, “They didn’t want me there.” She and the other study participants were called names, while Andrea was ignored (ostracized) by her “frienimies”, as was Morgan, who lost her best friend. O’Donohue (2002) declares, “When the friend departs, the inner house of belonging falls to ruins; this is why absence holds such acute presence and poignancy” (p. 226).

Morgan relates being ignored by her gym teacher as she fell, permanently injuring her pinky; Bethany was ignored by the paraprofessionals, and her complaint brushed aside by the principal. Brown (2003) says: “We have all seen, tragically, how teachers and administrators can contribute to school violence by looking the other way” (p. 214). The theme of longing to belong makes me wonder—have these teachers and paraprofessionals lost their love of students—their care? Do they not see that children in their midst desire to belong? It might be easier in smaller communities to “get away with going through the motions and NOT

doing one's job properly." Yet, students must have had "care" at some point in time. The absence of care, however, rings throughout each explicated theme.

Being invisible and being an outsider. I am concerned with the lack of care and attentiveness by the para-professionals, teachers, and administrators given to girls who have been bullied, physically, verbally or relationally. It is as though it is not being acknowledged; by showing these girls "care" and talking to them face to face, they would be made visible and valued. Everyone desires to be known for belonging to "something." I return to Kreisberg (1992): "What are the dynamics of power we as teachers can create in our relationships with our students that will be empowering for both our students and ourselves?" (p. xxii). Have our teachers been dis-empowered? Thus, the dis-interest? Our schools are one of the main sources of socialization while adolescent girls are crying out to be made visible, for someone to hear them. If they were given this recognition, they could potentially be contributing members of society.

Differences. Words meant to diss another girl, and make her feel "less than" take away the potential power from the bullied. Such was the case with Rhonda having been called a "dirty Jew that should be hung" because her religion was not the norm. No individual merits being stripped of her dignity and self-worth; we should celebrate our differences. Sensitizing our students regarding our differences could be of assistance. If we celebrated our differences, perhaps we might become stronger members of society. We would be heard, and less able to be ignored, as a circle of women [girls]. Our differences may be religious in nature, or these differences may be shown as not having the "in" things. In the words of O'Donohue (2002):

Consumerist culture worships accumulation and power; it establishes its own gaudy hierarchies. In admiring the achievement and velocity of these tiger

economies, we refuse to notice the paw marks of its ravages and the unglamorous remains of its prey. All of these factors contribute to the dissolution of real presence. (p. 229)

O'Donohue's words ring, once again, of the longing to belong, to be recognized. As I write, regarding the explicated themes, I have discovered the power of the circle—and its ability to dis-empower, or empower, as girls gather together. One theme leads to another—all related, not knowing where one ends and one begins.

Being cyber-bullied. Cyber-bullying is the last theme addressed, and it closes the circle on bullying; yet, each form of bullying overlaps another. All are related. Cyber-bullying is an impersonal, cowardly tool used to attack another female, and due to the bully's ability to hide behind a screen, it can be more vicious. The bully is present, but not present. O'Donohue (2002) states:

In post-modern culture, we tend more and more to inhabit virtual reality rather than actual reality. More and more time is spent in the shadowlands of the computer world; this is a world which is all foreground but has no background. (p. 228)

Andrea and Rhonda were cyber-bullied. This brings about the question: How are schools able to address cyber-bullying that is meted out from home, yet, leaves its effects at school? If the cyber-bullying was enacted at the school, most likely there would be consequences. In an attempt to answer this question, I suggest that schools tell their students only to give their e-mail addresses to trusted friends, (but, friends can become frenemies). As difficult as it may be, schools can monitor as closely as possible the use of computers by students. Students can be encouraged by their teachers and administrators to report cyber-bullying incidents, thus, hopefully eliminating the tattletelling stigma. Cyber-bullying,

whether it originates at school, or at home can be nipped in the bud, or at least slowed down by the involvement of law-enforcement. Swartz (2005) states:

