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BULLIES AND ALLIES NEAR THE PLAYGROUND: MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES OF
AGGRESSION IN THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

by

Mara Vicente Robinson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2017

Dissertation Committee

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TITLE OF DISSERTATION: BULLIES AND ALLIES ON THE PLAYGROUND:
MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES OF AGGRESSION IN THEIR
CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Despite an increasing understanding of the importance of both parent-involvement and aggression among women, there appears to be little understanding of how these two areas influence each other; specifically, the lack of literature examining the extent to which female guardians experienced aggression from other female guardians and the effect it had on their involvement in their children's schools. In an effort to investigate the extent to which aggression was prevalent among female guardians, the factors that influenced the aggression, and the effects of that aggression on women's involvement in their children's education, a convergent parallel mixed methods design was used to study female guardians living in the United States with children currently in grades K-12. The 225 survey participants and nine interviewees were recruited through snowball sampling. Closed-ended questions were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive, linear, and logistic regression analysis; open-ended questions were analyzed using in-vivo, categorical, and thematic coding.

Findings from the quantitative analysis revealed that most respondents experienced aggression from other female guardians at their children's schools, and that being ignored, excluded and gossiped about were the most reported aggressive acts. Interestingly, variation in aggression was not associated with the demographics of the aggressor, but instead with participant demographics; specifically, Ph.D./Ed.D., Asian, politically extremely liberal and moderate. Post-aggression, 35% of women decreased their volunteer time, 8% increased it, and 57% volunteered "about the same." Though most women reported "talking to" someone, these strategies were among the least effective.

Qualitative analysis revealed that women believed the differences in demographic and personality traits—between themselves and the aggressor—accounted for the aggression they

experienced. Specifically, women believed that differences in income, race and employment most influenced aggressive experiences. School structures, cultures and individuals consistently privileged one type of parent and alienated others. Participants believed their character and knowledge were most helpful in navigating aggressive interactions with other women.

Results from this study provide insight into how aggression may affect women volunteering in their children's schools. Understanding how women experience and navigate through this could help families, practitioners, and policy makers better support parental involvement in their children's schools.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Linda Dews, Bonnie Queen, my daughter Eleanor, and to the women whose voices are represented here. May this study challenge all of us to continually ask ourselves: Who do I privilege? How do I privilege them? How do I contribute to systems of aggression? How do I challenge systems of aggression?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every night since my daughter, Eleanor, was born, my husband and I fall asleep with a prayer of gratitude. Sometimes, with her sweet three year-old voice, she helps us. It goes like this:

Dear Lord, Thank you for this day. Thank you for giving us the chance of one more day. Thank you for Mommy, Daddy, and Eleanor. Thank you for our family and thank you for our friends. Thank you for clean food and clean water. Thank you for a safe place to live and a roof over our heads. Thank you for our continued good health. Lord, we pray for those who do not have all of our blessings, please show us how to best help them. We especially pray for those who are lonely, who are mentally, emotionally or physically ill, and for those who have no one to pray for them. We pray all these things in the Lord's name. Amen.

As I reflect upon the last six years (moving to a new city, starting and completing a Ph.D. program, balancing numerous jobs, becoming engaged and married, and having a baby), I want to be especially thankful for these wonderful people:

Thank you for my committee. Fred Galloway, Lea Hubbard, Paula Cordeiro and Karen Briggs. They are so patient and kind. They have been more than role models; they have been my guiding lights through stormy waters. I'm sure I don't deserve them, but thank you for them anyway. Thank you for Fred. He has always been so encouraging. The day I met him at the entrance interviews, throughout his classes, and as my dissertation chair, he has patiently guided and encouraged me. May others be so fortunate in their Ph.D. journey. Thank you for Lea, who has never stopped challenging me. She has made me a better researcher and, more importantly, a better human for this world. She has been more gracious and patient than I ever thought a professor could be. Thank you for Paula, her incredible spirit, and her love of the Global Center and its staff. As I said on the first day I met her, "Now there's a person I would follow into battle." Thank you for Karen, her friendship, wonderful spirit, sense of humor, brilliant mind, and her ability to ground me in reality.

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Thank you for my family, their love and support. Thank you for my best friend, Bonnie, her prayers, love and gentle guidance. She is the reason the past six years have been possible.

And finally, thank you for my husband, Michael. Together with our daughter, they have taught me more about leadership, strength, love, loyalty, forgiveness, compassion, patience, and humility, than an entire doctoral program put together.

Please Lord, help me to carry forward these gifts to others.

Amen.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the United States, educational success is still the ticket to higher earnings (Krueger & Lindahl, 2001). Many researchers have undertaken the task of investigating what factors influence educational success. Among the many factors studied are: school structure, student effort, and peer association (Stewart, 2008); teacher efficacy and empowerment (Moore & Esselman, 1992); parent involvement (Epstein, 2001); social class (Lareau, 1989); race (Ogbu & Simmons, 1998); and gender (Hubbard, 2005). Of these factors, scholars have consistently demonstrated parent involvement as having the largest effect on student achievement (Boocock, 1972; Epstein, 2001; *Family involvement makes a difference in school success*, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Lareau, 1989). Though the definitions are many, for the purposes of this study, parents' involvement in their children's education is defined as participation in the educational process and experience of their children (Jeynes, 2007).

Parent's participation in the educational success of their children has garnered the attention of politicians and the media for almost a century (Tyack, 1974). In fact, policies exist at the federal, state, and local level mandating that schools and districts have parent involvement processes and—though seldom—funding allotted for that purpose ("An overview of the local control funding formula," 2013). Often times, however, these policies do not account for differences in parents' economic, ethnic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). To date, scholars have found that different parents became involved in different ways (with the dividing factors often falling along the lines of income, ethnicity, and culture) (Epstein, 2001). Meanwhile, scholars are increasingly noticing that a specific "type" of parent and a specific "type" of involvement have been historically more welcomed than others (Lareau, 1989). As a result of being the "correct type" of family—usually white, upper-middle class—a certain societal sector

continues receiving the largest portion of supporting policies and educational rewards (Maia Bloomfield Cucchiara, 2013; Lareau, 1989).

Though often a variety of family members become involved in a child's education, it is a child's mother that continues to spend the most time raising a child and becoming involved in his or her education (Quindlen, 2005; Rotkirch, 2009). Though the number of mother's working at least one job has exponentially increased over the last century, the number of hours mothers spend caring for their children has not significantly decreased (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Sherrill, 2010; Toosi, 2002, May; "Women in the workforce: United States," 2016, August; "Working parents," 2016, April). As mothers in the workforce have increased, scholars have looked to understand the mental and physical effects of mother's employment on her children and herself (e.g. Winnicott, 1957). The earliest studies concluded that work was detrimental to both the child and the mother's wellbeing (e.g. Bowlby, 1969). Since then, those studies have been largely contradicted; in fact, numerous empirical studies—conducted worldwide—have demonstrated the positive effects of a mother's employment on her child and her own well-being (Hays, 1996). Irrespective of scholarly findings, mothers stay home, work part-time or full-time as a result of various factors, not the least of which include economic and cultural pressures (Campbell, 2002; Cha, 2010; Cotter, England, & Hermesen, 2010).

In other bodies of literature, scholars have looked to understand the mental and physical effects of aggression on women in general, and the various roles, ideals and social expectations, guilt and shame, and anger, depression, assertiveness, masochism and sadism have on mothers specifically. Considering the tremendous impact these dynamics have on mothers—as will be illustrated in the literature review in chapter 2—it is interesting that they have not been examined vis-à-vis a mother's involvement in her child's schools. Though seemingly disparate, this study aims to examine the intersectionality of all the above-mentioned dynamics: education, school

structures, mother's employment, mother's mental health, and aggression amongst women so that women may be better supported in becoming involved in their children's education, and schools may be better supported in welcoming parents' involvement. This study aims to explain—at least in part—how women influence each other in becoming involved (or not involved) in their children's schools. A key driver in educational success is parent involvement and mothers continue to be the most involved parent; however, it appears the specifics affecting mother's involvement in her children's schools appears to not be completely understood. Without further understanding, scholars, practitioners and family members are not fully supporting the members of society—arguably—most responsible for a child's life-long academic success.

Statement of the Problem

Existing literature underscores the importance of education for children's success and the importance of parent involvement for that success. Existing literature also helps provide some understanding of the challenges parents face in becoming involved in their children's schools. To further understand the forces affecting parent involvement, I conducted a pilot study in 2012 whereby I interviewed upper-middle class full-time working mothers about the factors that enabled or inhibited their involvement in their children's schools. Factors such as time away from work and friendships with other mothers appeared to promote school involvement while factors such as full-time work and estrangement from non-working mothers' "cliques" appeared to hinder involvement. Neither the extent of these dynamics, nor the generalizability of these findings is known; my findings were substantiated by less than twenty formal interviews with women of similar social, ethnic, financial and cultural capital. Though scholars in other fields have well documented the existence of women's aggressive behaviors and their effects on women's psychological and physiological well-being, there do not appear to be studies in the

education literature that corroborate my findings: neither an examination of the extent to which mothers experienced aggression in their children's schools—specifically from other mothers, nor the effect it had on their involvement.

Knowing how prevalent aggression is between mothers and how these experiences influence mother's involvement, could have the potential to provide valuable insights for the field of education. This information, however, would only be partially useful. For mothers, educators, and policy makers to be better equipped to manage these challenges, it is also important to know how—if any—mothers successfully navigated through challenging experiences and if there were structures in place within the school that ameliorated the effects of aggressive behavior on parent involvement. It would be valuable to know how mothers managed through these challenges—what strategies they used, what structures were in place—so that other mothers and policy makers could put support mechanisms in place when encountering similar challenges. And finally, the conclusions and implications from this study would be incomplete without understanding how mothers would advise each other in similarly challenging circumstances and what support the mothers believe school staff could have provided.

There exist studies that examine the support mechanism that helped women in their leadership journey (Cox, 2008; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000) and when facing aggression from other women in higher education (Briggs, 2015). Though this information is useful, the aggression phenomena and support mechanisms have yet to be examined in conjunction with mother's involvement in their children's education. Considering the predominance of women's involvement in their children's schools, the dire need for families and communities to become more—not less—involved in their children's education, and the far-reaching consequences of both education and aggression, there appears to be a significant gap in the literature that, if filled, could be helpful not only theoretically for scholars in education and women's studies, but also

for practitioners, policy makers and mothers simply wanting to see their children and their children's schools succeed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent mothers experience aggression from other mothers while attempting to become involved in their children's schools, how aggression affects their involvement, and how some mothers—if any— successfully navigate through this, if there are any structures in place at their children's schools that ameliorate or worsen the mother-to-mother aggression, and what advice—if any—do the mothers provide for other mothers and school personnel. A convergent parallel mixed methods design will be used which will involve collecting both quantitative and qualitative data during the same stage of the research process, analyzing it independently, and then merging results to provide an overall interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). Data will be collected from mothers with children currently in K-12 public and private schools in the United States.

The quantitative portion of the survey will be used to assess the prevalence and forms of aggression experienced from other mothers, the extent to which demographic factors are related to experiencing this behavior, how these experiences impacted involvement in their children's education, and what types of behavioral responses were utilized in response to this aggression. The qualitative portion of the study uses interviews and open-ended survey questions to collect more detailed information about the experiences of mothers who faced aggression from other mothers. These questions will assess how women interpreted and made meaning of their experiences, how their experiences as recipients of aggression impacted their involvement in their children's schools, what strategies helped them successfully navigate through this challenge, and what advice they would give to other mothers and school personnel.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine to what extent mothers/female guardians experience aggression from other mothers/female guardians in their child's/children's school(s), how this may affect their involvement in their child's/children's school(s), the methods, structures and policies they used to navigate (or not) through the aggressive experiences, which of those methods, structures and policies helped, hindered or did nothing to alter the aggressive behavior, and recommendations for other mothers and school personnel. The research questions this study aims to answer are:

1. Do female guardians experience aggression from other female guardians?
If so, what kinds of aggression did female guardians experience?
2. How do demographic and situational factors account for the aggressive experiences?
 - a. To what extent do aggressors' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - b. To what extent do participants' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - c. To what extent do structural, cultural or agentic factors account for the aggressive experiences?
3. To what extent does aggression among female guardians impact their involvement in their children's schools?
4. How did female guardians respond to aggressive behaviors, why did they choose those responses, and did their responses improve, worsen, or make no difference to the aggressive situation?

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine how female guardians experienced aggression from each other, how they responded to that aggression, which factors enabled or inhibited the aggression, and how aggression impacted their involvement in their children's schools. This chapter takes an in-depth look at the many bodies of literature that have informed this study. First, as economic and social returns continue to be directly proportionate to a student's academic success, I discuss the literature on education's returns to individuals and society. Second, as parents' involvement in their children's education continues to be one of the strongest influences of student's academic success, I review the literature on the factors that enable or inhibit parents' involvement. Mothers continue to be the parent most involved with their children's education; however, a mother's mental health sharply influences the quality and quantity of that involvement. Therefore, in the third and final section, I review the literature examining the factors that effect a mother's mental health: specifically, the effects of aggression. The following, then, is a discussion of the intersection of these phenomena: parent involvement, mothers' mental health, and women's experiences with aggression.

Returns to Education

Across the world, developed countries allot millions of dollars (approximately 5-7% of their GDP) in their yearly budget to education ("Education expenditures by country," 2016, May). For example, in 2012, The United States approximately spent \$107 billion on education (Delisle, 2013). These countries, presumably, believe in the financial and human capital¹ returns from education. That is, the greater the investment in education, the greater the future returns

¹ Human capital is defined "as the set of knowledge, skills, competencies, and abilities embodied in individuals and acquired, for example, through education, training, medical care, and migration" (Benos and Zotou, 2014, p. 669).

will be both tangibly (e.g. money) and intangibly (e.g. health) for that country and its people (Brandt, 2015, January; "Education expenditures by country," 2016, May; UNICEF, 2015). Indeed, over fifty academic articles, many in top tier journals, have demonstrated statistically the positive returns on education using cross-section, time series, and panel data sets (Benos & Zotou, 2014). A review of these articles is beyond the scope of this paper; however, for an extensive review, their findings, and a meta-analysis of these, please refer to the article by Benos and Zotou (2014).

From the earliest studies by Romer (1989) of 112 economies, through present-day working papers such as the National Bureau of Economics' "Returns to Education: The causal effects of education on earnings, health and smoking," research has consistently supported education as positively associated with growth. Recently published works estimated between seven and fifteen percent returns per year of schooling; the correlation, however, is not always perfectly linear as one more year of high school may not yield the same results as one more year of specialization in graduate school (Harmon & Walker, 2001, February).

Put simply, academic achievement has been found to have a direct effect on societies, economies, and individuals themselves. What, then, influences academic achievement? Many scholars have found that parents and guardians' involvement in their children's education is key to advancing student achievement. The following is a review of the literature that supports this claim.

An Introduction to the Parent Involvement Literature

In the past hundred years, researchers have undertaken the task of investigating what factors influence student achievement. Among the many factors studied were: school structure, student effort, and peer association (Stewart, 2008); teacher efficacy and empowerment (Moore & Esselman, 1992); parent involvement (Epstein, 2001); social class (Lareau, 1989); race (Ogbu

& Simmons, 1998); and gender (Hubbard, 2005). Scholars have consistently demonstrated that parent involvement has one of the strongest effects on student achievement (Epstein, 2001) (Lareau, 1989) . Parent involvement has also been shown to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students (Davies, 2002), and has been defined as “critical” to ensuring children’s academic success (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridgall, & Gordon, 2009). The positive affect of parent involvement on student achievement has been researched extensively (Bloom, 1980; Boocock, 1972; Comer, 1985; Cutler, 2000; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; *Family involvement makes a difference in school success*, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Hiatt-Michael, 2010; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2011; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Weiss et al., 2009). The effect of harmful parent involvement on student achievement has also been researched. That topic, however, is beyond the purview of this paper. For an excellent review and research on the harmful effects of parent involvement please refer to the works of Pomerantz, Grolnick, and Price (2005) and Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007). Despite this research, the greater body of literature demonstrates the positive effects caring parents can have on their children’s lives and school achievement. This section reviews what scholars and families mean by parent involvement and what the effects of parent involvement have been on children, schools, and communities.

Defining Parent Involvement

Scholars and families have used the term “parent involvement” to mean an expansive array of activities: parents’ participation and attendance in school activities (Bobbett, French, Achilles, & Bobbett, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Stevenson & Baker, 1987); time spent on school-related activities with their children at home (Shumow & Miller, 2001; Singh et al., 1995; Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996); number of hours parents volunteer in their children’s schools (Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001); attendance at

meetings organized by the school (Shaver & Walls, 1998); communication with teachers (Deslandes, Royers, Turcotte, & Bertrand, 1997); or communication with their children regarding education (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum, & Aubey, 1986). In recent years, parent involvement has even encompassed the non-physical and non-verbal communication of expectations from parents to children (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2003; Keith et al., 1998).

The muddy waters of parent involvement definitions have led other scholars to delineate between parent involvement and parent engagement. Shirley (1997) described a “critical” distinction between the two terms: “Parental involvement...avoids issues of power and assigns parents a passive role in the maintenance of school culture. Parental engagement designates parents as...change agents who can transform urban schools and neighborhoods” (p. 73). Pushor (2007) continued this dialogue with an emphasis that parent engagement is an *interaction* sequence between parent and school where the parent’s interaction is *intentional*. These differentiations of terms, some might argue, further obscure the definition of parent involvement as the terms interaction and intention come into question. Philosophical discussions of definitions notwithstanding, in this literature review, where the authors of studies explicitly differentiated engagement from involvement, I purposefully refer to the term chosen by the authors. As for the term “parents,” I use it to mean the people that are the primary care-givers of a child, be they part of the child’s biological, extended, adopted, or foster family. Where the authors of a study explicitly differentiated these categories, I purposefully referred to the terms or categories as delineated by the authors.

In sum, considering the all-encompassing nature of this literature review on parent involvement, I simply defer to Jeynes (2007) definition of parent involvement derived from his extensive meta-analyses of parent involvement studies. Whatsoever the length, depth, or nature

of the participation, parent involvement is the “parental participation in the educational process and experiences of their children” (p. 83). What the specific effects of parental participation on the education processes have been on students, schools, and communities is the topic of the following section.

The Effects of Parent Involvement on Their Children

Numerous scholars have found evidence for the positive effects of parent involvement on student academic achievement (Henderson et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Weiss et al., 2009). Recently, the results of a six-year longitudinal study by the Annenberg Institute demonstrated that successful parent-community-school “strategies contributed to increased student attendance, improved standardized test score performance, higher graduation rates and college-going aspirations” (Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister, 2009, p. vi).

Much of what is known about the positive effects of parent involvement on students’ academic achievement is a result of the seminal works by Epstein (2001) and Lareau (1989). Epstein and Lareau have consistently found that parent involvement significantly effects students’ academic achievement (Epstein, 2001, 2005b, 2016; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Lareau, 1987, 1989, 2011; Lareau & McNamara, 1999). In a later section of the paper, I discuss Lareau’s findings on the interactions between parent involvement and socio-economic status. Epstein’s work, however, is an excellent springboard for discussing the effects of parent involvement on their children. Therefore, the following is a brief introduction to Joyce Epstein’s many contributions to the study of parent involvement.

One of the most influential and frequently cited models of parent involvement is the Epstein Model (Bower & Griffin, 2011). It outlines six types of “involvement [that] are part of schools’ comprehensive programs to share responsibilities with families for the education of their children” (Epstein & Dauber, 1991, pp. 290-291). The six types of behaviors are, (1) basic

obligations of families, (2) basic obligations of schools, (3) involvement at school, (4) involvement in learning activities at home, (5) involvement in decision making, (6) and collaboration and exchanges with community organizations (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein's model became a grounding resource for many researchers; including the works of Barnard (2004), Ingram, Wolfe, and Lieberman (2007), and Lopez and Donovan (2009), all of whom found increased parent involvement using the Epstein Model to assess implementation.

Although Epstein's model has many strengths and has proved effective, not all researchers who implemented Epstein's model found an increase in parent involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Bower and Griffin (2011), in their work with a high-minority, high-poverty elementary school, found this model inapplicable. They found that in order for schools to use parent involvement effectively as a strategy for student success, they must consider differences in cultural norms by race/ethnicity and socio-economic status. In the section below on social factors affecting parent involvement, I discuss their recommendations, and those of other scholars in greater detail.

As Epstein, Lareau and many others have found, the effects of parents' involvement with their children's education often go beyond the parent-child relationship. Indeed, researchers have demonstrated that parent involvement may also affect the future of an entire school, a district and a community. Therefore, the following section reviews the literature demonstrating the effects that parent involvement (in their children's education) had on schools and communities.