Cyber-bullying is so pervasive in Westchester County, NY, that officials held a half-day conference . . . for students, parents, teachers, and law-enforcement officials. Six hundred attended [the meeting]. When 200 students were asked how many had been a victim or perpetrator or had a friend who was either, all but six raised their hands (Section 2, para. 5). School officials walk a tightrope to protect victims without trampling the free speech rights of bullies—many of whom operate anonymously. If schools harshly discipline cyber-bullies, they risk litigation from angry parents [despite the cyber-bullying stemming from the bullie’s home]. (Section 3, para.1)

Cyber-bullying becomes a fragile balance between the free speech of the bully and protecting the victim. Educating students, parents, educators, and community members can assist with this social plague. According to Swartz (2005), experts in face-to-face bullying “advocate work shops for education [parents], and community leaders to detect and respond to the problem, tutorials on how technology influences behavior, and a grounding in legal issues” (Section 4. para. 1). “Until new rules [laws] are in place, however, many schools are holding anti-cyber-bullying assemblies (Section 3 para. 7). Students should be able to feel as safe at school as they are at home.

“Bee—”ing Transformed

I have found the subject of female bullying intriguing and transforming. For me, “being” means “being in the moment,” and giving that individual my full attention. I believe one of the greatest gifts you can give someone is your “time.” As a mother, the essence of being has made me a more attentive and caring listener, particularly when my children have

things to share. These times, often occur when I am reading, just before my bedtime. They casually peek into my room, and sit on the edge of the bed to “talk” about the events of the day. I cherish these moments, as I realize my teenagers will soon be leaving the nest.

As a substitute teacher, and in-service speaker, I might be the only individual a student or teacher shares her concerns with that day. I feel privileged having been the confidant, even if the student or teacher needs another individual to “vent” her concerns to, despite the fact that I might not be able to do anything to ease the situation. Sometimes listening is all that is needed. If the concern warrants further action, I would take the issue to a higher level. I have discovered there are many adolescents “screaming out” for their parents’ and teachers’ attention.

The research process has given me a new sense of what it means to be patient. Research is a process and involves the time of numerous people connected to the study. There are times it cannot be hurried along, but must be methodically thought through, and re-written. The topic of my study, yet, for me, has raised a number recommendations, and questions that would assist in understanding female bullying.

Honey and Recommendations for Future Teachers

The adults in teacher education programs are neophytes, learning about the art and science of teaching, and honing it, as they continue to query themselves. Van Manen (2003) articulates: “The preparation of educators obviously includes much more than the teaching of knowledge and skills, more even than a professional ethical code or moral craft” (p. 9). These students need to learn more than theory, skills, and subject matter knowledge; hopefully, they will develop pedagogical thoughtfulness. In van Manen’s words:

““Self”” is the sense of pedagogy out of which a parent or teacher acts when he or she acts as a parent or teacher. Pedagogy is that essence, that transformation, that converts

woman into mother, man into father (into teacher, into therapist, into grandparent, etc.). At this level belongs the thoughtfulness and the practical tact that knows how to appraise the pedagogic significance of [a child who has been bullied]. (p. 89)

I have found, through my research, that in the schools that my study participants attend, the administrators believe that their harassment or sexual harassment policies are good enough. They will cover any bullying incident. Through this false belief, they have failed to recognize the stifling and life-long effects of bullying on adolescent girls. As stated by Gabarino and de Lara (2002), “Educational psychologist Patricia Kyle found that teachers [future and current] can feed [a] potentially violent situation by choosing inappropriate behaviors themselves such as ‘yelling, using sarcasm, put-downs or humiliation’” (p. 206). The girls in my study did not encounter these behaviors, but the potential remains. Morgan, Bethany, Liza, Rhonda, and Andrea remained invisible. Middle school students should be taught in an environment where they feel safe, valued, and care is demonstrated by the teachers. Informing future teachers is a huge step toward educating others about bullying; freeing adolescent females from bullying can help them become empowered and reach their full potential. A gigantic leap toward the demise of bullying will be achieved as teacher education programs include bullying as a part of the curriculum.