The Effects of Parent Involvement on Schools and Communities

Numerous researchers have demonstrated that through their involvement, parents have provided resources that benefited not only their own children, but entire schools and communities as well (Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004; Merz & Furman, 1997; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992). Hands (2005, 2009) research with schools in Ontario, Canada, for example, demonstrated how families were able to "provide human and material resources in the

form of time, knowledge, and skills that would otherwise not be available” (L. Hubbard & C. M. Hands, 2011, p. 43). Dyrness’s research (2011) with schools in Oakland, California also provided extraordinary examples of how parents used their resources to not only improve the lives of a few children, but to also affect an entire community (*Mothers United*, 2011). And still a third scholar, Maia Cucchiara’s (2013)—with her research in center city Philadelphia schools—also revealed the far-reaching consequences of parent involvement (*Marketing Schools, Marketing Cities*, 2013). Though the works of these scholars is discussed in greater detail below in the sections on societal factors affecting parent involvement, the common thread uniting these studies is the powerful influence parents’ involvements in their children’s schools can have on entire schools and communities.

Interestingly, both Cucchiara and Dyrness watched as not only did parents influence their children’s schools and communities, but also how federal, state, and district employees influenced schools and communities as well. In *Mothers United*, for example, a state or union representative was often found at the *madres’* kitchen table meetings. In *Marketing Schools, Marketing Cities*, city officials were often seen “rubbing elbows” at school fundraisers. Other researchers have noted the increasing attention that parent involvement receives at the state and national levels (Borman, Cookson, Sadovnik, & Spade, 1996; Epstein, 2005a). Therefore, as parent’s involvement takes place within (physical and geopolitical) boundaries of nations, states, and districts, the following is a review of some of the landmark cases and policies effecting parent involvement in the United States. (Borman et al., 1996; Epstein, 2005a)

Federal, State and Local Policies Affecting Parent Involvement

Student achievement and the affect parent involvement has on student achievement has reached the attention of national, state, and district officials. For example, federal policies concerning parent involvement date back as early as 1925 with the landmark case of *Pierce v.*

Society of Sisters; current California policies on parent involvement cite the provisions made for education in California's constitution of 1879; and most recently, all California school districts have had to make major alterations in their parent involvement policies as a result of the new Local Control Funding Formula regulations (Kirst, 2014). From federal legislature on parents' rights to local schools' policies on parent volunteers, the significance of parent involvement continues to rise. Each state, district, and school, however, is often at liberty to interpret parent involvement policies as they see fit. Therefore, the following is a brief review of the legislative literature concerning parent involvement at not only the federal and state level, but also at the district level as well.

Literature and Legislation on Federal Policies

The trajectory of national education policies has often been referred to as a pendulum vacillating between conservative and liberal agendas (Cutler, 2000; Hands, 2010; Hiatt-Michael, 2001; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Throughout the 1600s and 1700s parents were the primary educators of their children. Throughout the 1800s and early 1900s, parents shifted roles from primary educators to controllers of school governance. Then, throughout the mid to late 1900s, parent voices were increasingly less audible on day-to-day schooling practices, to the extent that many parents in the twentieth century had relatively little involvement in their children's schools.

There have been a few notable exceptions to the "quiet" parent voices in the twentieth century. For example, the 1925 landmark case of *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* established that it is unconstitutional for the state to "interfere with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of their children" (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 1925). During the social reform eras of the 50s and 60s, the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* increased the rights of parents in their children's schools through addressing the issues of equity and access across economic, cultural, social and political lines (*Brown v. Board of Education of*

Topeka, 1954). As parents crossed into the twenty-first century, parent involvement concerns increasingly reached desks across the country. The 2001 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*—commonly referred to as President Bush’s No Child Left Behind, made parent involvement a mandatory provision in public schools. Nine years later, in March of 2010, President Obama’s administration released its “blueprint” for revising the ESEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The revised ESEA, however, continued to allow each state to interpret parents’ “mandatory” involvement in their children’s schools quite differently. The California legislature and courts, for example, have increasingly dealt with issues of students and parents’ equity, access, and involvement policies.

Literature and Legislation on California Policies

The state of California is home to 6.2 million students in approximately 11,000 K-12 public schools embedded in 1,403 school districts (*Fingertip Facts on Education in California – CalEdFacts*, 2017). California is also home to Proposition 98 (the Classroom Instructional Improvement and Accountability Act) that requires a minimum of 40% of the state’s federal spending to be spent on education (Taylor, 2013). For example, the Governor’s 2013-2014 budget provided \$56.2 billion for Prop 98 funding (*Active Enrollment* 2017). Though the California Constitution (1879) and its amendments make provisions for equal protection and education, until recently, there was nothing in the state constitution that explicitly referred to parent involvement and education until the creation of the Parent Empowerment Law and Assembly Bill 97.

The Parent Empowerment or—as it is commonly referred—the “Parent Trigger” Law (“Parent Empowerment,” 2010) allows parents of children attending underperforming schools to petition for one or more of four actions: (1) convert the school into a charter; (2) replace the old staff and make budget decisions; (3) dismiss the principal; and (4) dissolve the school and

relocate the students to other schools. If fifty-one percent of parents sign the petition, the district is “directed to impose the requested model” (Annenberg Institute, 2012, p. 1) unless the “local educational agency makes a finding in writing why it cannot implement the recommended arrangement and instead designates in writing which of the other alternative governance arrangements it will implement in the subsequent school year” (“Parent Empowerment,” 2010, p.2). Despite the ensuing turmoil, the Parent Empowerment Law was viewed by many in California (and, indeed, across the country) as a powerful example of the increasing importance parent involvement is taking at the state level (Lubienski, Scott, Rogers, & Welner, 2012).

A second example of legislation concerning parent involvement was the 2013 Assembly Bill 97 passing of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Legislation (“AB-97 School finance,” 2013). This legislation, rather than allowing parents to “pull a trigger” or overturn state education code provisions through litigation, mandated the involvement and engagement of parents at a local level on a yearly basis (“AB-97 School finance,” 2013). As a result of LCFF, parents would have greater access to (and transparency of) several local education agencies (LEAs) through the development and implementation of the mandated Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Under LCFF’s “Parent and Community Engagement” section, the California Department of Education stated: “Statute requires the inclusion of parents, including parents or legal guardians of targeted disadvantaged pupils in the planning and implementation of the LCFF” (“AB-97 School finance,” 2013). Exactly how (and to what extent) parents will be involved in the “planning and implementation” of the LCFF will be a matter of semantics in each district’s LCAP, the willingness (and organization) of the LEAs, the extent to which parental organizations can galvanize parents to become involved, and parental willingness to do so.

Opponents of the legislation mark that reading, understanding and engaging in this process will be daunting challenge to even the most educated and involved parents. Despite

drawbacks, proponents claim it is intended to empower the people and agencies closest to the students in most need of aid. With such new legislation, the feasibility of California's LCFF's implementation (particularly as it concerns parent and community involvement) is yet to be seen. In the following section, I examine the second largest school district in California—San Diego Unified—specifically, and highlight some of the major legislative literature concerning local parent involvement.

Literature and Legislation on Local Policies

As noted above, in addition to creating a new funding formula in the state of California (LCFF), the 2013-14 AB-97 package of legislation established a set of new rules for school district transparency and accountability. Specifically, under the new rules, districts are required to adopt Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) ("An overview of the local control funding formula," 2013). The LCAP, as explained by Michael Kirst of Stanford University, "Is a three year plan that describes the goals, actions/services, and expenditures that are underway to support positive student outcomes that address state and local priorities" (Kirst, 2014). The LCAP template contains three sections with specific instructions each LEA (spell out) must follow: (1) stakeholder engagement; (2) goals and progress indicators; and (3) actions, services and expenditures. Each section, furthermore, contains provisions regarding parent involvement.

The LCAP, however, will not be inserted into a vacuous space. It will have to be integrated into an already established school district with politics and complex policies. San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is the second largest district in California (following Los Angeles Unified). In 2017, there were more than 122,000 K-12 students in 181 educational facilities—district, charter, special and continuing education combined ("Official enrollment total," 2017). The SDUSD website provides statistics (like the aforementioned), links to resources for students and parents, and mission statements of each branch within the district.

The page for parent and guardian rights, for example, begins with this statement:

Parents or guardians and other relatives are encouraged to become involved in the formal education of their children. Early and consistent engagement at home and at school helps children do well academically, and results in schools that are successful at educating all children. When family engagement is combined with a partnership between home and school, the student, school and community all benefit. ("Facts for parents," 2017)

The actual procedures for parent involvement, however, are vague. In what capacity, to what extent, when, and where parent involvement and engagement can take place at a school in the San Diego Unified School District appears to be at the complete discretion of each principal.

While the legislation certainly provides parents entry into the system, each principal, whether in SDUSD or any other district across the state, must implement an LCAP that addresses a variety of societal factors, socio-economic forces, parent and student ethnic and cultural factors, and in many cases, parents who speak a variety of languages. Parents, in turn, must navigate not only the various federal, state, district, school, and principal policies, but also manage the societal and socio-economic forces, and ethnic and cultural factors around them as well. For parent-involvement policies to be more effective, “schools need to consider differences in cultural norms by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status in order to use parent involvement effectively as a strategy for student success” (Bowen and Griffin, 2011, p. 79). In the following section, I review the studies of researchers demonstrating how powerfully sociological dynamics affect parent involvement in their children’s education.

Societal Factors Affecting Parent Involvement

In the last thirty years, many parents across the country responded to the call from government officials and researchers to become more involved in their children’s schools. In that time, researchers have uncovered a number of important findings. First, that different parents became involved in different ways; how, when and why they became involved varied across income, racial, ethnic and culture groups. Second, researchers have found that school

staff welcomed and encouraged a specific “type” of parent and a specific “type” of involvement. And third, that there is a particular demographic set of parents and children—i.e. white, upper-middle class families—that continue receiving the largest portion of social and academic rewards (respectively). In a democratic country with egalitarian ideals, where education is lauded as the great equalizer, how do social scientists account for these variations in involvement, preference and gain?

One method, is to examine the social world through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 1996) and his writings on the three forms of capital: economic, social and cultural². In simple terms, Bourdieu believed that an individual had certain social relationships and networks that allowed resources and advantages for some and deficits and disadvantages for others. Though a review of Bourdieu’s works is well beyond the purview of this paper, it is a lens through which scholars have studied the interconnectedness of economics, ethics and culture, and their effects on the educational attainment of youth. Therefore, in the following three subsections I review the literature on parent involvement as seen through the lenses of economic, social (specifically ethnicity and race) and cultural capital.

Parent Involvement and Economic Capital

Poor, working class, middle-class, and upper-class are terms generally accepted to stratify families by financial standing in the United States. What is not generally accepted, however, is that persons belonging to middle and upper-class have privileges afforded to them by American society that are not afforded to members of poor or working class families. While many recognize that there exist substantial inequalities in financial resources from one class to the next, it is only recently that some people have recognized and studied how those inequalities

² In his later works Bourdieu included symbolic capital, i.e. the resources available to someone as a result of recognition, honor or prestige.

permeate all parts of society, including school classrooms. School personnel and scholars have increasingly found that academic placement policies and practices within schools inadvertently continue to widen the achievement gap between socio-economic classes (Delpit, 2002; Lareau, 1989; Valenzuela, 1999 as cited in Hands & Hubbard, 2011). One possible explanation is that school personnel often operate from a deficit-oriented view of low-income students and their families. This deficit perspective is the implicit, often subconscious, beliefs about the inferiority of low income and/or minority families (Maia Bloomfield Cucchiara, 2013; De Carvalho, 2001; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Lipman, 2008). At best, the deficit perspective implies that middle and upper-class families have more to offer schools and society than their poorer counterparts (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). As the education researcher Maia Cucchiara recently noted, this is a considerable shift from the “democratic ideals of seeing each citizen as equally valuable and worthy of full participation in public institutions” (Maia Bloomfield Cucchiara, 2013, p. 20). At its worst, the deficit perspective implies that middle and upper-class families are inherently virtuous, while low income families are faulty or depraved. In their studies, Karen Mapp, Mark Warren and others have consistently found that many middle and upper class teachers and administrators hold negative beliefs about lower income students and their families (see, for example, Thompson, Warren, & Carter, 2004; and Warren & Mapp, 2011). For a deeper analysis of the effects of socio-economic status on parent involvement, the following is a review of the works of Annette Lareau and Maia Cucchiara.

Lareau and socio-economic status. In *Unequal Childhoods*, Lareau found that the benefits for middle class children “can be significant, but they are often invisible to them and to others. In popular language, middle-class children can be said to have been ‘born on third base but believe they hit a triple’” (1989, p. 13). Lareau noted that not only did parents of middle and upper-class families have financial advantages, but other parts of their life critically shaped their

involvement in their children's education to their advantage: like flexibility in work schedules, educational resources (including larger vocabularies and more knowledge), and the "confidence to criticize educational professionals and intervene in school matters" (p. 248). On the other hand, she noted that for poor and working-class families the combination of seeing educators as their superiors (not their equals), the "deadening quality" of their work, the "press of economic shortages," and the "dependence on public assistance" significantly affected how and to what extent these families became involved in their children's education.

Parents of middle and upper class families practiced what Lareau termed, *concerted cultivation*: an assertive, ultra-involved parenting style that included "making certain that their children have...organized activities that are established and controlled by mothers and fathers" (1989, p. 1). Concerted cultivation parents, Lareau found, were "assertive" in the way they sought information and privileges for their children. Parents of the concerted cultivation mindset fostered a "robust sense of entitlement" wherein "middle-class children learn to question adults and address them as relative equals" (p. 2). Thus, not only were parents aggressive in the gathering of information for their children, but they taught their children to be aggressive information gatherers as well. Fortunately for these families, educational institutions in the United States privilege *concerted cultivation* as a way of parenting and involvement (Barbarin, McCandies, Coleman, & Hill, 2005; Bower & Griffin, 2011); education professionals "applaud assertiveness and reject passivity as an appropriate parenting strategy" (Lareau, 2011, p. 244).

This is to the detriment of poor and working class families that used (as Lareau called it) an *accomplishment of natural growth* parenting strategy. Unlike upper-middle class parents, low-income parents who ascribed to the natural growth method did not focus on ensuring that their children were in organized activities. Parents who ascribed to an accomplishment of natural growth parenting style believed that children "own control over the character of their

leisure activities” (1989, p. 3). As a result, children were taught that there are clear boundaries between adult and child: adults are not to be questioned or challenged. Not surprisingly, Lareau found that poor or working class families (who espoused less assertive methods of gathering information about their children’s education) had less educational information and less involvement in school activities. When working class and poor parents did try to “intervene in their children’s educational experiences” they “often felt ineffectual” (p. 243). For example, Ms. McAllister attends a parent-teacher conference, but it “yield her few insights into her son’s educational experience” (p.243). Another *natural growth* mother attempted to become more informed of her child’s progress, but said ultimately “felt bullied and powerless” (p. 243).

Lareau found that the aggregate of daily interactions between parents, children and educators imprinted on lower-income families lessons of frustration and powerlessness, and on higher-income families, lessons of encouragement and support. When Lareau returned to interview the families (ten years after her initial interviews), she found that the small acts of “imprinting” had such long-lasting implications for the children and their families, that she could not use the same interview questions with both income groups. As the students had progressed through junior high and high school, the accumulation of the small, almost imperceptible differences in parent involvement had changed the life trajectory of the children. For example, in high school, the poor and working class parents were inclined (and accustomed) to turn over responsibility for education to the school. This had negative consequences for students as Lareau noted,

Relying on professionals to manage their children’s careers is an eminently reasonable decision for working-class and poor parents who have never been to college. But a reasonable decision is not necessarily an advantageous one. In schools especially, today’s institutional rules of the game require parent to be actively involved in order to maximize opportunities for their children. (2011, p. 311)

Since neither the school nor the school district disseminated information (for example on college admission, entrance exams, working opportunities, job interviews, etc.) “it was easy for working-class and poor parents to be misinformed” or uninformed (Lareau, 2011, p. 292). As a result, the effects on students’ academic opportunities were powerful and long lasting.

Cucchiara and socio-economic status. In her study of an education initiative in Philadelphia Center City Schools, Maia Cucchiara also found that socio-economic status provided privileges to some families and disadvantages others. The very policies created by school districts and city councils to help struggling educational systems often privileged higher classes while demeaning parents and students of lower economic standing. Cucchiara examined the “consequences of [educational] policies that positioned middle and upper-middle classes as inherently more worthy and important than other sectors of the population” (2013, p. 2). Cucchiara explained that to fight the middle-class flight to the suburbs, officials in the city of Philadelphia launched the Center City Schools Initiative (CCSI). The goal was to reverse urban decline and improve public schools by luring wealthier families back to the city. Though city and school staff accomplished this goal, it came at a great cost (more than \$150,000 in monetary terms) to the neediest families and children. As Cucchiara explained,

It brought additional resources to a few relatively high-performing schools and helped an already advantaged population secure access to them, while marginalizing other families and making it more difficult for them to share in the benefits of the best Philadelphia schools. (2013, p. 2)

The stratification of preference and privilege was evident across the city and within the high-performing schools themselves. The disparity in advantage was also evident in the variations in parental activity within the Center City Schools. Lower income parents, or *supportive parents*, as Cucchiara referred to them, were generally supportive of the school, its staff and pre-existing programs, and believed its educators were the experts and should determine what needed to be done for the school and how. Higher income parents, or *activist*

parents, as Cucchiara referred to them, took part in activities that were shaped by the parents' own ideas about what the school needed, challenged those in power, and positioned parents as the ones to set the agenda for improvements. Socio-economic class, Cucchiara points out, affected what parents' actions could be and where resources were allocated.

Center City activist parents created a momentum that allowed CCSI to give students who lived in Center City (i.e. students from wealthier families) priority access to better-funded schools, and prevented formerly transferring students from outside Center City (i.e. students from poorer families) less access to the better-funded Center City schools. Cucchiara wrote that district employees were well "aware of how the creation of a new academic region, the shuffling of administrators, and the special attention of high-level officials" meant channeling scarce district resources toward already successful schools and away from schools where the conditions were "deplorable" (p.187).

In the aftermath of the political disaster of the CCSI, the district changed some of the nomenclature around the initiative in order to minimize both the appearance and reality of inequity. Long after the name-change, district staffers continued to refer to the CCSI as the "segregated initiative." The CCSI had set in motion the "replacing of minority students from outside of Center City with white students from the immediate neighborhood" (p.187). As with Lareau's experience, Cucchiara noted that years later, the disparities between privileged families and lower income families continued.

The very purpose of increasing parent involvement in the Center City neighborhood was to alter the community. Some parents, administrators, and city officials believed increased Center City parent involvement would funnel more resources back into the Center City community and away from the suburbs. As the (mostly white) upper-middle-class parents became increasingly involved and funneled resources to their children's school, the (mostly

white) upper-middle-class local community benefitted with, for example, a new playground for the kindergarten classrooms. The benefits, however, came at the expense of the non-white, non-upper-middle-class families, communities, and impoverished schools outside of the Center City.

Lareau (1989, 2011) and Cucchiara's (2013) research counter idealized notions of the "American Dream" and the U.S. educational system as "a great equalizer." Not only has the U.S. educational system privileged some children while they are attending school, but those privileges continue impacting children's life trajectories long after they leave the education system (Lareau, 2011). In addition to privileging certain socio-economic statuses, many educational institutions (and those who are employed within them) privilege certain races and ethnicities. Several researchers have documented the powerful sociological dynamics of race and ethnic status and its impact on parent involvement and their children's education. Those studies are the focus in the following section.

Parent Involvement and Racial/Ethnic Capital

Since the seminal works of Lareau and Epstein, numerous scholars have undertaken the task of understanding the nuances of parent involvement. One important sector of the literature discusses the interconnectedness of race and parent involvement. Though an in-depth analysis of this sector is beyond the purview of this paper, the following is a sampling of some of the more salient and current literature regarding this topic.

Historically, minority students have not fared as well academically as their white counterparts (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Faircloth, 2011; Noguera, 2012; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Warren & Mapp, 2011). As Erin McNamara Horvat (2011) has noted, there appear to be two barriers to effective partnerships between home and school. The first is race-patterned differences in expectations for interactions (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lareau & McNamara, 1999; Lewis & Forman, 2002); the second are cultural differences between home and school

(Crozier & Davies, 2007; Davies, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Lopez & Donovan, 2009).

Though race and cultural factors are often intertwined, I first discuss the race-patterned differences and later return to the discussion of cultural barriers.