Bullying and Parents

Parents can talk to their daughters about bullying, inquire as to how bullying is dealt with at school, and ask to be informed if their daughter is bullied. In addition, parents have the responsibility to report any incidents of female bullying that their daughter has encountered. I also recommend, that parents place their computer in an area where they can oversee what their child is viewing. Some individuals might perceive this as a form of snooping, but it can truly be seen as care. Our children are our future, and as parents, we need

to be there to protect them. It does not hurt to casually look over your child's shoulder, as did Andrea's mother.

If your school has no bullying policy, as a parent you might help in surveying the students regarding bullying and assist in writing a bullying policy. The school your adolescent female attends should have a bullying policy; students need to be aware of this policy. It should be a part of the student handbook and the school board policy manual. When my son attended the session for parents and students regarding junior high orientation, I inquired as to where the bullying policy was in the junior high student handbook. I was directed to page 29, the section on sexual harassment, by the principal. I did speak to the superintendent about my concern and he stated that he would look into this issue. I have not heard from him, as he has turned it over to the "school policy committee." Parents need to campaign for a bullying policy if one does not exist.

Future Research

Phenomenological research with a larger body of participants is necessary to add to the knowledge regarding bullying. Research in other areas of the country concerning middle school girls is needed. The results of these studies can be compared to discover commonalities; these similarities can be used to discover how to potentially prevent, or at least reduce, the incidents of bullying. In addition, I highly recommend studies be conducted regarding the lower grades—kindergarten through grade 5. Research concerning the frequency and types of bullying among middle school girls is necessary, and the results should be compared to those of the lower grades. Such phenomenological studies are the key to preventing bullying because they start with understanding it. My next suggestion would be to look at bullying from a different angle, a phenomenological study of mothers and

daughters. Our parents are our first role models and teachers. Each of these potential studies would assist in the completion of the circle of understanding female bullying.

A Circle of Understanding

Bolen (1999) believes in the power of the circle; it will begin as a critical number of people have changed how they think and behave. Gadamer (1960/2003) states, “Fundamentally, understanding is always a movement in this kind of circle, which is why the repeated return from the whole to the parts, and vice versa, is essential” (p. 190). My conversations and writing demonstrated this powerful hermeneutic circle; I would return to my conversations then write, re-write, and again return to my conversations, only to re-write. I previously stated van Manen’s (2003) caution with this circle:

To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the life-world, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal. (p. 18)

I understand, now, the impossibility of fully describing female adolescent bullying. I remember Liza’s and Rhonda’s tears as they described their bullying. The sadness and feeling of distress I felt cannot be described. These moments were personal and passionate, and lost to the ineffability of mere words.

Nevertheless, it is through words I am able to accentuate the experiences of adolescent females who have been bullied, as an everyday experience. These words carry a historicity, and they contain deep hidden meanings used to express the bullying of girls. They show us as we really are; this everydayness reveals the depth of caring in pedagogy necessary to assist in healing the effects of bullying. The meaning and importance of having been bullied is as straightforward as the tears streaming down Liza’s and Rhonda’s cheeks:

The fundamental law of human being is interdependence,

A person is a person through other persons.

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as cited in Coloroso, 2003, p. 127)

The interdependence continues in bullying. We begin to know ourselves, as we see what other individuals reflect back to us, and children learn to treat others through ways in which they have been treated. Perhaps, individuals [middle school girls] can “mutually enhance one another’s growth, fulfillment and power. That is, what is good for one can be good for all” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 84). In the words of John Penberthy (2007), “The power of the mind lies in perceiving differences, the power of the heart lies in perceiving similarities” (n. p.). Girls can become empowered in this manner—they share the power. Adolescent girls can to be taught to reflect back to each other positive, rather than negative attributes. This allows adolescent girls grow, to fully blossom, and strive to reach their full potential, thus contributing their honey, as society grows. Female bullying has grown by leaps and bounds, from slam books to cyber-bullying. Sensitizing our females about bullying and embracing our differences is a start in the right direction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Of great concern to me when I started this journey was my dissertation topic, for I knew numerous students who have wrestled with various topics. I had discovered the topic for my dissertation long before I began to meander my way through the dissertation process. This inspiration for the topic, female adolescent bullying, is credited to my daughter, Sydney, and my dissertation advisor, Yvonne. This journey demanded a single focus consisting of writing and re-writing while searching for the right words and phrases to bring about the meanings which were discovered along the way. On this path, I learned the language of middle school students, which assisted to preserve the authenticity of their voices as they helped me understand female adolescent bullying. Now, as I find myself at the end of this journey, I am grateful for individuals who kept me focused on my path.

My heartfelt gratitude goes out to Yvonne, for her fortitude to bear with me and her encouragement. She saw within me things I could not. She saw the merit in my research, when I could not see past the present concern. She was always there for me, in a sense, my personal cheerleader.

I am grateful for the assistance and support of Francine, for her unyielding, yet, gentle guidance as I continued to write my way through the hermeneutic phenomenological process. It has been through the support of Francine and Yvonne that I have again built my wings, as they offered wisdom and advice. The words “thank you” cannot portray adequate meaning. In addition, Bonnie Cooper gave her encouragement and editing expertise, along with her own bullying incidents; they, too, were a form of support. I thank Cindy Solberg for her computer skills regarding MS Word. I acknowledge each of these individuals, for they have greatly contributed towards completing my dissertation, and I will be forever grateful.

It is beyond words for me to express my thanks and appreciation to the participants of

my study. I now have a better understanding of what it means to be a middle school student who has been bullied. I admire their courage to name the pain attached to the experiences they have endured. It is my hope that educators can learn from their stories and take action to make schools safe for all students to flourish.

APPENDIX A

**Underwood School District No. 8**

P.O. Box 100 • Underwood, North Dakota 58576-0100
Telephone (701)442-3201 • Fax No. (701)442-3704



January 5, 2006

Ms. DeAnn Miller
Underwood, ND 58576

Dear Ms. Miller:

Thank you for presenting your proposal to the McLean County Schoolmasters at our December meeting for your research study on harassment and bullying among adolescent females.

This letter is to verify the support given by each of the School Superintendents in Garrison, Max, Turtle Lake-Mercer, Underwood, Washburn and Wilton and to grant permission to work with each respective school counselor in selecting potential candidates for interviewing for your study.

Best Wishes as you proceed with the project and we look forward to receiving your findings and recommendations.

Sincerely,

Dale A. Ekstrom
McLean County Schoolmasters Chairman

APPENDIX B

Parental Consent Form

Title of Research: Queenbees and Wannabees: The Struggle for Power Through Bullying in Adolescent Girls

Principal Investigator: DeAnn V. Miller, Ph.D. Candidate at Iowa State University

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this study is to better understand middle school girls and bullying. Female bullying consists of but is not limited to giving another girl the “look”, name calling, being excluded from a group, being teased, or even targeted on a web page.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES:

Your daughter has agreed to participate in the bullying study. I will meet with the girls not on school time, prior to, or after the school day/year. This will insure the confidentiality of the participants as well the use of multiple school districts in McLean County in North Dakota. Approximately 5-10 girls will be participating in this study in McLean County.

RISKS/BENEFITS:

A potential risk is that your daughter could experience mild distress as a result of explaining the situation to the principal investigator. The school guidance counselor will be available for assistance if it is needed; if further help is needed West Central Human Services are available at 1101 3rd Ave NW Beulah, ND. A benefit to your daughter could be that she feels a sense of therapeutic healing after explaining her situation to the principal investigator. The information gained in this study will assist parents, teachers, and others in working more effectively with students who have been bullied and it will assist those who are developing curriculum about bullying.

As the parent(s) or guardian(s) by signing this document you are giving permission for your minor daughter to participate in this study. I will meet with each participant on four occasions for approximately one hour. At anytime, if you have questions please contact the principal investigator.