As already evidenced by Lareau's (2003) work with different socio-economic groups, differences in expectations for parent-school-student interactions can create vastly different outcomes. Students whose parents' expectations aligned with those set by the middle-and upper-class, succeed financially long after middle-school. Similarly, scholars have found that when minority parents' involvement expectations did not align with parent involvement expectations (often set by white professionals) the minority students did not fare as well academically as their white counterparts (Maia Bloomfield Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Faircloth, 2011; Johnson, Carter, & Finn, 2011; Lavadez & Armas, 2011). Researchers have often found that parents' involvement is related to their racial and social class backgrounds (Lareau, 1987; Lareau & McNamara, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). In their study of grassroots initiatives for parent empowerment, Johnson, Carter and Finn found that schools "expect students' parents to match their involvement to the schools' practices and thus reinforce the school paradigm of success through individual achievement.... this has been labeled the 'transmission school practices model' where parents emulate the school learning at home" (Schutz 2006 and McCaleb, 1997 as cited in Johnson et al., 2011, p. 71). These practices often lead to "(ap)parent involvement" where programs designed for parents by others fail to authentically include the voices of parents or to challenge existing power relations at the individual school site and district level" (Johnson, Carter & Finn, 2011, p. 71). Though Mickelson and Cousins (2011) study is detailed below; it is worth noting here, however, that they also found these parent-school-racial-dynamics in their study of African American families participating in a series of parent-involvement trainings (The Math/Science Equity Project (MSEP)). Once African-American families knew their rights (e.g.

parents *could* email the teachers or *could* call the school counselor), many parents were “able to get the desired results—a change of course placement, a sense of caring from the educators...”

(p. 202). In the discussion of their findings, Mickelson and Cousins (2011) summarize the work of researchers (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Oakes 2005; Oakes, Wells Jones & Datnow, 1997; Yonezawa, 1997) that have come before them:

Minority parents [defer to educators’ decisions] because they often assume that educators’ professional expertise trumps their own knowledge and experiences, and that they should not—or could not—advocate for a higher track placement for their child. Working class parents of color—especially those with limited English language proficiency—are the least likely of all parents to feel they have the relevant knowledge, language skills, or sense of empowerment necessary to effectively become involved in school decisions or to question school personnel. (p.204)

Susan Faircloth (2011), Lavandez and Armas (2011), Horvat (2011) and Dyrness (2011) have also explored the interconnectedness of race and parent involvement. The results of their studies demonstrated strikingly similar results and practical suggestions for educators and families wishing to have more minority parents involved in their children’s education. The recommendations were: (1) to ask for input from parents and the community, (2) to listen to (and act on) the responses, and (3) to acknowledge the skills and resources available in non-white parents and families. For example, Susan Faircloth, in her study on including American Indian and Alaska Native Families found that parents wanted school staff to:

recognize and respect native families’ cultural and linguistic diversity.... and encourage student and family voice and agency.... The most important guidance on how best to create and sustain inclusive learning environments for American Indian parents and families comes directly from the voices of these individuals. (2011, pp. 127, 133)

Working with Latino and African American parents, Lavandez and Armas (2011) drew similar conclusions from their study on improving home-school partnerships. The parents defined respectful outreach to diverse communities as: moving beyond the uni-directional

approach, considering the talent and skills parents bring to the conversations, listening to them with sincere consideration, and following up with measurable actions to implement changes.

If white school staff operate from the hidden assumption that there is something wrong or lacking in non-white families, then it is difficult, as De Carvalho (2001) has famously noted, for school personnel operating from this deficit perspective to complete the involvement tasks presented above; namely to ask for input, listen to (and act on) the answers, and acknowledge the skills and resources available in non-white parents and families. At least six studies, however, have documented positive and encouraging results when low-income and minority families were considered and included in school and community programs: Comer (1984); S. O'Connor (2001); Abrams and Gibbs (2002); Mickelson and Cousins (2011); Horvat (2011); Dyrness (2011).

In 1984, James Comer demonstrated how his School Development Plan—that emphasized *collaborative* working relationships among school staff and parents—resulted in enhanced school climate and students' academic performance. Twenty years later, S. O'Connor (2001) demonstrated how involving parents in decision-making can empower and guide them in the school involvement process. Abrams and Gibbs (2002) documented the potential to alter the balance of power between educators and low-income parents.

As mentioned above, Mickelson and Cousins (2011) studied the Math/Science Equity Project (MSEP) that aimed to increase African American parental involvement in secondary math and science course placements. Mickelson and Cousins found that the MSEP “began to level a very uneven playing field because the workshops provided African American parents with the information, networks, and negotiation skills ... that many white, middle class parents already had and often used to their children's advantage” (2011, p. 190). The expectation for the MSEP was that as a result of training parents, “more black adolescents would enroll in and complete advanced mathematics and science courses” (p. 205). Indeed, the ninety-nine adults in

the program resoundingly felt that MSEP had empowered black parents and “directly challenged racially disparate educational outcomes rooted in the race gaps in higher-level track enrollments” (p. 208).

Horvat (2011) similarly illustrated the positive effects of minority families being considered and included in school and community programs. She found that over a thirty-year period, the critical factors accounting for sustained school improvement were the importance of a “reciprocal approach that treats all parents as partners in the effort, and recognizes the importance of teachers, parents and administrators working in cooperation towards a shared goal” (2011, p. 164). Horvat found that when parents and school agents “reached across barriers” they created pathways for involvement and allowed for a schools’ increasing success.

Finally, Dyrness (2011)’s work with Mothers United in Oakland, California is yet another study that demonstrated the positive effects on parents and students when minority families were included in school and community programs. In *Mothers United*, Dyrness recounted the lived experiences of five Latina immigrant mothers—*madres*—as they tried to be informed and engaged advocates for their children’s education and work with other community members to open a new, small, community school in their Oakland, California neighborhood. Dyrness’s comprehensive work is critical to the minority-parent involvement literature because it recounts in detail how parents successfully became informed of their rights, the challenges they faced, how they became advocates of their (and their children’s) rights, and how they used their own familial cultural practices to resist oppressive structures. Therefore, I have dedicated the following section to illustrating some of the major findings from this research:

Parent involvement and minorities: The work of Andrea Dyrness and Mothers United. During her three-year ethnographic study, Dyrness watched as the five *madres* gathered around kitchen counters; the women developed *confianza* (to confide in each other) based on

sincerity, honesty and respect. Moreover, they brought and nurtured *confianza* with the school staff through two research products. The first research product was the presentations to the teachers; this gained them credibility with the White school staff. Afterwards, the teachers remarked not only that they learned new insights from working with their students' parents, but also, that they "were moved by the mother's courage and honesty," and that the mothers "had ways of being in community that the school could learn from" (Dyrness, 2011, p. 177). Continuing in their progress, the *madres*' second research product was the founding of the parent center.

The parent center brought more parents to the school by not only offering support and services, but also training and development. The parent center

was a *mujerista* inspired counterspace where parents who struggled with multiple indignities of life at the interstices of racism, sexism, classism, and xenophobia could support each other in naming their experiences and interrogating the structures that worked to marginalize them. (2011, p. 188)

The more teachers and parents that became educated, the more the school and community flourished. As one teacher later noted, this was possible because the *madres* "created the space and place for that to happen" (p. 188). In concluding her work, Dyrness suggested lessons for professional educators and reformers. The first, she wrote, is to see parents as "people in progress, capable of being something tomorrow that they weren't today" (p. 193). The second lesson Dyrness suggested was for educators to get out of their own way: A significant barrier, if not the most significant barrier, to the participation of immigrant parents in school reform is the stubborn trained inability of professionals to recognize these parents as change agents (p. 193).

Ideally, educators and school staff across the country could set time aside to learn and implement the lessons from Dyrness' work. In practice, however, schools are already overburdened financially and struggle for resources, while teachers increasingly juggle more meetings and in-service training in addition to their daily pedagogical requirements. How, then,

does a school or district change the patterns of trained inability and create spaces and places for support, courage, and honesty? In reflecting on her work with the *madres*, Dyrness suggested that it not be an increase in work, but a redefinition of that work; not more meetings, but different kinds of meetings. In conjunction with the literature mentioned above, perhaps the different kinds of meetings could be those where staff ask for input from parents and the community, listen to (and act on) the responses, and acknowledge the skills and resources available in non-white parents and families.

In the preceding sections, I have discussed how researchers have examined the intricate nature of parent involvement and family finances (socio-economic capital) and racial and ethnic identity (racial/ethnic capital); how those resources (i.e. forms of capital). Intricately interwoven into both of these is a third resource: cultural capital. In the following section I discuss culture as capital, the effects of privileging one culture over others, the effects of having one culture in the school and a different one in the community, the effects of having—or not having—a school culture that is a welcoming, communicative and trustworthy, and the influential links between school culture, agency and structure.

Parent Involvement and Cultural Capital

In “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction” Bourdieu and Passeron first formulated the term *cultural capital* as they sought to understand the differences in children’s educational outcomes in France during the 1960s. The authors theorized that aside from financial capital, there were other forms of capital in an educational system that could be inherited and capitalized on to give power, status and advantage to some and not to others. Cultural capital for parents may reveal itself in three forms: (1) personal dispositions, attitudes, and knowledge gained from experience; (2) connections to education-related objects; (3) and connections to education related institutions (Grenfell & James, 1998; Lee and Bowen, 2006).

Lee and Bowen explained, “Just as economic capital represents the power to purchase products, cultural capital for parents in terms of their children’s education represents the power to promote their children’s academic enhancement” (2006, p. 197).

Culture of privilege. Of particular significance to those studying parent involvement in their children’s schools, is the fact that certain cultures—usually the white upper-middle-class culture—are valued and privileged above all others, even when assessing parents’ involvement with their children’s education. Historically in the United States, the dominant culture in schools has been the white upper-middle class culture. In her research Lareau repeatedly encountered a “dominant set” of cultural repertoires (Lareau, 1987, 1989; Lareau & Weininger, 2003) that were more highly valued than others. Lareau found that the dominant way of being involved as a parent was so pervasive and generally accepted, that it became difficult to see that it (1) existed, (2) was preferred, and (3) gave privilege to some and not others. Above, in my discussion of socio-economic status and parent involvement, I mentioned that in Lareau’s second edition of *Unequal Childhoods*, the privileges that the educational system had afforded the upper-class families over the ten years since her original interviews, caused such great disparities between the upper and lower class families, that Lareau could not even use the same interview questions with the—now grown—children. The adult middle-class children’s interviews were filled with questions about their college preparation, while the working-class and poor adult’s interviews were not. The latter’s interviews were “filled with discussion of their difficulties in high school, challenges at work, and uncertain future goals” (2011, p. 310). Lareau wrote, “Differences in the cultural logic of child rearing are attached to *unequal currency* in the broader society” and that “concerted cultivation [upper-middle class rearing] appears to have greater promise of being capitalized into social profits than does accomplishment of natural growth [lower class rearing]” (p.244).

Disparate cultures. Schools where the staff is predominately of one culture and the families are of another should particularly note this unequal currency. As mentioned previously, Mickelson and Cousins (2011) worked with White educators to increase African American parental involvement in secondary math and science course placements. Though Mickelson and Cousins focus primarily on the practice of curricular differentiation (tracking and ability grouping), the response of the African American parents regarding the parent involvement workshops is worth citing verbatim. The authors found that African American parents believed that

[the parent involvement] workshops began to level a very uneven playing field because the workshops provided African American parents with the information, networks, and negotiation skills they typically did not possess, but that many white, middle class parents already had and often used to their children's advantage.... African American parents see a world in which being African American means one is unlikely to get the best information or best opportunities in schooling, that success in schooling of African American children requires persistence of parents, and parents have to make one's child the top priority to "make success" in schooling. (p. 190 & 205)

Similarly, Faircloth (2011) found that the American Indian and Alaska Native parents wanted the predominantly White school staff to *recognize* and *respect* native families' cultural and linguistic diversity. Similarly, Lavadez and Armas (2011) created a "framework for change to strengthen home school partnerships through a three-pronged approach" (p. 99). After speaking with the Latino and African American families, Lavandez and Armas noted that first and foremost, parent involvement programs should be *culturally relevant* and linguistically appropriate; second, staff training preparation "draw from community funds of knowledge;" and third, "improvement of advocacy-oriented bi-directional communication" (p. 99). In constructing their framework, Lavandez and Armas drew from the already existing literature of parent involvement that repeatedly noted the challenges for cultural minority student populations served by a cultural majority staff (Mapp, 2003; Noguera, 2012; Noguera & Wing, 2006). As these and other studies (Curtis, 1988; Epstein, 2001; Heath, 1982; Lareau, 2011; Metz, 1986)

have suggested, unless disparities in family and school culture are addressed parent involvement challenges arise and negative educational outcomes inevitably ensue.

The importance of school culture. Not only do all of the above mentioned studies emphasize the significance of culture recognition and its effects on parent involvement, but also, directly or indirectly, they all spoke to the necessity of schools having a culture that is welcoming, communicative, and trustworthy. It is not only individuals and demographic groups that have a particular culture. Schools—like all other organizations—have a culture of their own (Schein, 2010). A culture of communication—as organizational scholars have written—is key to the success of an organization (Schein, 2004). Students’ success—and thereby, the school’s success—is directly proportionate to the quantity and quality of communication *between* school staff and families (Epstein, 2001; Hiatt-Michael, 2010; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Specifically, scholars have found that two-way communication is key (Hands, 2009; Sanders & Harvey, 2002) As noted above, the Native American, Alaskan, African American, and Latino parents asked to not only receive communication from the school about their children or about ways to become involved, but also *to be asked* about their children’s cultures and *to be heard* regarding the ways they could be involved.

In that same vein, a school with a welcoming culture fosters communication. When, for example, a school appears welcoming to only certain parents’ cultures (e.g. White upper-middle class) and certain kinds of involvement (e.g. bake sale and field trips), communication with minority families will be strained at best and hostile at worst. Historically, minorities in the United States have plentiful reasons to not believe they are welcomed in schools (Tyack, 1974). The key to rebuilding relationships with various ethnicities—and across school fences—is to create a culture of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Mapp, 2003; Schneider, Tinsley, Cheldelin, & Amanatullah, 2010). How, then, does a school create a culture of trust, welcome, and

communication? Many scholars believe it is derived from the school leadership and the structures they impose.

Culture, agency, and structure. Hubbard's (2011) ethnographic study focused on one urban public school's conversion to a charter status. Ripe with possibilities and resources, parents and community members were prepared to engage with their children's education and rally the call for school improvement and change. Unfortunately, much like Cucchiara's study with the *madres*, the parents swayed opinion and garnered votes, but then were silenced once policies changed to the administration's liking. The new school charter—with incredible potential for community partnership and parent engagement—floundered despite the constituents' beliefs that they had done their best. To uncover the dynamics that led to parent and community disengagement, Hubbard examined the interplay of culture, agency and structure. For example, the school leadership—specifically the new executive director (ED)—operated from a deficit perspective of minority and low income families. Because of her actions (based on beliefs about her wisdom and minority family's deficits) the community increasingly felt that “they were being systematically marginalized and alienated from the school” (L. Hubbard & C. Hands, 2011, p.58). It is not surprising since structures did not adequately support a school-community communication and partnership and the ED continued to embrace power with school leadership on top and families on bottom. While teachers and other staff often play an integral role in the welcoming, trusting, and communicative culture of a school; it is the principal's leadership and agency that establish “priorities for their schools, allot resources, ... impact school culture (Knapp, 1997; Newman, King & Youngs, 2000)” and put into place structures that allow [or do not allow] parent and community engagement (p. 62). Though much more may be said about culture, agency and structure, the important point to note when trying to understand parent involvement and its influence on students' academic achievement is to attend

to the various ways that culture, agency (the actions of individuals) and structural factors shape inequities.

Summary

In this first section, I have used existing literature to demonstrate the following: first, the importance of educational achievement in light of its returns to individuals and society, second, that parents' involvement in their children's education is consistently a determining factor in educational achievement—so much so that federal, state, and local policies are in place to support it; and third that there are a number of societal factors that either facilitate or impede parent involvement. Most literature reviews on parent involvement end here. However, based on a pilot study I conducted with a group of mothers who were of similar levels of education, social economic status, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, their involvement in their children's education was influenced by the interaction they had with other mothers at their children's schools. Factors such as mothers' employment status and mothers' use of aggression appeared to influence involvement. Because of these findings, in the next section, I review literature regarding stay-at-home mothers and working mothers, the effects of mothers' employment on their children and on their own mental well-being, and the effects of their well-being and employment status on themselves and on other women.

Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Education

Though some may argue that it takes a village to raise a child, throughout the world it is mothers that continue to do the largest amount of raising and spend largest amount of time becoming involved in their children's education Quindlen (2005); (Rotkirch, 2009). Scholars have often documented that in all known human societies, it is the biological mothers that invest the most in their children (Campbell, 2002); it is the mother that is crucial for the infant's survival, and it is the mother that most greatly influences the reproductive success of her children

(Sear & Mace, 2008). As such, the review of the literature now turns more specifically to the dynamics specifically affecting mothers' involvement in their children's education. Moreover, as writers in both the academic and non-academic fields have differentiated working mothers versus stay-at-home mothers' involvement in their children's education, in reviewing the literature below, I also differentiate throughout the sections between working and stay-at-home mothers

Mothers may become volunteers for their children's schools through two general pathways. One way, is to hold a school volunteer role that is elected or appointed through an established process—often described in the district or school policies and bylaw documents. For example, at Johnson Charter School (a fictitious name for a real school) the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) board members are nominated by school parents and officially instated by the school principal. The second path to volunteering, however, is the more common: parent involvement role assignments are arbitrary, without elections, appointments or an established process. For example, a mom volunteers to be the president of the band boosters, another coordinates the Fall Festival, another volunteers to lead the fundraising efforts, and so on and so forth. I chose those examples specifically, because in each of those, the parent is not only in a voluntary role that varies from one year to the next (e.g. this year it's a committee needed for the bake sale, next year it is the holiday dance), but also because she holds an informal leadership role over other parents; that is to say, the mom that is in charge of the band booster chooses the parents volunteering with her. The Fall Festival coordinator and the fundraising chair will do the same: they will choose the parents and assign them their roles. This may seem simple and straightforward at first: the mother who is a business owner might be appointed as community fundraising liaison, the mother who is a nurse might be appointed to run the first aid booth, and

so forth. Social dynamics, however, do not seem to allow for simple and straightforward orchestrations.

In an un-published pilot study Vicente (2012a) I conducted interviews with twelve working mothers. One of my findings was that mothers becoming involved in their children's schools was not a simple or straightforward process. The mother who was a pediatric ophthalmologist, for example, had offered to do free eye screening exams for the students at her daughter's elementary school. She informed me that the stay-at-home mother in charge of parent volunteers passed her over for another stay-at-home mother who was on better terms with the volunteer coordinator; the mother chosen to do eye-screening exams had no medical training. My interviewee posited two explanations for this behavior: first, that the volunteer coordinator did not like her personally, and second, that perhaps the coordinator felt threatened by her career success; the coordinator, she surmised, chose to work with another stay-at-home mother that she perceived as less threatening. This example of parent involvement exclusion (and explanation for that exclusion) was typical of the many examples and explanations provided by my interviewees—all full-time working mothers.

As social scientists, how can we better understand the factors enabling and inhibiting mothers'—and other female guardians'—involvement? What are some of the dynamics that encourage or inhibit female guardian's from helping their children's schools? To begin to answer these questions, I conducted the literature review presented in this section. First, I discuss the historical background to female guardians working or staying at home; specifically, their choices (or non-existent choices) for either staying home or working. Second, as many women make the decision to work or stay-at-home based on what they perceive will benefit their children, I discuss the literature on the effects of a mothers' employment (or unemployment) on her children's mental well-being. Third, as children's well-being is directly linked to their

mothers' well-being, I review the literature on the effects of a mother's employment on her own well-being. Fourth, as women's well-being is directly linked to experiences of aggression, I review the literature on women's experiences with aggression—particularly—indirect aggression: its use, its effects, and the link to school involvement. Fifth, as women often experience aggression because of their communal or agentic behaviors, I review the literature on prescriptive communal behavior versus socially condemned agentic behaviors. Sixth, I discuss the studies that have built on the “agentic versus communal” discourse and have found the powerful influences of likeability and competence, and the penalties of success. I conclude with a summary of the above-mentioned literature, with an eye towards gap in the literature and suggestions for future studies.

Stay-at-Home and Working Mothers

After the birth of their child(ren) women—by choice or circumstance—either become stay-at-home mothers or continue in the labor force as working mothers. In the United States, both terms are politically and socially charged. Some individuals expect that women will stay home and raise their children, others expect that women will work outside the home, and yet others feel that women can do both simultaneously and perfectly. Moreover, women in general are expected to become involved in their children's schools.

Stay-at-home mothers. Historically, the term stay-at-home mother elicits images of a happy, calm and perfectly put together June Cleaver from the “Leave it to Beaver” television show of the ‘50s and ‘60s. That image, however, continues to be an untenable ideal for stay-at-home mothers. In fact, since the ‘50’s mothers have felt increasing pressures to go beyond the basic June Cleaver perfections and become “super” or “uber” moms. As Quindlen (2005), explained: “There is an uber-mom who bounces from soccer field to school fair...until she falls into bed at the end of the day, exhausted, her life somewhere between the Stations of the Cross

and a decathlon.” In *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, Hays (1996) analyzed “mothering” as a historically constructed ideology and used the term “intensive mothering” to describe the “contemporary cultural model of socially appropriate mothering.... It is a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children” (p. x, 1996). Hays continued with an explanation of the three “tenets” of intensive mothering: first, the mother is primarily responsible for childcare; second, the childcare needs to be child centered; and third, children are “sacred, innocent and pure, their price immeasurable” (p. 54). In the final sentences of her expansive work, Hays summarized the implications of this culturally constructed motherhood: society believes that “all the troubles of the world can be solved by the individual efforts of superhuman women” (p. 177).

A decade later, Bianchi et al. (2006)—in *The Changing Rhythms of American Family Life*—quantified some of Hays’ results. They studied, among other “intensive” parenting factors, the amount of time parents reported taking care of their children and compared their findings to previous studies. In 1975, for example, stay-at-home mothers spent 11 hours per week on primary child care. In 2000, stay-at-home mothers spent an additional seven hours per week on primary child care, for a total of 18 hours on average. Perhaps even more striking, was the finding that the working mothers in 2000 spent as many hours on child care as non-working mothers did in 1975 (Bianchi et al., 2006). It is not surprising then, that at the turn of the 21st century, under the strain of idealism and perfection, many women chose to leave the workforce and become stay-at-home mothers, this is often referred to as the “Opt Out Revolution” (Bayard, 2006; Belkin, 2003; Feder, 2005; Pollitt, 2005; Story, 2005 as cited Dillaway & Pare, 2008). For many mothers in the United States, however, there is no such thing as a choice to not work; for many mothers in the United States, staying home after child birth is a necessity, not an option.

Staying home as a necessity. Though a small sector of society may choose to be stay-at-home mothers, for most women, leaving the work force after having children is not a choice but a necessity. In the recently edited work, *Families as They Really Are*, Cotter, England and Hermesen found that mothers who leave the workforce are concentrated at opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum (Cotter et al., 2010) from women who stay in the workforce. For example, many mothers married to spouses in the top five percent of the earnings' ladder feel they have no choice but to leave the work force to care for their children, despite often having the highest levels of education (Harvard Business School Survey, 2007; Yale Survey, 2000 as cited in Sandberg, 2013)³. This is because of the number of hours the husband or partner is away from the home. Cha (2010) found that if their husbands worked more than fifty hours per week, mothers were forty-four percent more likely to quit their jobs in order to provide consistent care for their children.

On the other end of the financial spectrum, fifty-two percent of mothers with husbands or partners in the bottom quarter of the earning scale, had no choice but to be out of the labor force; these families could not scrap together the funds to cover child care costs in the form of daycares or sitters. Financially, therefore, one of the parents had to stay home with the infant child(ren); for a variety of reasons that parent was usually the mother (Campbell, 2002). The exorbitant cost of child care in the United States is gaining considerable political attention. Mothers, academics and politicians alike have noted that in the last quarter century, though the minimum wage has remained largely unchanged, the cost of childcare has skyrocketed ("The National Association of Child Care Resources & Referral Agencies," 2010). The cost of having two children in daycare, for example, is greater than what the average family pays in rent, *in every single state* in the

³ Personal communication between Sandberg and Harvard and Yale faculty for data on the Harvard alumni of 1981, 1985, and 1991, and the Yale alumni of 1979, 1984, 1989, and 1994.

country ("Child Care Aware of America," 2012). Many mothers have found that their income will hardly cover the cost of day care, not to mention the related additional expenses of working such as clothing and transportation costs (Bayard, 2006). Moreover, to complicate what is already a difficult decision for parents, many of the daycares have strict policies such as dropping off children after 8 a.m. or picking them up by 5:00 p.m. This is an impossible feat for full-time working parents. For many working mothers, therefore, the combination of these factors leads to only one conclusion: as a matter of necessity and survival, they must leave the workforce and become the primary care giver (for a non-academic discussion see Gardner, 2006, October; Gerson, 1994; Pollitt, 2005, October 17). What then are the circumstances surrounding the forty-eight percent of low-income mothers that return to work after their child is born? And what are the options (or non-options) for working mothers disbursed throughout the many other rungs of the socio-economic ladder?

Working mothers. In the last century, the number of working mothers has exponentially multiplied. In fact, more than two thirds of mothers in the united states work at least one job (*Employment characteristics of families-2016*, 2017). Despite the increases in policies protecting and advocating for women at work and at home, the tensions between work and family continue to increase. In fact, for women, the tension between work between work and family has a long history (Dillaway & Pare, 2008; Ferree, 1990; Kessler-Harris, 1983). Since the era of tribal hunting and gathering, women have constituted a significant part of the workforce. In modern times, certain groups of mothers have always worked outside the home (Dillaway & Pare, 2008); black women in the United States for example, have balanced motherhood and working since slavery (Collins, 1991). As Western Nations industrialized, working women of all races slowly emerged from the “‘shadow economy’ where work conditions and wages [were] worse, and few families [were] able to rely on a single income” (Ferree, 1990, p. 872); work in

the *shadow economy* (also commonly referred to as informal economy or grey economy) is untaxed work done for cash where there are few (if any) regulations (Constable, 2017, March 5).

Tensions between work and home increased in new ways for many women during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As women (mostly white and middle-class) increasingly gained access to previously male dominated educational opportunities, so too did these same women increasingly gain access to “influence educational institutions, promoting social change and challenging dominant social norms and restrictions” (Rubin & Wooten, 2007, p. 336).

Moreover, during the two world wars of the 20th century, lower to middle-class women of various ethnicities who were previously relegated to *shadow* work helped the war effort at home, in businesses and factories. Across the country there was propaganda with images of “Rosie the Riveter” and other images of working women saying, “We Can Do It!” After the war, however, men returned to their pre-war employment, the economy flourished, and many women were pushed out of their jobs. At that time, many white, privileged families—only needing one source of income—moved to the newly minted suburbs. As a result, many white middle-class women’s identity changed from “Rosie the Riveter” to “Susie Homemaker” (Bland, 1983). The new standard for mothering became the “stay-at-home” mother despite the fact that many women needed and wanted to go to work, and that “women’s labor force participation, divorce, cohabitation, single-headed households, and non-marital births remained high and increased in the United States” (Dillaway & Pare, 2008, p. 440).

Working as a choice. There were, however, many women who challenged domestication and looked to strengthen Rosie’s new-found muscles (Pearson, Touchton, & Shavlik, 1989). During this time, college enrollment for (mostly white) women increased as did employment in *visible* (non-shadow) work and previously male-dominated occupations (“Industry and occupation,” 2014). Despite the increase in college attendance and employment, however,

women were expected to continue to “carry the bulk” of household work and be the primary care-givers in the family (Coltrane, 2000; Lachance-Grzela and Bouchard, 2010, as cited in Liss, Schifffrin, & Rizzo, 2012). Some scholars like Winnicott (1949, 1957) supported women working outside the home by asserting the discourse of the “good enough mother.” The good enough mother could work outside the home and keep the children healthy by “providing what the child needs but does not give into their every demand” (Guendouzi, 2005, p. 18). The women who took to Winnicott’s theory were perhaps able to balance or negotiate the demands of both the working and home spheres.

This did not go unnoticed. As a counter-strike and in an attempt to quell the women’s liberation movement, psychologists like Bowlby (1969) vehemently spoke out in support of Attachment Theory—proposing that a child has an innate need to attach to one main figure (the mother) and that the child should receive *continuous* attention from the mother for the first two years of life. He believed that delinquency, low intelligence, aggression and depression were the long term repercussions of a maternally deprived child. At the same time, outspoken politically conservative women like Phyllis Schlafly took center stage at political rallies and women’s speaking engagements across the country to encourage women to stay home and fight the flight of women into the workforce. Despite feminist speakers—then and now—noting the irony of Phyllis Schlafly travelling and “working” across the country away from her children, Schlafly’s and Bowlby’s supporters would not be dissuaded. Bowlby, Schlafly and many others across the country were “influential in helping create an idealized version of motherhood....which resulted in feelings of guilt for many working mothers” (Guendouzi, 2005, p. 18). The idealized mother was one that constantly puts her children’s needs above all else; “she is the *protective* mother, the *moral socializer*, the *caring* or *nurturing* mother, the *concerned* mother, the *proud* mother,

and the *organized* mother” (p. 31). This idealized mother was an image impossible for working women to achieve.

By the 1980’s, women were told that they could “have it all”: they could be *super* moms by working full-time *and still* being the perfect homemaker. The super mother switches easily and seamlessly from working woman to homemaker without the slightest loss for either job or family (Faludi, 1991; Perkins & DeMeis, 1996). Unfortunately, the reality was unlike the ideal: the same number of hours existed in a day for all mothers, working or not. Based on four decades of research, it was clear that “despite access to education and professional achievement, the integration of family and career roles remain[ed] problematic for women” (De Marneffe, 2004, p.336).

Today’s working mothers continue to be in a bind: if she works, she helps support her family and gains status from some parts of society; but, if she works, she also feels the pressure and guilt of social condemnation for not staying home with her children (Douglas, 2000). For mothers in low-income households, the social condemnation is incessant: they are condemned for not working and thus relying on welfare, but when they are working, they are condemned for not being home with their children. Zimmerman, Aberle, Krafchick, and Harvey (2008) refer to this as the “zero-sum game, where clearly no mother, regardless of race or social class, can win” (p.209). Hays (1996), discussing the pressures of intensive mothering summarized the problem for American women in this way:

In a society where over half of all mothers with young children are now working outside of the home, one might well wonder why our culture pressures women to dedicate so much of themselves to child rearing. And in a society where the logic of self-interested gain seems to guide behavior in so many spheres of life, one might further wonder why a logic of unselfish nurturing guides the behavior of mothers. These two puzzling phenomena make up what I call the cultural contradictions of contemporary motherhood.” (p. x)

Though scholars have various ways to convey these contradictions, most mothers will simply explain that they are “damned if I do and damned if I don’t.”

Mommy wars. In 2003, two women—caught in the damned if I do, and damned if I don’t predicament—were participants on the *Dr. Phil* television show. The women were deciding whether to work or stay home. The audience was comprised of women who vehemently defended one side or the other (“Mom vs. Mom” and “Mom vs. Mom, Part 2”). Since then, popular media shows have continued to stage (literally and metaphorically) a *mommy war* that pits working moms and stay-at-home moms against each other (Zimmerman et al., 2008). The *mommy wars* were purportedly meant to elicit answers to the question: “Who is the best mother?”. As Zimmerman et al. (2008) have pointed out, there are several problems with this question and the media’s treatment of the answers. The first is that it focuses the blame on individuals (mothers) rather than the systems (social and political) that have constructed the *mommy wars* narrative in the first place. Second, it is an excellent distraction from asking solution-focused questions, such as “How can society better support families?” And perhaps most importantly, the media-fueled discourse has completely denied the experiences of mothers who are not white, affluent and heterosexual. Kim Gandy, the former president of the National Organization for Women, wrote a letter to Diane Sawyer: the document has become one of the most cited documents in the discussion on the *mommy wars*. In the letter, Gandy scolds Diane Sawyer for ignoring single mothers and other women who have to work. Gandy wrote, “What are the moms who must work to put food on the table supposed to think about a debate that manages both to exclude and scold them” (Anonymous, 2006, p.1)?

As the United States underwent economic downturns in almost all decades proceeding the post-WWII boom, many families had no choice but to become double-income households. Today, though the economy has taken a slight upturn, most mothers in the United States do not

have the luxury of choosing whether or not to work; being a stay-at-home mother is not a financial possibility. In the following section, I continue the discussion of the literature, specifically turning the discussion to women who must work as a necessity.

Working as a necessity. As discussed above, for many mothers it is nearly impossible to find a source of income that meets either extended-family-care requirements or day-care complying hours. Interestingly, with the expansion of mobility and technology, mothers have found other sources of income. In “Locating Mothers,” Dillaway and Paré outlined the various capacities in which mothers’ have worked and continue to find employment outside of the “universalized” White, middle or upper class experiences (in typical white-collar jobs) by instead participating in: working from home, becoming chameleon mothers, and mothering-for-income. Though Dillaway and Paré extensively discuss these experiences, the following is a summary of their findings. The *working-at-home mothers*, for example, earn income by “taking in laundry, sewing, haircutting...selling Tupperware, Pampered Chef, or Mary Kay cosmetics; taking in receptionist data, entry small assembly, or telemarketing work; or utilizing computer technology to ‘telecommute’ to one’s paid workplace” (Dillaway & Pare, 2008, p. 454). *Chameleon mothers*, on the other hand, work outside the home, but because they work part-time or at night (such as nurses or janitors) are “chameleon” mothers “able to perform both at home and at work without social sanctions” (Garey, 1999; Johnston & Swanson, 2004 as cited in Dillaway & Pare, 2008, p. 455). And finally, there are the mothers who *mother-for-income*: who either work in day care facilities (their own or someone else’s) or work in private homes as nannies (sometimes requiring twenty-four hours of mothering for others’ children).

Regardless of how a mother scrapes together the resources necessary for the family’s financial stability, most mothers must not only contribute to the family income in some way, but then are also expected to continue to be the primary care-giver in the home. The financial

necessities and sociological expectations on mothers have created not only a media feeding frenzy (see Douglas, 2000 for an excellent review of mothers and the media) but also a whirlwind of scholarly articles attempting to answer questions such as: What, if any, are the effects of working mothers on the well-being of their children? Do children reap greater benefits from “intensive” mothering or from “good enough” mothering? What, if any, are the effects of employment on a mother’s well-being? And do mothers reap greater benefits from “intensive” mothering or from “good enough” mothering? The following is a review of the more recent studies answering these questions regarding mothers’ employment, her own well-being, and her children’s well-being.

Effects of Mother’s Employment

Though reviewing the literature of these studies may appear as a distraction to the original goal of understanding the factors affecting a mother’s involvement in her children’s education, the reader will see, however, that the mental well-being of the mother has *everything* to do with her involvement in her children’s education. Before discussing the effects of employment on mothers, however, it is necessary to answer the questions regarding the well-being of her children. Not only because of the economic and social implications, but also because it is long since established that the emotional well-being of mothers and children are interdependent ((Bornstein, Suwalsky, & Breakstone, 2012).

Effects of mother’s employment on her children. The seminal study on the effects on children of mothers working status was conducted in the 90’s by the Early Child Care Research Network (under the guidance of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development). Over a period of fifteen years, the researchers studied more than 1,000 children’s cognitive and language abilities, and social behaviors to determine, among other things, the relationship between child care and child development; in particular, the effects of exclusive

maternal care versus child care. They found that the “children who were cared for exclusively by their mothers *did not develop differently* than those who were also cared for by others” (emphasis mine, "National Institute of Child Health and Human Development," 2006, p. 5)

Since then, almost every study published has confirmed that “maternal employment does not negatively influence the mother-child relationship, the influence of parents on children, or the quality of the parenting as perceived by the child” (Zimmerman et al., 2008, p. 212). To the contrary, studies have found that: “the benefits of maternal employment are particularly salient and far-reaching for girls. Daughters of employed mothers have been found to have higher academic achievement, greater career success, more nontraditional career choices, and greater occupational commitment” (Alessandri, 1992; Eccles & Hoffman, 1984; Hoffman, 1979; Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999 as cited in Zimmerman et al., 2008, p. 211). More recently, scholars from the United Kingdom, after conducting a study of eleven thousand children, found that the highest levels of well-being were present in children whose parents both worked outside the home (McMunn, Yvonne, Noriko, & Bartley, 2011).

Perhaps the most well-known study on the effects of mothers’ employment on her family, was by Lois Hoffman and her colleagues (Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999; Nye, Hoffman, & Adamson, 1976). Hoffman and her colleagues studied 448 families with elementary school children living in an industrialized city in the Midwest. Participants were of various ethnicities and socio-economic status, and included one and two parent families. The findings revealed the abundance of positive effects of a mother’s employment on her children and on herself. The following are the concluding remarks from Dr. Hoffman’s speech to “Parenthood in America.”

The positive effects of a mother’s employment include:

higher academic outcomes for children, benefits in their behavioral conduct and social adjustment, and [a] higher sense of competence and effectiveness in daughters. On the whole, these research results suggest that most families accommodate to the mother's employment and in doing so provide a family environment that works well. In two-

parent families, the fathers take on a larger share of the household tasks and child care and this seems to have benefits for the children. In the working class, employed mothers indicated a higher level of well-being than full-time homemakers and this, in turn, affects their parenting in positive ways. Even in the middle-class, where employed mothers did not show a higher level of well-being, neither did they show a lower one. While the quality and stability of nonmaternal care for infants and young children is important, the mother's employment itself does not seem to have the negative effects often proclaimed. (Hoffman, 1998)

Despite Dr. Hoffman's speaking engagements, published works and the number of studies that have corroborated her findings, there has yet to be a cease-fire—particularly in the media—around the controversy of mothers working. Though the discourse on the effects of mothers' employment has generally centered on children's well-being, there are increasing numbers of studies centering on the effects of a mother's work on her own wellbeing.

Effects of mother's employment on herself. Perhaps even more surprising, employed women reap greater rewards including greater financial security, more stable marriages, less depression, less anger, better health, and in general, increased life satisfaction (Bennetts, 2007; Buehler & O'Brian, 2011; Coley, Lohman, Votruba-Drzal, Pittman, & Chase-Lansdale, 2007; Cooke, 2006; Freeman, 2010). This does not imply that working mothers do not experience financial insecurity, instability in marriages, depression and so forth. For example, Freeman (2010) explained that job overload, lack of support, and the inability to set one's own schedule can be detrimental to a working mother's well-being (see also Klein, Hyde, Essex, & Clark, 1998). Moreover, there is tremendous stress at home for working mothers as they continue to spend forty percent more on child care and thirty percent more on housework than the father (Hall & MacDemid, 2009; Milkie, Raley, & Bianchi, 2009).

In spite of the potential for greater at-work and at-home tensions, research has shown that stay-at-home mothers (SAHMs) have a higher risk for depression than working mothers (WMs) (Brown & Tirril, 1978; Evenson & Simon, 2005; Kahn & Cuthbertson, 1998; Woods, 1985). As early as Pistrang's study from 1984, researchers have demonstrated that mothers who had

previously worked but after child birth were unemployed, had the highest levels of depression and irritability. A year later, Hock, Morgan, and Hock (1985) found that the mothers who then returned to work had less anxiety than those who did not. Nicolson (1999) and others ((Hock, Schirtzinger, & Lutz, 1992; McCarten, 2003; Oberman & Josselson, 1996) have hypothesized that it is the disruption and loss of a mother's former self and status, the loss of autonomy, structure, tangible rewards, intellectual challenge, social contacts, economic independence, occupational identity, and personal power that then result in higher levels of anger and depression As Aneshensel and Pearlin (1987) and others (see Zimmerman et al., 2008) have noted, while the family is highly valued for women, the homemaker role is [at the same time] devalued. As many working and non-working mothers have said, "Being a mom is a thankless job." When Rubin and Wooten (2007) studied highly educated mothers who decided to stay home, they found that, as hypothesized, these women felt many of the aforementioned "losses." Suddenly, highly educated women were "just moms" and felt "snubbed, blown off, and discounted" by professionals "who treated them as they were invisible until they found out they had a certain degree behind their name" (p.343). Rubin and Wooten continued:

In discussing the challenges of staying home full-time, loss was often a significant feeling. Participants described a lost sense of identity or sense of self as found by Madaras (1999). The phrase "just a mom" were used to illustrate this loss of identity. The women often discussed the loss of validation they had once attained through their work.... The loss of validation from others was often matched by an internal loss of validation. The women described having difficulty valuing the job of stay-at-home mother. This lack of felt importance was credited to the idea that any woman can be a mother and to the recognition that one does not need an education to be a mother. (p. 343)

The ten participants in Rubin and Wooten's study felt guilt and shame, some felt conflict ("torn" or 'split' between their professional aspirations and their familial responsibilities"), and all felt the need for self-care and personal growth. Interestingly, when "discussing their previous work and what they missed about their jobs, the words that arose were *positive feedback*

and *recognition*” (p. 343). The women described “support from other women” as “indispensable in finding fulfillment as a stay-at-home mother” and “volunteer work” that gave them “a sense of self-worth and personal satisfaction” (p. 343). In a previous study, the authors noted, there was a correlation between the number of volunteer hours performed by participants and their own positive self-concept (Manetta, 1992, as cited in Rubin & Wooten, 2007). Two decades earlier, Woods (1985) had found that stay-at-home mothers turned to their “relationship with their confidants to provide them with an affirmation of worth in a society that undervalues unpaid work” (as cited in DeSimone, 2001, p. 31)

How a mother—whether working or not—views herself versus how she thinks society views her will also contribute to her positive (or negative) self-concept. As mentioned previously, it is impossible for mothers to meet the high standards that society has placed on them to be a “perfect” or “super” mom. Regardless of the absurdity of the standard, mothers across the country have attempted to meet society’s standards. This is partially motivated by fear of her children failing. Crum (2005) neatly summarized the fear: if women do not take on the “herculean task of being absolutely everything to their children” and if they “don’t perform magical acts of perfect Mommy ministrations, their kids might fall through the cracks and end up as losers in our hard-driving winner-take-all society” (p.40). Crum goes on to give poignant examples of the harried tasks both stay-at-home and working mothers accomplish life from day to day. Reflecting on both roles, she concluded, “We all end up in the same place—Exhaustion” (p. 40). Scholars have a variety of theories for how mother’s end up at Exhaustion, or one of the many other stations along the way. The following is a synthesis of the prominent theories that illustrate/elucidate the internal mental models of mothers.