ALTERNATIVE TO PARTICIPATION:

At anytime you may choose to withdraw your daughter from this study with no penalty; your minor daughter is NOT required to participate in this study. Your daughter will be paid for the meetings with the principal investigator that she attended.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION:

There will be no costs on your part for your child to participate in this study. The study will be explained in depth to your daughter and her assent will be granted if she agrees to and signs the assent form. Your daughter will be compensated at a rate of \$6.00 for each time she meets with the principal investigator in the form of a gift certificate and she will be paid at the conclusion of the final meeting. The gift certificate is a token for the students' time, effort, and participation. The conversations relaying your daughter's bullying incident(s) will be audio taped and transcribed, and I will be taking notes. This information will be used as "data" for my study. I am interested in the experiences of the girls who have been bullied and NOT the name of the bully or any others involved.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All the information collected for this study will be kept strictly confidential. The descriptions and the findings may be published, but no names will be used. The participants' names as well as those who may have been identified will NOT be used in the study. The bully should NOT be identified. A summary of the results of this study will be available to you at its conclusion.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS:

The confidential information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office and will be kept for one year after the study is complete. I will be the only individual to have access to this information. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 701-442-3858. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants at Iowa State University at 515-294-4566.

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE:

I, _____ affirm that I have read and understood the above statement and have had all of my questions answered. I am giving permission for my minor daughter to participate in this study.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to allow your child/legal ward to participate. Your signature indicates that having read the information provided above, you have decided to permit your child/legal ward to participate. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Date _____

Signature _____

Relation to Participant_____

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT:

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

(Signature of Person Obtaining
Informed Consent)

(Date)

APPENDIX C

Youth Assent Form

My name is DeAnn Miller, and I am studying middle school girls and bullying. It's a research project called Queenbees and Wannabees: The Struggle for Power Through Bullying in Adolescent Girls. The purpose of this is to better understand middle school girls and bullying. Female bullying can include giving another girl the "look", name calling, being excluded from a group, being teased, or even targeted on a web page.

Your parent(s) or guardian(s) have given permission for you to participate in this study. I need your permission for you to participate in this study; your permission is called an assent. You should discuss whether or not to participate in this study with your parents before you sign this form. At any time if you do not understand a part of the study, please ask and it will be explained.

You will meet with me approximately 4 times on a one-to-one basis to relay to me your experience(s) with being bullied. Each meeting will be approximately one hour in length. You will be paid \$6.00 for each time you meet with me in the form of a gift certificate. The conversations will be taped and used as "data" for my study. The gift certificate is given to you for your time and effort for participating in the study. The conversations passed on to me regarding bullying incident(s) will be tape recorded, put in written word form, and I will be taking notes. This information will be used as "data" for my study. I am interested in the experiences of the girls who have been bullied and NOT the name of the bully or any others involved. At anytime you may choose to withdraw from this study with no penalty; you will be paid for the sessions attended.

The school guidance counselor will be available if you feel you have difficulty in recalling these bullying incidents; if further help is needed West Central Human Services are available at 1101 3rd Ave NW Beulah, ND. By signing this document you are giving permission to participate in this study. All the information collected for this study will be kept in confidence and not told to anyone else. The descriptions and the findings may be published, but your names will NOT be used. The participants' names as well as those who may have been identified will NOT be used in the study. A summary of the results of this study will be available to you at its conclusion.

The confidential information (not told to anyone else) will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office and will be kept for one year after the study is complete. I will be the only individual to have access to this information. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 701-442-3858. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants at Iowa State University at 515-294-4566.

This research project has been explained to you and you understand what is going to be done, and why. You have talked to your parents about this project and you have decided that you would like to be a part of it. You understand that your parents [or legal guardian(s)] will be given a copy of this form.

Signature of Youth

Date

Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D**Possible Interview Questions**

1. What is your definition of bullying?
2. How have you been bullied?
3. Initially, how did you react?
4. What was the experience really like?
5. What do you feel drew the bully to you?
6. Can you tell me more about that bullying experience?
7. In what other ways have you been bullied?
8. How did you feel when this occurred?
9. Can you give me another example?
10. Who did you first tell that you were being bullied? And why?

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