Mothers' Mental Well-Being

In 1989, Peggy Thoits laid the foundations for a thorough discussion and examination of the interactions of self, identity, stress, and mental health. In her introduction, Thoits wrote,

Almost all approaches in psychiatry and clinical psychology (with the exception of behaviorism) view individuals' mental health as at least partly influenced by *positive self-conceptions*, *high self-esteem*, and/or the positions of *valued social identities*. Conversely psychological disorder has been attributed to unconscious conflicts within the individual's personality (Freud, 1933), arrested or inadequate identity development (e.g. Erikson, 1963; Freud, 1933), threats to self-conception of self-esteem (e.g., Abramson, Mealsky, & Alloy, 1989), and identity loss (Breakwell, 1986, Brown & Harris, 1978; Thoits, 1986), among many related processes. Some theorists and researchers see *injuries to identity of self-worth* not only as precursors but as key *markers* of mental disorder (e.g. Abramson et al., 1989; Beck, 1967) "Low self-esteem", "feelings of worthlessness", and/or "unstable self-image" are central criteria in the identification of depression, bipolar disorder, dysthymia, chronic depressed mood and borderline or avoidant personality disorders, for example. (emphasis mine, 1989, p.357)

In other words, positive self-conceptions, high self-esteem, and valued social identities *are important* to an individual's mental health; while, among other factors, threats to self-conception of self-esteem, identity loss, injuries to identity of self-worth are *also important* to an individual's mental health. It is no wonder, then, that the disruption and loss of a mother's former self and status, the loss of autonomy, structure, tangible rewards, intellectual challenge, social contacts, economic independence, occupational identity, and personal power result in higher levels of anger and depression. These dynamics of how mothers' feel about themselves may be studied under the lens of various theories. For the purposes of this paper, the lenses used will be: role theory, notions of guilt and shame, self-discrepancy theory, and the interplay between anger, depression, assertiveness, masochism, and sadism.

Role theory. Attached to notions of the self are the roles, or normative behavioral expectations, that one has of themselves. Roles not only encompass tasks, but also enumerate (albeit less overtly) how a person should think and behave. The mental and emotional struggles of both working and non-working mothers should also then be examined through *role theory*. In

terms of motherhood, scholars initially discussed mothers' various roles (mother, wife, employee, volunteer, etc.) in terms of *role overload and role conflict* (Kahn & Cuthbertson, 1998). In other words, some scholars believed that the more roles a mother had, the more psychological damage she would experience. Other scholars, however, found that this was not always the case. Sieber (1974), for example, found that that multiple roles engendered privileges, resources and rewards. Thoits (1986) found that more roles increased the sense of purpose and meaning in a person's life. That same year Pietromonaco, Manis, and Frohardt-Lane (1986) found that an increase in roles led women to have higher self-esteem and greater job satisfaction. McCarten (2003) dissertation tested her *role enhancement* hypothesis. She found that "although employed mothers may experience more role conflict and overload, they also have more avenues for enjoyment, challenge, and social support" (p. 26). As Moen, Dempster-McClain, and Williams (1989) noted (and McCarten emphasized in her work), it is imperative to consume data on role studies with a critical eye, particularly it is important to contextualize the findings by both the number of role involvements as well as their nature and circumstance. Moen et al., termed this perspective the *role context* approach. For example, if a woman is a mother, wife, employee and school-volunteer she may have strenuous-stressful tasks within those roles, but she may also find that the multiple roles enhance her well-being; if she feels dislike or discouragement in one role, her entire self-concept (and therefore, mental well-being) is not defined by that role only; she has the other roles and experiences within those roles to counter what would otherwise be the lone voice of dislike and discouragement.

Guilt and shame. Both working and stay-at-home mothers of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds have reported feelings of guilt and shame in association with mothering (Liss et al., 2012; Sutherland, 2010). Stay-at-home mothers feel guilt and shame at not contributing more to the family or to society, while working mothers feel guilt and shame at not being home

with their children (Elvin-Nowak, 1999; Guendouzi, 2005; Rubin & Wooten, 2007). Though historically the words guilt and shame have been used interchangeably, more recently, social scientists have differentiated the terms for a number of reasons (e.g. clarity, research study purposes, etc.). Liss et al. (2012) for example, explain that,

Shame has more serious psychological repercussions than does guilt and has been more strongly linked to depression (Kim et al., 2011; Tangney and Dearing, 2002) Shame-proneness in particular has been linked to higher levels of anger and lower levels of empathy (Tangney, 2002). (p. 1113 & p. 1117)

Since mothers, particularly stay-at-home mothers experience higher levels of depression and universally report feelings of shame and guilt, it appears imperative for the health of mother and child(ren) to identify which emotion—shame or guilt—she feels and to what extent a mother feels each.

Self-discrepancy theory. In 2012, Liss, Schiffrin and Rizzo studied just that. In their article “Maternal Guilt and Shame”, the authors explicate the two feelings: *guilt* is a negative self-evaluation or self-reproach of a specific behavior. *Shame*, on the other hand, is “an emotion that involves failing to live up to one’s goals and ideals as opposed to doing an act that is prohibited (Deonna & Teroni, 2008). Shame involves the desire to hide and disappear” (2013, p.1112). Liss et al. continued their study on guilt and shame in light of *self-discrepancy theory*.

Self-discrepancy theory, they wrote, “proposes that guilt and shame result from perceived discrepancies between one’s actual and ideal selves. Fear of negative evaluation by others may enhance the effects of self-discrepancy especially for shame, which involves fear of others’ reproach” (p.1112). In their quantitative study (the first non-qualitative study of its kind), the scholars found that though the 181 mothers surveyed reported low levels of shame and guilt, the levels of both emotions increased “not only with the amount of maternal self-discrepancy reported, but also as fear of negative evaluations increased” (p.1116). In other words, mothers who cared about what others—“society”—thought of them *and* had wider gulfs between their

reality and their ideals, felt greater feelings of guilt and shame. Thus, they continue, “people who fear social evaluation from others may be particularly prone to shame, especially when they feel as though they have not lived up to their internalizations of society’s standards” (p.1116). Again, these findings are critical because mothers who “internalize the cultural standards of motherhood (Rizzo, Schiffrin, & Liss, 2012), as well as experience shame about their inability to meet those standards (Lee, 1997), may be particularly prone to depression...higher levels of anger and lower levels of empathy” (p.1116-1117). Higher levels of anger and lower levels of empathy often lead to negative consequences, as Amanda Freeman found through her dissertation work.

Hostility, anger, depression, assertiveness, masochism, and sadism. In a set of three studies, Cowan, Neighbors, DeLaMoreaux, and Behnke (1998) found that women who were less positive functioning (including measures of sexual and personal happiness), who were less intimate (across various domains) and who had less life satisfaction, were more hostile towards other women, than women who scored more positively in these indices. Second, the authors found that the higher the woman’s self-esteem, self-efficacy and age, the lower their levels of hostility towards other women. Third, women were more hostile towards other women when they were more likely to accept interpersonal violence, had higher levels of emotional dependence on men and were more hostile towards men. And finally, women’s hostility was “not related to self-identification as a feminist or support of the feminist movement, at least as assessed by two items” (p. 280). Perhaps most interestingly, the strongest predictor of hostility towards other women was the participants’ dependence on men.

In a more recent study, Freeman (2010) compared the experiences of anger, assertiveness, depression and masochism of working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. Freeman, found that full-time working mothers were less depressed than stay-at-home mothers.

Even when comparing stay-at-home, part-time and full-time working mothers, full-time working mothers experienced less *state anger*—i.e. expressing anger verbally and physically. She found, moreover, that whereas the studied variables were not necessarily all related to employment status, they were nonetheless strong correlations between the four variables: assertiveness and masochism were negatively related suppressing anger and masochism were positively related; depression and masochism, depression and anger, depression and suppressing anger were positively related; and finally, that sadism and anger were positively related. In other words, the more assertive the mother felt, the less acts of masochism she exhibited; while the more depression the mother felt the more she felt anger and exhibited masochism and sadism.

How is it, then, that the nightly news is not overwrought with stories of wild mothers exhibiting outward manifestations of anger, masochism and sadism? Perhaps it is because it is socially unacceptable for women to overtly express anger, masochism or sadism (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Women's covert aggression (or *indirect aggression*) is—at best—unnoticed, and—at worst—socially condoned. That is the nature and purpose of indirect aggression: it is meant to be unseen and difficult to trace. As the discussion now turns to mothers' outward expressions of emotions, particularly their actions towards each other, I ask that the reader consider the tremendous implications of the above mentioned theories and studies (role theory, guilt and shame, self-discrepancy theory, and hostility, anger, depression, masochism and sadism) on a mother's working role, voluntary school involvement, interactions with school staff and interactions with other mothers.

Women: Indirect Aggression, Likability, Competence, and the Penalties of Success

In the previous three sections, I discussed the historical background to female guardians working or staying at home; specifically, their choices (or non-existent choices) for either staying home or working. Then I discussed the literature on the effects of a mothers'

employment (or unemployment) on her children's mental well-being. And finally, in the previous section, I reviewed the literature on the effects of a mother's employment on her own well-being. In this section, as women's well-being is directly linked to experiences of aggression, I review the literature on women's experiences with aggression—particularly—indirect aggression. Therefore, I begin with a definition of indirect aggression and an exploration into its origins; I follow this with a summary of the findings from studies demonstrating the *uses* of indirect aggression, and conclude with the discussion of studies demonstrating the *effects* of indirect aggression.

Indirect Aggression

Indirect or covert, aggression, varies from direct or overt aggression in that the perpetrator is “difficult to identify” (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988) and may “inflict pain in such a manner that he or she makes it seem as though there has been no intention to hurt at all” (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992, p. 118). Throughout their thirty years of research on indirect aggression, Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz and their colleagues defined indirect aggression as “a kind of social manipulation: the aggressor manipulates others to attack the victim, or, by other means, makes use of the social structure in order to harm the target person, without being personally involved in attack” (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992, p. 52). Some examples of indirect aggression are: “gossiping, criticizing someone behind their back, ignoring, social exclusion, becoming friends with someone else as revenge, dirty looks, putting pressure on someone, judging someone's work in an unjust manner, and/or interrupting when intended to discredit or embarrass someone” (Briggs, 2015, p. 53).

As an aggressor, being difficult to identify and using seemingly unintentional actions is, in many ways, socially *safer* than employing overt behaviors. Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Lagerspetz (1994) first presented this notion using the *effect/danger ratio*. The aggressor, they

noted, assesses the “relation between a) the effect of the intended strategy, and b) the dangers involved (physical, psychological or social) for him/herself and for people important to him/her” (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994, p. 28). Similar to strategies in war, the idea is to use a technique that will cause the most harmful *effects* to the target with the least amount of *danger* to the aggressor. To continue the war metaphor, in military combat, psychological repercussions are often more harmful and long-lasting than physical— or apparent and overt—inflictions. Similarly, indirect aggression is extremely effective in psychological repercussions, particularly in manipulating a person’s reputation, excluding him or her from a group, and threatening an individual’s self-esteem (Archer & Coyne, 2005).

A number of scholars have found that females are as aggressive as males (e.g. Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Buss & Perry, 1992) but that females primarily use indirect aggression (e.g. Cashdan, 1998; Green, Richardson, & Lago, 1996; Lagerspetz et al., 1988). Some have concluded that females’ use of indirect aggression is a result of the very structure and nature of girls’ friendship groups (i.e. smaller, tighter) (Lagerspetz et al., 1988), others (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) further posit that because females are more relationally oriented than males, females prefer to use aggression that will damage relationships (for example, group exclusion and false rumors).

How is it then, that girls become more relationally oriented and subversively aggressive? Scholars across fields—anthropology and sociology for example—agree that aggression (for men and women) is largely a socialized process (though naturally there is also an evolutionary-survival hereditary component). Tracy (1991), for example, studied the nascent and developmental quality of inter-female aggression and competition. In her groundbreaking book, *The Secrets Between Us*, Tracy substantiated at length her claim that patriarchal family configurations set the stage for women’s interactions with each other; and that socialization

begins immediately with a girl's relationship to her mother. The roles and rules of being a woman, about competition and about aggression are ingrained from birth. Tracy wrote,

Competition is the tie that binds women together in our patriarchal society. When most of us compete, we act out a distorted version of our fundamental desire to connect (p. xii) The issue at the crux of our competition is that, traditionally, we suffer from an absence of self-defining ideals for female life (p. 15) Competition with their mothers is what daughters learn first and know best. It is the tie that binds mothers and daughters together in a culture defining women primarily through their relations to men (p.34).

Reflecting on the work of Tracy and others before her (e.g. L. O'Connor, 1969), Bertero (2003) concludes her dissertation work on female aggression with the following:

Little about women's competitive strategies have changed. They are still fighting in the service of a male-dominated system...For, the most startling and unexpected finding of this study is the bald fact that women—the most successful notwithstanding—use their 'female wiles' of indirect aggression and competition to, in fact, maintain the status quo of our male-dominated society" (2003, p. 72).

The use of indirect aggression. During the last five decades, scholars have studied the use and effects of indirect aggression. Though, Feshbach (1964) used the term "indirect aggression" in her study of six year olds, it was not until 1988 that Lagerspetz et al. (1988) conducted the first study systematically examining indirect aggression. They examined whether fifth grade students (boys and girls, ages 11-12 years old) employed similar aggression strategies. The factor analyses yielded a three-factor solution that the authors labeled as *indirect*, *direct and peaceful*. Lagerspetz et al. found that though boys became angry more often, girls used *indirect* means (e.g. exploiting peers as punishment) and *peaceful* means (e.g. resolution strategies or notifying teacher or parent) to handle their anger. The authors also found that girls were part of tighter social structures consisting of pairs or triads, allowing for greater opportunities of indirect aggression; the smaller the group, the greater the impact that isolation (and other negative effect of indirect aggression) could have on the child. Interestingly, the students in this study, especially the girls, were either not aware of their indirect aggressive behaviors or did not want to admit to their indirect aggressive behaviors.

In 1992, Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukiainen aimed to replicate the original Lagerspetz et al. 1988 study with 8-year-old and 15-year-old students. The factor analyses once again yielded a three factor solution: *indirect, direct and withdrawal*; with withdrawal differing from the original 1988 peaceful factor, in that students may have told a teacher, but they may also have isolated themselves. Much like the first study, girls preferred indirect and withdrawal methods whereas boys primarily used direct methods. The compilation of findings from the 1988 and 1992 studies led the authors to conclude that as the children mature and as social networks begin to form, the greater the number of situations available—and the greater number of strategies employed—to inflict greater damage.

Green et al. (1996) conducted a similar study to Bjorkqvist et al.'s 1992 work, but this time with 148 college-age students. The students had to self-identify their utilization of various aggressive behaviors and friendship patterns to measure aggression based on network density (i.e. the number of relationships among each other). The findings illustrated that regardless of network density, women reported similar levels of indirect aggression; while men, on the other hand, reported higher levels of indirect aggression in higher density groups. In other words, while men used indirect aggression proportionate to the number of relationships, women's experience of indirect aggression was the same regardless of the number of relationships.

Another notable study of teenager's use of indirect aggression is Owens dissertation work—published in part under Owens, Shute, and Slee (2000a, 2000b) What distinguishes Owen's study from the other studies listed here is that rather than inferring the reasons for the aggression, the researcher actually asked the girls for their own explanations for their aggression toward their peers. Because of “the difficulty of having students admit to socially undesirable activities such as manipulation of the peer group...and the very covert nature of indirect aggression” Owens developed and used a vignette from which the girls could discuss the

problems and aggressive behaviors of “Jo” a fifteen-year-old “average” girl (Owens et al., 2000b). Owens conducted pilot focus groups of fifty-four 15-16-year-old girls, interviews with six pairs of the original fifty-four, focus groups with eight other sixteen year olds, and separate interviews with ten teachers. The authors found that the reasons the young women gave to explain indirect aggression were not only to create close intimate relationships and secure belonging in a peer group, but also because of a desire to create excitement and alleviate boredom. In creating friendships and belonging to peer groups, the girls participated in: (1) attention seeking (she gains status by being the one who knows everything-the gossip- or the one who gets to select who attends a party); (2) group inclusion (“bitching and gossiping” allows for group building/maintaining); (3) belonging to the right group (creating a system of hierarchy allows for there to be a “top group” to be a part of; (4) self-protection (by being the first to act, the aggressor self-protects herself from becoming the next victim); (5) jealousy (over other friendships, especially with boys); and (6) revenge (by utilizing other members of the group to spread rumors/ignore/exclude the other). In other words, not only did the young women use aggression to alleviate boredom, but also out of a need to fit in and an even greater fear of being left out.

Studies of indirect aggression in children are of tremendous value, especially in light of the increasing knowledge of the severe psychological consequences it can have, and in extreme cases lead to depression, loneliness or suicide (Adams, 2011; Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaide, 2008; Archer & Coyne, 2005). Though studies of aggression in regard to children and young adults provide important information, it is difficult to apply the findings directly to an adult population as individuals grow socially and intellectually as they get older. Three studies, however, have examined aggressive behavior specifically in adult populations: Bertero (2003), Benenson, Markovits, Thompson, and Wrangham (2011) and Briggs (2015).

Similarly to Owens (1998) qualitative study that asked why and how teenage girls used aggression as they did, Bertero (2003) used qualitative methods to ask adult women why and how they used aggression as they did. Though Bertero's findings from thirteen semi-ethnographic interviews with women bankers are not generalizable, however, the women's explanations for their aggression are worth considering. Similar to former studies, Bertero found that women used exclusion, gossip and withholding information as strategies to socially survive in their workplace. As an addition to the previous (largely quantitative) literature, Bertero also found that women used the strategy of avoiding envy or open competition. She noted that the women made themselves "appear nonthreatening, cooperative, and equal or even 'one down' in relation to women who were of lower or equal rank to themselves" (p. 64, 2003). For example, one of the women said, "If you follow group rules and customs...other women will protect you," while another said, "I will always downplay. I never brag about achievements" (p.65). Though discussed in greater detail below, these responses are typical of women socially surviving in what was once a typical male role (e.g. banker) by appearing communal—even deceptively communal—in an otherwise agentic role. The reasons, Bertero found, that women employed these strategies were because of "the absence of a basic trust among women" (p. 68) and in order to "manage their position in the company and compete with other women for various avenues of success" (p.58); the avenue most sought after was "access to high-ranking males in order to obtain their only means to status" (p.70).

In a different study of indirect aggression, Benenson et al. (2011) studied whether adults faced with the threat of social exclusion from others would preemptively use social exclusion (a form of indirect aggression) themselves. The results demonstrated that women—more often than men— chose to use social exclusion and alliances as a defense against the impending threat of being socially excluded. As Owens et al. (2000a) found with the teenagers, a female has only to

perceive the threat of social exclusion (or demotion of status) and she will—more often than not—proactively use indirect aggression to secure her place and status in a group.

More recently, in her study of 306 women deans of doctoral granting institutions, Briggs (2015) found that the women at one time were victims of aggression from other women through the use of gossip and rumors, shouting and spontaneous anger, humiliation and ridicule, exclusion, false allegations, and silencing or ignoring of opinions. In analyzing the deans' qualitative responses from the prompt "What factors do you think came into play that caused the person/people to behave the way they did?" Briggs categorized their explanations into three themes; aggressive behaviors from other women were as a result of: social comparison (e.g. jealousy, insecurity, lack of confidence, frustration over her own lack of achievement, and competition for their own validation), personal issues (e.g. stress, mental illness, unhappiness) and formal or informal group norms (e.g. unique aspects of higher education, namely faculty tenure).

The effects of indirect aggression. As may be surmised by the above studies on the use of indirect aggression, the effects of indirect aggression are powerful and effective. A number of scholars have shown this to be true. Crick (1995), for example, found that girls become more psychologically distressed by relational aggression (a form of indirect aggression) than boys. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) found that child victims of relational victimization demonstrated higher levels of depression, social anxiety, social avoidance, loneliness. Galen and Underwood (1997) found that girls reported social aggression (another form of indirect aggression) to be just as hurtful as physical aggression. Crick and Bigbee (1998) found that children victims of relational aggression were more emotionally upset, more rejected by peers and felt more loneliness than "control" children that did not report relational aggression. And the research team of Owens et al. (2000a) found that the teenagers acts of indirect aggression led to, on

occasions, a desire by the girl victims to leave the school and/or thoughts of suicide. When studying adults, Kaukiainen et al. (2001) demonstrated that indirect aggression affected adults physically, psychologically and psychosocially. Women manifested psychosocial symptoms including: “family problems, alcohol abuse, lack of willingness to work, and isolation in private life” (p.368). In summary, the research is clear, whether studying children or adults, indirect aggression affects people in general, and women in particular.

Indirect aggression and mothers’ school involvement. The purpose, therefore, of the literature reviewed thus far was to place my current study of mothers in schools in the larger context of studies of parent involvement, stay-at-home and working mothers, and women and aggression. Of the hundreds of articles referenced to this point, however, it was still unclear as to why there would be a particularly strong dynamic between the full-time working mothers in leadership positions and the stay-at-home mothers. To begin to understand these dynamics, I had to turn to the literature on the social expectations of men to act agentically, women to act communally, the consequences (particularly for women) of not staying within those roles, and the powerful effect of likability over competence. Thus, the final section of the literature review is on agentic behaviors, communal behaviors, and the consequences for women who take on the roles and behaviors of one, the other or both.

Women: Agentic and Communal

Above, in the section on mothers’ well-being, role theory was discussed in terms of the number of roles a mother has and the psychological repercussions of those. In this section, I discuss role theory in terms of the expectations society places on certain roles, particularly gender roles. The literature on role theory and gender roles is so vast that it is well beyond the

purview of this paper.⁴ For the purposes of this study, the main tenants of role theory are these: first, that a person performs everyday activities because of socialized rules and constructs (e.g. the role of mother is performed by a female; a mother is a child's primary care-giver), second, that roles have "normal" behavioral expectations (e.g. a mother is expected to be soft and nurturing), and third, that roles are context specific (e.g. a mother of an infant is expected to fulfill her role differently than a mother of a college student). In *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) reviewed the existing literature about gendered cognitive ability and social behavior (Briggs, 2015; Eagly, 1987). Eagly (1987) specifically focused on gendered social behavior and conducted her own meta-analysis in order to examine "differences in the social position of the sexes and contend[ed] that these differences expose women and men to systematically different role expectations" (Eagly, 1987, p. 4). From her findings, Eagly coined the terms *communal* and *agentic*, noting that women were socially expected to act *communally*, while men were socially expected to act *agentially*.

Agentic versus communal. Women are expected to act communally, that is, behave in a nurturing, caring, healing, peaceful, helpful, kind, sympathetic and soft-spoken manner (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Men, on the other hand, are expected to act agentially, that is, behave in an assertive (e.g. aggressive, ambitious, and forceful) manner, demonstrate self-expansion (e.g. self-confidence and self-reliance), and carry out tasks with an urge to master them (e.g. use control, competency and task orientation) (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Some scholars in the social sciences have suggested that these

⁴ For extensive discussions on the history and practice of role theory please see: Hindin (2007); for the seminal works on role theory please see Mead (1934) Parsons (1951) and Linton (1936); for seminal works on gender roles as a result of socialization see: Money, Hampson, J. G., and Hampson, J. H. (1955); for further philosophical discussions on the nature versus nurture determination of sex roles please see de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1949/2011), and Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1978).

differences have grown out of historical social constructions. For example, in the United States men have had more access to employment and the armed forces, while women have had more of the domestic duties of home and child. Other scholars (e.g. biologist and evolutionist) have suggested that these differences have arisen out of genetic and evolutionary differences (e.g. men's physical strength and testosterone levels). Whatever the root causes may be, research in the last twenty-five years has consistently proven that both men and women have implicit, sub-conscious expectations of the roles they are meant to fulfill, and the methods in which they are to fulfill them (Brenner & Bromer, 1981; V. Cooper, 1997; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Schneider et al., 2010).

As women have entered historically male-dominated fields, they have had to adapt in numerous ways in order to succeed. In the cut-throat world of finance or law, for example, it is impossible to succeed without some agentic behaviors (such as aggression and competition). Though they may be commended in their organization (winning cases and earning raises and promotions), these women are penalized in society: those behaviors are socially unexpected and inappropriate for women. Conversely, were a woman to act communally in a court room or in the stock exchange (i.e. be demure, soft spoken, and share) she may be commended by society but penalized by her organization. In the feminist literature, this dilemma is known as the *double bind* (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). From these studies, Eagly and her colleagues found evidence for their theory of role congruity (Eagly & Karau, 2002). When men are in positions of authority their roles are congruous; when women are in authority roles, they are behaving incongruously. Behaving incongruously is generally not viewed favorably (as studies mentioned in the next section on social condemnation will demonstrate) and instigate prejudicial views and behaviors.

Social condemnation. Both men and women hold strong expectations of appropriate behaviors and roles for women: behaviors, for example, that are nurturing, helpful, kind, sympathetic and soft-spoken and roles that are not generally associated with leadership such as homemaker (not breadwinner), nurse (not doctor), teacher (not principal), and employee (not employer) (Eagly, 1987). In a country like the United States, where women are homemakers and breadwinners, nurses and doctors, teachers and principals and employees and employers, women are met with the *double bind* at every turn and society must grapple with the ensuing dilemma of role incongruity.

Ironically, it is not men, but women—the supposedly communal, nurturing, helpful, sympathetic sex—that are more socially aggressive towards women who deviate from social expectations of communal, nurturing, helpful and sympathetic behavior. Several studies have demonstrated that women acknowledge preferring stereotypical male behavior in management roles and look unfavorably toward women in these roles—especially if they behave in male stereotypical ways (Brenner & Bromer, 1981; V. Cooper, 1997; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ely, 1994; Schneider et al., 2010). Though the following studies do not take place in children’s schools, they are worth noting because they speak to women’s interactions. In fact, whether those interactions take place between employee, employer, co-worker, faculty, student, or even with potential hires, women are harsher critics (of other women) than men. For example, Snipes, Oswald, and Caudill (1998) asked male and female participants to evaluate identical resumes with only one variation: the gender of the applicant. The women evaluators were not only harsher of the female applicants (than men were of the female applicants) but they also perceived the women applicants as less likely to be successful in their future employment. Perhaps most strikingly, the findings were the same even when the women’s resumes were for typically female-oriented roles such as nursing (Snipes et al., 1998). Similarly, Ellemers, Van Den

Heusel, De Gilder, Maass, and Bonivi (2004) wanted to assess whether the commitment levels of male and female students differed in Austria and Italy and how male and female faculty members in both countries perceived these levels of commitment. Despite there being no differences between male and female students' commitment levels in either country, the Austrian and Italian female faculty rated female students as having lower levels of commitment. In another discouraging study, using phone surveys of over 800 men and 600 women, the *National Study of the Changing Workforce* (2002) reported that men received *more* support from women bosses (including one-on-one mentoring) and were more optimistic about opportunities for advancement than their female colleagues (Maume, 2011). Long before these studies were published, Staines, Tavis, and Jayaratne (1974) defined this aggression from women in positions of authority towards women in subordinate roles as the *Queen Bee Syndrome*. Others (V. Cooper, 1997; Eisenman, 1992; Todor, 1980) have used the term to more broadly encompass the idea that women are threatened by other women, particularly for the attention of men, and therefore purposefully undermine other women's success.

In her study, *Homophily or the Queen Bee Syndrome*, V. Cooper (1997) asked eighty college undergraduate women to evaluate female leadership. Unlike previous studies, Cooper contrasted the results between women who held more traditional views of sex roles (e.g. women as homemakers and men as breadwinners) versus the women who held non-traditional views of sex roles (e.g. men and women should share household and child rearing duties). Her results validate the theory of homophily ("love of the same"): similarity is preferred and breeds connection (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001), particularly as it applies to women who view sex roles differently. Cooper found that (1) conservative women evaluated female leadership less positively than liberal women, (2) conservative women were more positive about traditional leadership than liberal women were of traditional leadership, and (3) liberal women

were more positive about nontraditional leadership than traditional leadership (1997). Cooper's (1997) findings are consistent with others (Eisenman, 1992) that "conservative women are more likely than liberal women to be prejudiced toward other women, therefore, reflecting the Queen Bee bias" (p.493). Interestingly though, the lowest leadership evaluations were those of liberal women evaluating traditional leadership, and the highest leadership evaluations were liberal women evaluating non-traditional leadership. It appears the homophily syndrome works both ways; Cooper continues, "Females are likely to be harsher judges...be more competitive...stereotype more...and exhibit more jealousy with female leaders than male peers. Women may be a more critical factor than are men in the failure of the female leadership" (p. 493).

Perhaps, then, it is not a great surprise that every Gallup poll since 1953 has found that women prefer a male boss to a female boss (Carroll, 2006). Ely (1994) found that junior women associates in male-dominated firms viewed women partners' authority as less legitimate than the men, and did not perceive them to be good role models. Even when the dynamics were lateral (across coworkers) rather than hierarchical (boss to employee and vice versa), the findings remain the same; South, Bonjean, Markham, and Corder (1982) and later Ashforth and Mael (1989) found that as hostility towards women in a work environment increases, rather than band together, women were *more* likely to turn on each other for access to positions, influence and opportunity. As can be imagined, Wharton and Baron (1991) found that such work environments were detrimental to a woman's job satisfaction and levels of depression and self-esteem. Moreover, Wharton and Baron (1991) found that women in a predominantly male work environment had higher levels of work satisfaction than women in work environments with greater numbers of women. Briggs (2015) posited two possible explanations for the behavior between women:

If women in male-dominated environments have learned to identify more with men, their self-esteem is influenced by how men perceive them as leaders and/or colleagues. When

new women enter the organization, existing women face a dilemma—men expect them to conform to accepted male norms and women expect them to demonstrate female norms. These expectations are in conflict. Another explanation is that when self-esteem or acceptance is threatened, people often engage in self-enhancing strategies as a protective measure (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990). This may help explain why some successful women in male-dominated organizations demonstrate biased attitudes toward new women—they are attempting to preserve their social status within the organization. (p. 49)

Whatever the reasons might be, it is evident that society holds expectations for women and will condemn those who act agentically, i.e. incongruously. Not all women, however, act in agentic ways and yet hostility amongst women persists. To uncover this further, in the following section, I examine research on likability, competence and success as factors influencing women's aggression towards each other.

Likability, Competence, and the Penalties of Success

During interviews I conducted for the unpublished study I mentioned previously (Vicente, 2012b), women gave various explanations for why they were “overlooked” for volunteer opportunities. There were two common explanations given by the interviewees; one, was that the volunteer coordinator did not like her personally, and second, that perhaps the reason for this was that the coordinator felt threatened by her career success. Interviewees were not surprised that a volunteer coordinator would choose to work with other stay-at-home mothers that would be perceived as less threatening. Is it possible that competent parents were excluded from helping their children's schools because they were less liked or because they were perceived as socially threatening? To answer these questions, I turned to the following three studies: Casciaro and Sousa Lobo (2005) on likability and competence, Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins (2004) on reactions to women who succeed, and Heilman and Okimoto (2007) on women penalized for success and the communality deficit. Though these authors did not study mothers or schools specifically, they shed light on many of the social dynamics that may be occurring between women in their children's schools.

Casciaro and Sousa Lobo on likability and competence. Casciaro and Sousa Lobo (2005 and 2008) gathered data on over 10,000 work relationships from various organizations in North America and Europe, in order to study informal networks, i.e. how people choose with whom they work. The authors constructed four archetypes: the loveable star (competent and likable), the loveable fool (incompetent and likeable), the competent jerk (competent and unlikable) and the incompetent jerk (incompetent and unlikeable). Not surprisingly, Casciaro and Sousa Lobo found that people wanted to work the most with the loveable star and the least with the incompetent jerk. But what about the loveable fool and the competent jerk? Would people choose competence over likability? Though interviewees espoused the theory that competence “mattered most” and likeability was “a bonus” (2005, p.3); in practice people consistently chose the loveable fool over the competent jerk. Likeability mattered more than competence: every time, in every scenario, in every organization and country tested. Casciaro and Sousa Lobo wrote, “If someone is strongly disliked, it's almost irrelevant whether or not she's competent; people won't want to work with her anyway. By contrast, if someone is liked, his colleagues will seek out every little bit of competence he has to offer” (p. 3).

Though Casciaro and Sousa Lobo do not expound on gender differences, what is known from other contemporary studies is that for men and women, competence and likability are rated differently. It is no surprise, for example, that when men display competence—behaviors that easily align to agentic characteristics like using ambitious control and task orientation—their likability ratings increase, i.e. because people expect men to behave in agentic competent ways (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004; Sandberg, 2013). Perhaps at this point in the literature review, it is also not surprising to find that for women, competence and likability are negatively correlated; the more competent behaviors women demonstrate, the more they are

described as *cold*, *bitter*, or *bitchy* (Briggs, 2015; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004; Sandberg, 2013).

We all make split-second decisions as to whether someone is likeable, warm or competent simply by momentarily noticing their clothing and behavior (Ambady, Bernieri, and Richeson, 2000, as cited in Casciaro & Sousa Lobo, 2005). Moreover, it is long since established that people—men and women alike—prefer to be with people who are similar or familiar (for excellent summaries, explanations and reviews see Kahneman, 2011; McPherson et al., 2001). Perhaps it is because, as Casciaro and Sousa Lobo explain, people who are like us or familiar to us “reaffirm the validity of our own characteristics and attitudes” and in the business world, “their similar values, ways of thinking, and communication styles help projects flow smoothly and quickly” (2005, p. 4). Humans’ preference for likability over competence, combined with quick judgement and preference for similarity and familiarity, renders my interviewee’s (the pediatric ophthalmologist’s) explanations as plausible. First, that despite her competence, she was not chosen because of not being liked; and second, that the non-medical mother was chosen because she was a non-threatening, stay-at-home mother similar or familiar to the coordinator.

The second portion of her explanation, however, is not yet fully explained. Was Dr. Lawrence disliked simply because she was unfamiliar and dissimilar, or was she further disliked because—as she claimed—she was perceived as threatening as a result of her successful career? To address this component, I discuss the findings of Heilman et al. (2004) research on reactions to women who succeed, and Heilman and Okimoto (2007)’s research on communality deficit and how women are penalized for success at male tasks.

Heilman et al. on women who succeed. Heilman et al. (2004) asked 242 subjects to participate in three experimental studies to gauge social reactions to women succeeding in male gender-typed jobs. The authors found that

(a) when women are acknowledged to have been successful, they are less liked and more personally derogated than equivalently successful men (Studies 1 and 2); (b) these negative reactions occur only when the success is in an arena that is distinctly male in character (Study 2); and (c) being disliked can have career-affecting outcomes, both for overall evaluation and for recommendations concerning organizational reward allocation (Study 3). These results were taken to support the idea that gender stereotypes can prompt bias in evaluative judgments of women even when these women have proved themselves to be successful and demonstrated their competence. (p. 416)

For example, based solely on the resumes of Dr. Lawrence (a female) and Dr. Smith (a male), participants in this study would have rated the two doctors—on competence, likability and hostility—in the following manner: when Dr. Lawrence and Dr. Smith’s previous success was made explicit, participants rated both doctors as having similar competence. When prior success was made ambiguous, however, the participants rated the female doctor—Dr. L—as *significantly less competent*. Interestingly, when asked about likeability, the results were inverse. When the doctors’ prior successes were made explicit, the female doctor—Dr. Lawrence—was *significantly less liked*; when their success was made ambiguous, they were rated similar levels of likability. Lastly, when participants were asked to evaluate interpersonal hostility, if the doctors’ prior successes were ambiguous, there was no difference in their hostility scores. However, if prior success was made explicit, the female doctor—Dr. Lawrence—was seen as *more hostile*. When the first study was replicated (i.e. study 2) but with the man and the woman in a gender-neutral field, there were no significant differences in either likability, competence, or hostility.

In the final portion of their study (study number 3) there were “four key dependent measures, two reflecting evaluative reactions to the employee—overall evaluation and feelings about having the individual as one’s manager—and two reflecting recommended personnel

actions—recommendations for special career opportunities and salary recommendations” (Heilman et al., 2004, p. 424). Not surprisingly, the authors found that people who were likeable were rated more favorably and likability mattered in managers who would be in competence demanding jobs (but not low-competence ones). Moreover, they found that people who were more competent and more likeable were more recommended for career opportunities, and likeable employees were especially recommended for higher salary earnings (regardless of level of competence). How does any of this pertain to mother’s involvement in their children’s schools? Heilman et al. (2004), summarized it this way:

What is most critical to remember is that whereas there are many things that lead an individual to be disliked, including obnoxious behavior, arrogance, stubbornness, and pettiness, it is only women, not men, for whom a unique propensity toward dislike is created by success in a nontraditional work situation. This suggests that success can create an additional impediment to women’s upward mobility when they have done all the right things to move ahead in their careers. (emphasis mine, p. 426)

In other words, a mother may do all the “right things” to succeed and to become involved in her child’s school, but that success will make her both less likable and less likely to be chosen by the volunteer coordinator for any activity, even one as critical as school-wide eye exams.

Heilman and Okimoto on the communality deficit and penalties for success. In a similar set of three studies, Heilman and Okimoto (2007) wanted to assess whether likability levels would alter if participants were given specific information on the communal attributes of a woman in a typically male-dominated field. The tests were meant to assess the perceived “violations” of gender-stereotypic prescriptions. Rather than study descriptive gender stereotypes (what men and women are actually like), Heilman and Okimoto studied prescriptive gender stereotypes (what men and women should be like): women should be communal and men should be agentic (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001, as cited in Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). The authors found that, indeed, the “negativity directed at successful female managers—in ratings of likability, interpersonal

hostility, and boss desirability—was mitigated” when information was provided of the manager’s communality (p. 81). The authors found that the ameliorative effect only occurred when the manager’s communality was explicit and clear (results of study 1); when the communal actions could be attributed solely to the manager (results of study 2); and, perhaps most interesting of all, the third study demonstrated that penalties were mitigated only when communality was “conveyed by role information (motherhood status) or behavior” (p.81). In other words, in this study, if a female doctor behaved more communally or emphasized her motherhood status more, the hostility might have decreased to the lower levels reserved for men. Thus we return to the double bind conversation: if a woman is successful and achieves her goals she violates prescriptive gender stereotypes and will be seen as unlikable at best, and demanding and bitchy at worst (Briggs, 2015; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004; Sandberg, 2013). If, on the other hand, a woman does not succeed in male fields nor insistently reaches for career goals (becomes a house wife and volunteers at whatever tasks she is assigned—if any) she stays within the expected prescriptive gender stereotypes and will be seen as likable at best and an un-contributing member of society at worst.

Summary

In 2013, Sheryl Sandberg, the current COO of Facebook, released her first book titled *Lean In*. In it, Sandberg encouraged women to lean in to positions of leadership in the workplace despite social barriers. Though *Lean In* is not an academic work nor is it about parent involvement, it is worth noting that in Sandberg’s chapter on success and likability, she quoted Hannah Bowles’ research from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government: in order for women to increase their chances of achieving their desired outcome they must do two things in combination, “First, women must come across as being nice, concerned about others, and

‘appropriately’ female;” second, women must “provide a legitimate explanation for the negotiation. Men don’t have to legitimize their negotiations; they are expected to look out for themselves” (p.47). Sandberg concluded, “The goal of a successful negotiation is to achieve our objectives and continue to have people like us” (p. 47). Perhaps one day women will not have to negotiate through double binds and double standards. Perhaps Sandberg’s advice does not apply to mother’s volunteering in their children’s schools. Perhaps none of the above research on women’s aggression and penalties for success applies to their parent involvement. Or, perhaps it very much does. That is the purpose of this study: to determine to what extent mothers experience aggression from other mothers while attempting to become involved in their children’s schools, how aggression affects their involvement, and how some mothers—if any—successfully navigate through this, if there are any structures in place at their children’s schools that ameliorate or worsen the mother-to-mother aggression, and what advice—if any—do the mothers provide for other mothers and school personnel.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent female guardians experienced aggression from other female guardians from their children's schools, how this may have affected their involvement in their children's schools, the methods they used to navigate through the aggressive experiences, and what methods, structures or other factors helped, hindered or did nothing to alter the aggressive behavior. The research questions this study aimed to answer are:

1. Do female guardians experience aggression from other female guardians?
If so, what kinds of aggression did female guardians experience?
2. How do demographic and situational factors account for the aggressive experiences?
 - a. To what extent do aggressors' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - b. To what extent do participants' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - c. To what extent do structural, cultural or agentic factors account for the aggressive experiences?
3. To what extent does aggression among female guardians impact their involvement in their children's schools?
4. How did female guardians respond to aggressive behaviors, why did they choose those responses, and did their responses improve, worsen, or make no difference to the aggressive situation?

Because this study aimed to understand the prevalence of aggression among women by providing participants the opportunity to provide their own story, a mix of both qualitative and quantitative methods was necessary to more fully explore these research questions. Using a convergent parallel mixed methods design allowed for simultaneous quantitative and qualitative data collection, separate analysis, and finally a synthesis of findings for an overall interpretation of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The following sections describe in more detail the

mixed methods approach, participant selection, data collection, survey and interview design, and data analysis procedures.

A Mixed Methods Approach

From its inception, this study was designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. A methodology that focused predominantly on the quantitative analysis, however, was chosen in order to reach a larger set of participants than the twelve participants in the original qualitative pilot studies (Vicente, 2012a, 2012b). However, because the very existence of this current research is as a result of inductive analysis of open-ended interview questions, qualitative methodology—specifically, open-ended survey questions and interviews—were used to allow participants to enter their own nuanced interpretations of their lived experience. Open-ended questions and interviews allowed the researcher to “understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view” (Patton, 2002, p. 21). Thus, I employed a convergent parallel mixed methods survey design relying heavily on quantitative data that would be augmented by qualitative data. The following sections more specifically describe the participants, survey and analysis of the data.

Participant Selection

For this study, I invited female guardians with children in kindergarten through twelfth grade to participate. Female guardians were the targeted participants because, as noted earlier in the review of the literature, mothers continue to be the family member most involved in their children’s schools. To reach the maximum number of participants and so that the number of participants would grow exponentially, I used snowball sampling—a purposeful sampling procedure (Patton, 2002). I sent a link of the online survey through email and social media to all my contacts; more than a thousand individuals received the email and link to the survey.

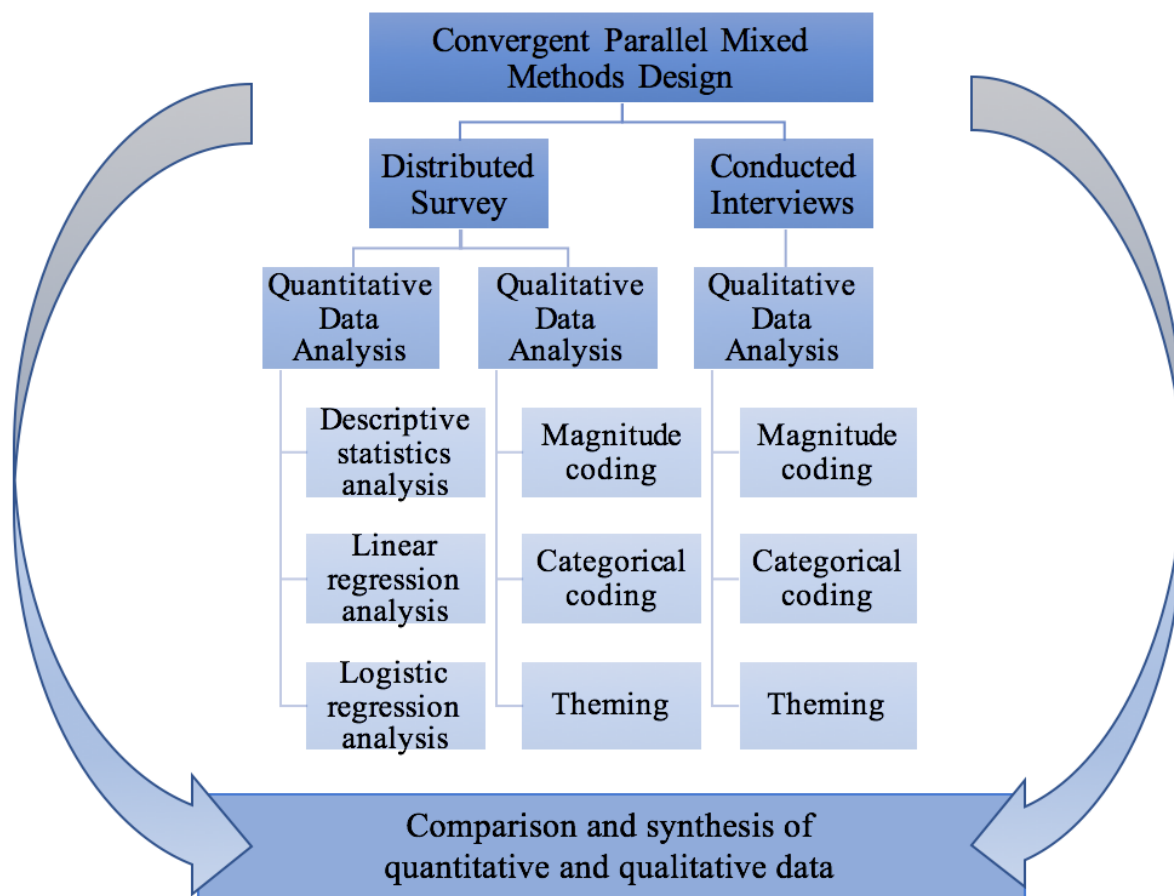
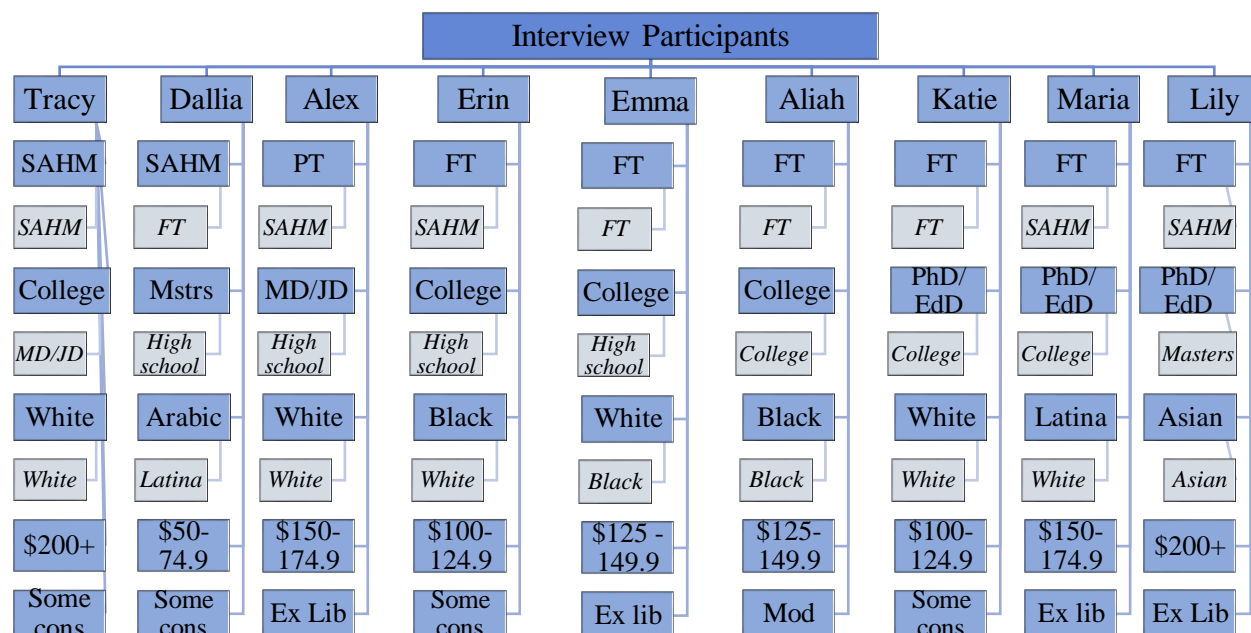


Figure 1. Methodological map.

I ensured that the link was sent to my contacts in various demographic regions across the United States; please see Appendix B for the email solicitation. Survey instructions asked the recipients to answer questions honestly and thoroughly from their perspective, and to then forward the survey link to other female guardians with children currently in kindergarten through twelfth grade.



Legend of Abbreviated Demographic Information

Work Status	Degree Earned	Ideology	Income
Stay-At-Home Mother	Mstrs= Masters	Cons= Conservative	Amounts are x \$1,000
PT= Employed Part-Time	MD= Medical Doctor	Some cons= Somewhat Conservative	
FT= Employed Full-Time	JD= Juris Doctor	Mod= Moderate	
	Ph.D.= Doctor of Philosophy	Some lib= Somewhat Liberal	
	Ed.D.= Doctor of Education	Ex lib= Extremely Liberal	

Figure 2. Demographic comparison of interview participants and the female guardian from her children's schools with whom she had the most aggressive experience.

Interview participant selection. Participants were given the opportunity at the end of the survey to provide their telephone number or email address to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Of the participants who completed the survey, lived in the United States, and were mothers or female guardians with children in grades K-12, about one third provided their telephone number or email address to be contacted for a follow up interview. In order to have

qualitative data that would provide the greatest depth and breadth to the quantitative findings, 30 of those participants were purposefully selected as possible interviewees and contacted via email and/or text messaging. Of the 30, nine participants responded to emails and text messages soliciting for interviews. Figure 2 illustrates the demographic variables describing the nine interviewees (in blue) and their aggressors (in gray).

In addition to the women who participated in the survey, I was also able to interview Ana Sambold, a lawyer and conflict resolution specialist hired by school districts to resolve disputes between various parties (including conflicts between parents). Ana was able to provide more nuanced information regarding inter-parental aggression; because, as she said in her own words, “I’ve been on all sides. As a mom, as a volunteer, and as a mediator.”

Data Collection and Analysis

Using a convergent parallel mixed methods design allowed for simultaneous quantitative and qualitative data collection, separate analysis, and finally a synthesis for an overall interpretation of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The quantitative data was gathered using a survey with multiple choice and Likert-scale questions. Qualitative data was gathered using survey open-ended questions and post-survey interviews with nine purposefully-selected participants who experienced aggression from other female guardians. It should be noted that throughout the paper, I reference both quantitative and qualitative results purposefully using the phrase, “women reported that....”. While some studies may use the terms “reported”, “receiving”, or “perceiving” interchangeably, I cannot do so in this study; I do not believe that I may claim the number of women who perceived aggression, much less the number of women who received aggression. What I believe I *can* say in the results, are the numbers of women who *reported* aggression.

The following discussion is divided into three sections. First, I discuss the data collection methods of the survey instrument and interview guide. Next, I discuss how quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Lastly, I demonstrate how the survey and interview questions align with the research questions.

Data collection: Survey instrument. Data was collected using the online survey software of Qualtrics.com. The software program was chosen because of its reliability and the support available through the university. An online survey was chosen because it allowed for time-sensitive data collection, compilation and analysis. The survey consists of closed and open-ended questions. Because not all survey participants could be interviewed, the open-ended questions were meticulously crafted (by myself, my advisors, mock-participants, and former interviewees from my previous studies) so that women would provide a more nuanced understanding of their experiences with aggression and involvement.

The survey's original design was modeled after the survey used by Briggs (2015) for her dissertation. Of Brigg's original survey design, the remaining similar pieces are the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (response choices and open-ended question prompts) and the behavioral questionnaire (responses and open-ended questions). In the end, however, even those questions were adapted for the purposes of this study.

The survey employed the use of skip logic (the ability to move between questions depending on participant's responses). For example, if a participant responded "never" to the question "How often did you volunteer for your child's/children's school(s)?", the participant was not asked further questions about volunteering for her children's schools, and instead was directed to the Negative Acts Questionnaire.

The survey was piloted with more than twenty mothers (their results were not included in the final analysis). This was done to determine whether questions were clearly worded and

neutral in tone. Moreover, I met with an interviewee from a previous unpublished study (Vicente, 2012a) to go over the survey—question by question—and the survey flow. This was done to ensure that the survey would capture women’s responses in the same way that my interview questions did in 2012.

Upon approval of the university’s International Review Board, the survey was emailed to all the researcher’s contacts. The survey was designed to be anonymous, however, the final section allowed participants to provide their contact information for a follow-up interview. In the consent form and on the final page of the survey, respondents were made aware that all identifying information would be kept confidential.

The survey consists of six sections, with a total of 47 questions. Participants took between 5 and 20 minutes to complete the survey—the variation in time was due to the level of detail provided in response to each question. The full survey may be found in Appendix A.

Figure 3 demonstrates the survey flow.

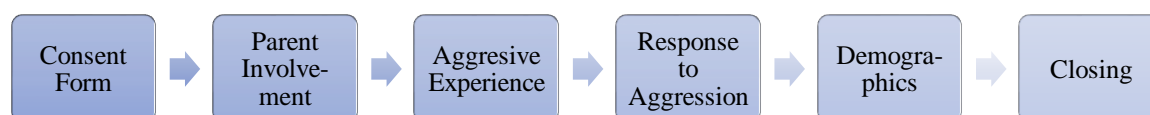


Figure 3. Survey flow.

Consent form. The first section included a welcome message, a consent form, and one demographic question inquiring as to the gender and parental status of the participant. If the participant is a female guardian (adoptive, biological, foster or step mother; aunt, cousin, sister, grandmother, etc.) with child/children attending grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, then she was directed to the parent involvement questionnaire. This was the first of two *forced answer* questions, meaning that participants could not continue to the next page without first

answering this question. If the participant did not identify him or herself within those parameters, he or she was presented with a “Thank You” message and the survey was closed.

Parent involvement and aggression. The second section contained the Parent Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ) and the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ). The PIQ was a combination of four quantitative and two qualitative questions. The quantitative questions prompted women to indicate whether they participated in any volunteering activities for their children’s schools, how often, whether they felt their level of involvement adequately met the needs of the school, and whether the more they volunteered for their children’s schools, the more they felt personally valued. The qualitative questions asked women to provide the ways they had volunteered for their children’s schools and why they chose those volunteering activities. Parent involvement questions were proceeded by the adapted Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ).

The NAQ. The NAQ is an instrument designed by Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen and Hellesoy (and revised by Hoel) to measure perceived exposure to bullying and victimization in the workplace (“NAQ,” 2009). For the purposes of this study, the NAQ needed to be adapted so that it was relevant for voluntary service rather than work done for financial compensation. Despite the financial compensation discrepancy, I found, as Briggs (2015) did, that the NAQ was the most reliable and valid instrument for my purposes. As noted by Briggs,

this instrument has been used in numerous studies around the world (Jimenez, Munoz, Gamarra, & Herrer, 2007; Tambur & Vadi, 2009; Tsuno, Kawakami, Inoue, & Abe, 2010) and was determined to have both strong reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.90$) and validity (when compared to instruments measuring mental health and psychosomatic complaints) (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). The instrument has strong reliability for determining overall workplace bullying but also can be used to assess three factors: person-related bullying, work-related bullying, and physical intimidation (2015, p. 90).

The original NAQ design asked participants to respond to 22 statements about bullying behaviors and the frequency of those behaviors. For this study, I reduced the number of double/triple/quadruple-barreled questions and simplified the questions and responses. For

example, “Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes, or your personal life” from the original questionnaire, was then made into two separate questions “I felt I was insulted” and “I felt I was humiliated”. For side-by-side comparison of the original and modified NAQ, please see Appendix D. Of the original 22 prompts, the adapted NAQ contained 15 statements in response to a single prompt. Figure 4 illustrates a portion of the question as it would have appeared to survey participants.

How often have you encountered the following behaviors from mothers/female guardians from your child's/children's school(s)?					
I felt I was _____	Never	Yearly 1-6 times a year	Monthly 7-12 times a year	Weekly 13-24 times a year	Daily more than 25+ times a year
Excluded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ignored	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Humiliated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insulted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teased	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ridiculed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gossiped about	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 4. A portion of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ).

Furthermore, the original NAQ-R was meant to assess current experiences of bullying and aggressive behaviors. Because of the tenuous and titrating nature of indirect aggression, however, the question prompt was modified to also account for past experiences. As may be seen in Figure 4, the prompt read: “While your child/children attend grades K-12, how often have you encountered the following behaviors from other mothers/female guardians?” Similar to the original NAQ, I maintained the frequency options: “Never,” “Now and Then,” “Monthly,” “Weekly,” “Daily.” Most women who piloted the study asked that there also be numbers listed

as part of the frequencies. After several iterations and feedback from the mock-participants, the frequencies shown in figure 4 were selected for the study.

The NAQ matrix-style question was the second of two *forced answer* questions, meaning that participants could not continue to the next page without first selecting a response to each of the fifteen prompts. If female guardians selected that “negative or challenging experiences with other mothers/female guardians” had a little, a moderate amount, a lot, or a great deal of an effect on their involvement in their child’s/children’s school(s), then the participant was directed to the proceeding sections. If a participant indicated having “never” experienced any of the fifteen aggressions listed, she was directed to the Positive Acts Questionnaire (PAQ). Due to the time and logistic boundaries of a doctoral program, and the low-numbers of women who answered the PAQ, the results were not included in this study.

Aggressive experience. Following the NAQ, participants were first prompted to recall information about aggressive experiences in general and then asked to provide information regarding *the most* aggressive experience. One Likert-style question asked women whether as a result of aggressive experiences she had altered her volunteer time for her children’s schools. Four open-ended questions asked women to describe the “challenging experiences” in general: how those experiences affected her involvement, what services and/or resources she could have provided had she been able to volunteer more, and what factors she believed caused the female guardians to act aggressively.

To more thoroughly answer this study’s research questions, women were then prompted to recall “*the most* negative or challenging situation” with other female guardians from their children’s schools, and asked to answer five open-ended questions and five multiple-choice questions. The open-ended questions asked women to describe the most aggressive situation and the people involved in that experience, to provide the name of the school and school district, to

explain how culture, income, employment, race or level of education may have influenced the experience, and to provide at least three factors that most helped her navigate the aggression situation. The five multiple choice questions asked for: the length of time since the event, the type of school (e.g. public or private), the child's grade at the time, the participants' relationship to her child at the time (e.g. adoptive mother, foster mother), whether as a result of that *particular* experience, she had altered her volunteer time for her children's schools. Women were then asked five demographic questions about the female guardian with whom she experienced *the most* aggression: her employment status, relationship to her child/children, level of education, race, and whether she was employed at the participants' school or school district.⁵

Responses to aggression. This study's fourth purpose was to better understand how some women respond to aggression and the resources that improve, worsen or make no difference to the aggressive situations. Therefore, the fourth section of the survey used one matrix-style multiple choice question—the Aggression Response Questionnaire (ARQ)—to better understand how women responded to aggression and whether those responses altered the situation; figure 5 illustrates a portion of the ARQ as it would have appeared to survey participants. The ARQ was developed based on a survey developed by Keashly and Neuman (2008), the findings of previous aggression studies (e.g. Jimenez, Munoz, Gamarra, & Herrer, 2007), and studies specifically examining women and aggression (e.g. Briggs, 2015). The response options were purposefully selected after reviewing the responses most used by the participants in Briggs (2015) and Keashley and Neuman's (2013) studies. Particularly as Keashly and Neuman (2013) found that participants perceived indirect responses to have made

⁵ Neither the participants' nor the aggressors' demographic data were verified independently. Only the participants' survey responses were used in the data analysis; no other source (e.g. family members, school staff or other parents) were used to verify the information provided.

the situation better and direct response were perceived to make the situation worse. This matrix was also tested with the mock-participants, and their suggestions were then adapted for clarity and parsimony.

Following the Aggression Response Questionnaire, women were asked four open-ended questions: to “explain in more detail” why she chose (or did not choose) those responses, what advice she would give to another female guardian in a similar situation, what advice she would give to school staff, and if there was anything else she thought I (the researcher) should know that would be relevant for this study.

Demographics and concluding remarks. The final sections of the survey were comprised of demographic questions, concluding remarks, a note of thanks, and the option to provide their email address or phone number for a follow-up interview. Participants were notified that “This is the last section” and then presented with eleven demographic questions in the following order: employment status, race, ideology (e.g. liberal or conservative), number of children in her home that are attending or have attended elementary school, level of education, primary language spoken in her childhood home, with whom do children live most of the time (e.g. only with her, with her and other parent), whether she is employed at her children’s school or school district, year of birth, income level, and income level compared to “the other families” in her children’s school.

During the most negative or challenging situation with mothers/female guardians from your child's/children's school(s), which of the following best represent your responses?				
	Did not use this approach	Used this approach and it worsened the situation	Used this approach and it made no difference to the situation	Used this approach and it improved the situation
Ignored it, did nothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoided the individual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduced the number of volunteer hours for the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transferred to another volunteer opportunity at the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stopped volunteering for the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 5. A portion of the Aggressive Response Questionnaire (ARQ).

Data collection: Interviews. This study was designed to understand the breadth and depth of women's aggressive experiences with other female guardians from their children's schools. As the survey was meant to capture the breadth of women's experiences, the interviews were meant to capture the depth of their experiences. If, as the constructivists believe, humans socially construct their reality and that that reality is context specific, then it was critical to augment the (quantitative) data gathering with interviews: to include in the analysis the socially constructed narrative and the contexts in which some of the women created their narrative (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995). Moreover, as Banks (2006) found, interviews allowed voices that were previously silenced (victims of aggression) to be heard and lived experiences brought to light.

Therefore, I conducted one-on-one telephone interviews with nine women who had indicated on the survey that they would be willing to take part in an interview. The interviews were between 40 minutes and an hour and a half; the variation in time depended on the amount of time women wanted to spend answering the questions. The interviews were then audio

recorded and then transcribed. At the end of each interview, and again at the end of a transcription, I recorded my own thoughts, feelings, observations and reactions to the stories shared by each participant.

Interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview guide (found in Appendix C) so that the information from participants would flow naturally, but allow for a focus on particular topics (Patton, 2002). I purposefully conducted the interviews *after* analyzing the quantitative data so that I could ask the women not only to elaborate on their own stories, but also, how they might explain the quantitative findings. The interview protocol and questions may be found in Appendix C.

Data analysis: Quantitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, linear and logistic regression analysis. Descriptive statistics allowed for a basic review of the aggregate data from participants' responses. Frequency coding of demographic variables, for example, allowed for an overview of where participants were from and how they identified themselves and their aggressors (please see chapter four for a compilation of demographic variable frequencies).

Logistic and linear regression analysis were run to determine if there were any significant correlations between: experiences of aggression and individual demographics; experiences of aggression and female guardian's involvement in their children's schools; and responses to aggression and individual demographics. The dependent variables included the aggregate aggression score (the total number of times a woman indicated having experienced aggression), whether she experienced various types of aggression (e.g. she did (or did not) experience person-related bullying) and whether she responded to aggression (e.g. she did (or did not) respond to the aggressive actions). A comprehensive list of the dependent and independent variables may be found in Appendix E.

Data analysis: Qualitative data. The qualitative components of this study used the Critical Incident Technique—a form of narrative inquiry (Flanagan, 1954). This technique is especially appropriate as it asks participants to “provide descriptive accounts of events that facilitated or hindered a particular aim” (Airini, Conner, McPherson, Midson, & Wilson, 2011, p. 48); in the case of the current study, the assumed aim of the participants would be to volunteer at her child’s/children’s school(s). Qualitative data was analyzed using structural/categorical coding as a basis for more in-depth analysis, while simultaneously using descriptive or in-vivo coding to summarize the basic meaning of the passages (Saldana, 2009). Descriptive coding uses a word or short phrase to summarize passages from the open-ended survey questions and interview responses (Saldana, 2009); in-vivo coding uses terms used by the participants themselves to summarize passages. In addition, I plan to conduct magnitude (frequency) coding as it is a “very common way to identify patterns in terms of the frequency in which specific...themes occur” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 99). In both my previous interviews with mothers (Vicente 2012a, Vicente 2012b) and again in this study, it became critically important for me to give voice to the women who often felt ostracized and silenced. I found the above mentioned methods of coding (particularly in-vivo coding of the interview transcripts) effective in accurately portraying the women’s feelings and experiences.

As a result of my previous experience and yet my naïveté with the subject matter, the qualitative analysis throughout the study included both deductive and inductive approaches. I began with deductive analysis based on a coding scheme informed by extant literature and former research. I then used content analysis utilizing the coding schemes to identify the primary patterns in the data (Patton, 2002). Moreover, as a strength in qualitative analysis is its ability to allow for emergent patterns and themes not anticipated in the deductive analysis (Patton, 2002); I also used inductive analysis to help identify those unanticipated patterns or themes.

Research Questions

Once again, the research questions this study aimed to answer are:

1. Do female guardians experience aggression from other female guardians?
If so, what kinds of aggression did female guardians experience and with what frequencies?
2. How do demographic and situational factors account for the aggressive experiences?
 - a. To what extent do aggressors' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - b. To what extent do participants' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - c. To what extent do structural, cultural or agentic factors account for the aggressive experiences?
3. To what extent does aggression among female guardians impact their involvement in their children's schools?
4. How did female guardians respond to aggressive behaviors, why did they choose those responses, and did their responses improve, worsen, or make no difference to the aggressive situation?

Research question 1: Prevalence, forms, and frequency. The first research question addressed whether female guardians experienced aggression from other female guardians, the types of aggression women experienced, and the frequency in which women experienced the various types of aggression.

Quantitative component of question 1. To answer the primary research question, I conducted a simple t-test of aggregate Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) scores. Then, to answer what types of behaviors were most commonly reported by women, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the three NAQ construct scores for *person-related bullying*, *work related bullying*, and *physical intimidation*. This same procedure was done with each of the fifteen aggressive behaviors. The data for research question 1 was gathered from the closed-ended questions of the NAQ. Please see figure 4 above for a sample of the NAQ questions.

Research question 2: Accounting for aggressive behaviors. After establishing that aggression occurred between female guardians, the types of aggression that women experienced, and the frequencies in which they were perceived, the next research question examined how demographic or situational factors may have accounted for the experiences of aggression. Therefore, the second research question is comprised of three sub-questions: how did (a) aggressor's demographics, (b) participant's demographics, and (c) structural, cultural or agentic factors account for the aggressive experiences.

Quantitative component of question 2a. Logistic regression analyses determined whether correlations existed between the binary dependent variable—Aggression Yes =1, Aggression No=0—and the five binary independent variables: aggressor's relationship to her children, her employment status, whether she was employed at her child/children's school district or school, her race/ethnicity and her level of education. Both the standard and forward conditional methods were used to ascertain which demographic groups would be significantly more likely to act aggressively towards other female guardians. For clarity and brevity, only the survey questions (but not the answer choices) are listed under each research question. Please see Appendix B, "Consent form and questionnaire" for the full list of survey questions and their answer choices. Questions are numbered as they appear in Appendix B to facilitate referencing.

- Closed-ended survey questions:
 - (3.19) “Which statement best describes the employment status of the mother/female guardian with whom you experienced the most challenging interactions? If you do not know, please make your **best guess**.”
 - (3.20) “What was the relationship to her child/children in this school? If you do not know, please make your **best guess**: She was the ____.”
 - (3.21) “What is the highest level of education the mother/female guardian completed? If you do not know, please make your **best guess**.”
 - (3.22) “Please select the race/ethnicity that you believe most closely describes the mother/female guardian with whom you experienced the most challenging interactions. If you do not know, please make your **best guess**.”
 - (3.23) “Is the mother/female guardian with whom you experienced challenges employed at your child's/children's school district or school(s)?”

Qualitative component of question 2a. Qualitative analysis was then used to analyze participants’ short answer responses to ascertain whether there were other characteristics (aside from the aggressor’s demographic variables) that participants used to describe the aggressor; and whether findings from open-ended questions would match those of the close-ended questions. As the interviewees were not asked more specifics about the aggressor than they had already provided in the open-ended questions of the survey, interview responses were not integrated in the analysis of this sub-question.

- Open-ended survey questions:
 - (3.14) “Please tell me more about the person/people involved in this situation. How would you describe or characterize her/them?”
 - (3.6) “Please explain what factors you believe caused the mothers/female guardians to behave the way they did.”

Quantitative component of question 2b. Similarly, to answer the second sub-question, logistic and linear regression analyses identified which demographic variables corresponding to the participant were associated with aggressive experiences. Linear regressions may only be run with interval, ratio or dichotomous variables as the independent variables; of the descriptive variables, only two match these requirements: age and household income level. In these regressions, the dependent variable was the aggregate score from the Negative Acts

Questionnaire, and the independent variables were age and household income. The remaining ten categories were binary and therefore binary logistic regressions were run once the dummy variables were created for each variable. In these regressions, the dependent variable was whether participants had experienced aggression (Aggression Yes =1, Aggression No=0); the independent variables were the remaining demographic variables.

- Closed-ended survey questions:
 - (3.17) *“During this experience, what was your relationship to your child/children in this school? I was the :”*
 - (7.2) *“Which statement best describes your current employment status?”*
 - (7.3) *“Choose one race/ethnicity you most strongly identify with:”*
 - (7.4) *“Ideologically, you see yourself as:”*
 - (7.6) *“What is the highest level of education you have completed?”*
 - (7.7) *“What was the primary language spoken in your childhood home?”*
 - (7.8) *“With whom does your child/do your children reside the majority of the time?”*
 - (7.9) *“Are you employed at your child’s/children’s school district or schools?”*
 - (7.10) *“What is your year of birth?”*
 - (7.11) *“Information about income is very important for this study. Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income (the previous year) before taxes.”*

Qualitative component of question 2b. Qualitative analysis was then used to analyze participants’ open-ended responses to ascertain whether there were other characteristics (aside from the self-identifying demographic variables) that participants would use to describe themselves; and whether findings from open-ended questions would match those of the close-ended questions. During the interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on their short-answer responses and asked to reflect on the variables that were—and were not—found to be significant in the quantitative analysis. As interviewees spoke at length in response to these questions, interview responses were integrated into the analysis of this sub-question.

- Open-ended survey questions:
 - (3.2) *“Please describe the challenging experiences with female guardians from your child’s/children’s school(s):”*
 - (3.15) *“In what ways (if any) did (1) culture, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) race or (5) level of education influence the challenging experience?”*
- Open-ended interview questions (please see appendix C for the full interview guide):
 - 4a. *When I looked women’s level of education, only women with a doctoral degree were more likely to receive or perceive aggression. What are your thoughts on that? Why do you think that might be?*
 - 4b. *When I looked women’s races and ethnicities, only women who identified as Asian were more likely to receive or perceive aggression. What are your thoughts on that? Why do you think that might be?*
 - 4c. *And finally, when I looked at how women identified ideologically, women who identified as extremely liberal were more likely to receive or perceive aggression. What are your thoughts on that? Why do you think that might be?*
 - 4d. *I wanted to point out that you mentioned “[factors]” as most influencing the aggressive experience. Can you tell me more about that?*
 - 5a. *What do you think about the fact that working moms and stay-at-home moms were just as likely to be aggressive and receive aggression? Why do you think that is? Did these results surprise you?*

Qualitative component of question 2c. The third section of the second question (the impact of structural, cultural or agentic factors on aggressive experiences) was not in the original design of the study and was therefore not included in the survey. However, because almost every interviewee had something to say about either the structures, cultures or people that effected the aggressive situation, the third sub-section of the second question was created early in the interview process. Therefore, qualitative analysis was used to analyze participants’ interview responses to ascertain what structural, cultural or agentic factors could account for the aggressive experiences of female guardians.

- Open-ended survey questions:
 - 2a. *Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about that experience?*
 - 3a. *My study shows that many women across the country have experienced aggression from other female guardians. Why do you think that is?*
 - 3b. *What do you think causes the aggressive interactions?*
 - 3c. *Do you think the culture has anything to do with the aggressive experience? So, what would be the ideal school culture?*

- 3d. *Do you think there are structures that caused aggressive interactions? Is there a PTA or any sort of parent volunteer group at the school? So, what would be the ideal school structure?*
- 3e. *Do you think there are people actions or inactions that caused the aggressive interactions?*

Research question 3: Impact of aggressive acts on school involvement. The purpose of this research question was to determine if aggression influenced women's involvement in their children's schools, what were the effects on volunteer time, and which-if any-aggressive acts (e.g. "ignored" or "shouted at") correlated with the alteration in volunteer time. Qualitative and quantitative analysis were used to answer these questions.

Quantitative component of question 3. Using two Likert-style survey questions, women were asked to indicate to what degree they had altered their volunteer time after experiencing aggression (in general) and after the most aggressive experience (specifically). First, t-tests and descriptive statistics were used to ascertain whether women had altered their volunteer time after experiencing aggression from other female guardians. Then, logistic regressions were run to determine whether any correlation existed between the dependent variable "modification in volunteer time" and the independent variables: participants' demographic variables. In each model, the modification in volunteer time was the dependent variable—Less=0, Same=1—and the aggressive acts were the independent variables.

- Closed-ended survey questions:
 - (3.3) *"As a result of these experiences, I volunteered ____ for my child's/children's school(s):"*
 - (3.12) *"As a result of this particular experience, I volunteered ____ for my child's/children's school(s):"*

Qualitative component of question 3. Immediately following question 3.3 (as written above), participants had the opportunity to respond to short-answer survey prompt ("3.4" as shown below). Responses were analyzed using categorical and thematic coding.

- Open-ended survey question:
 - (3.4) *“Please describe how these experiences affected your involvement in your child’s/children’s school(s).”*

Research question 4: Responses to aggression. This research question addressed what strategies female guardians used to responded to aggression from other female guardians, why they chose those responses, and whether those responses improved, worsened, or made no difference to the situation. For answers, data from three survey questions—one multiple-choice, two open-ended—were used; responses were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively (respectively).

Quantitative component of question 4. During the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics allowed for an initial assessment of the responses used after the most aggressive interaction with another female guardian, and whether women perceived that their strategies improved, worsened or had no effect on the situation. Logistic regression analysis was used to determine whether any relationship existed between participant or aggressor demographic information and the type of responses used. In each model, a different response strategy was used as the dependent variable, while the participant and aggressor demographic variables were the independent variables.

- Closed-ended survey questions:
 - (4.1) *“During the most negative or challenging situation with mothers/female guardians from your child’s/children’s school(s), which of the following best represent your responses?”* (Please see figure 5 above for a portion of the Aggression Response Questionnaire”

Qualitative component of question 4. To better understand how women responded to aggression, whether those responses helped, and why they chose to respond the way they did, participants were prompted with two open-ended questions (4.2 and 3.16 below). The purpose of including these open-ended questions in the survey was threefold: to better understand the

decision-making process of female guardians when confronted with aggression from other female guardians, to better understand the context in which they made those decisions, and to examine the connections between their responses to open-ended questions and the multiple-choice questions that preceded them.

- Open-ended survey questions:
 - (4.2) *“Please explain in more detail why you chose (or did not choose) the responses listed above:”*
 - (3.16) *“Please provide at least three factors that most helped you navigate this situation. The three things that helped me the most were _____:”*

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine (1) to what extent female guardians experienced aggression from female guardians from their children's schools, and what forms of aggression female guardians experienced from other female guardians; (2) which demographic or situational factors may account for the aggression; (3) how aggression from female guardians affected women's involvement in their children's schools; and (4) how some women—if any—navigated through the aggressive experiences. This chapter presents the findings for the study. First, demographic details are provided about the participants and the women they found to be the most aggressive. Next, reliability analysis for the results from the Negative Acts Questionnaire and the Aggression Response Questionnaire is provided. Then, results for each of the research questions are presented. Each section concludes with a summary of findings. The results of the quantitative data are purely from the survey instrument; the results of the qualitative data are a combination of the survey instrument open-ended questions and post-survey participants' interviews.

Participants and Procedures

In the Spring of 2017, using snow-ball sampling via email and social media, I invited mothers and female guardians with children in kindergarten through twelfth grade—children approximately ages 5-18—to participate in an online survey. Between March 31st and May 28th, 652 participants from around the world followed the link to the survey. Of those, only 377 participants were mothers or female guardians, lived in the United States and had children in grades K-12. Participants were given the opportunity at the end of the survey to provide their telephone number or email address to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Approximately one third provided their telephone number or email address to be contacted for a follow up

interview. Of those, 30 participants were purposefully selected as possible interviewees and contacted via email and/or text messaging. Of the 30, nine participants responded to emails and text messages to schedule time for interviews.

Figure 6 below demonstrates how survey participants and interviewees were selected. Participants with at least one aggressive experience from another female guardian made up 59% (n=223) of the respondents and were asked to complete the Negative Acts Questionnaire. Not included in this study are the participants making up 41% of respondents (n=154); these participants indicated never receiving aggressive behaviors from female guardians from their children's schools.

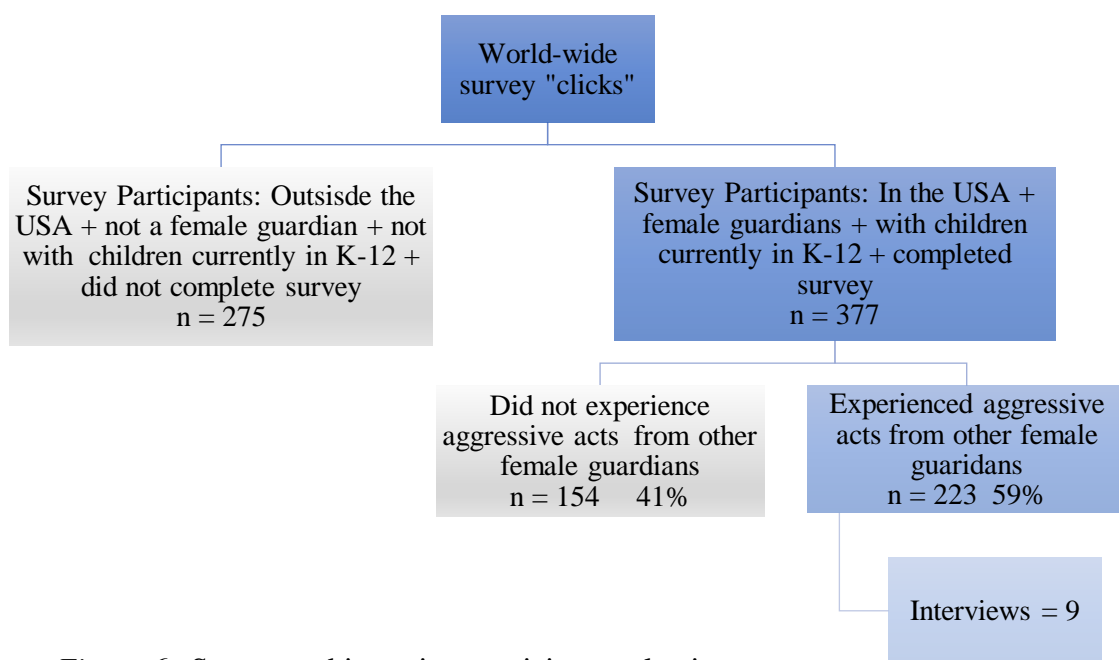


Figure 6. Survey and interview participant selection.

Demographics

In the survey, none of the fifteen demographic questions were *forced answer* (where the participant must answer the question to move onto the next page). Though this technique often yields the most honest answers (Lavrakas, 2008) it allows participants the freedom to skip questions or sections entirely. As a result, most demographic questions had an average 65% response rate (answered by approximately 142 participants).

Because a study of female guardians' experiences with other female guardians had not previously been conducted—and therefore possible statistically significant variables were unknown, this survey required participants to answer eleven demographic questions about themselves and four regarding the female guardian with whom the woman had the most aggressive experience. The following discussion on demographic variables is divided into three sections: (1) demographic variables describing the *survey participants*, (2) demographic variables describing the *female guardian* with whom participants shared the most aggressive experience, and (3) demographic variables describing *the interview participants* and the female guardian with whom shared the most aggressive experience was shared.

Survey Participants' Demographics

At first glance, participants who answered demographic questions were English speaking, white, middle-to-upper income, educated, moderate-to-liberal, biological mothers in their late thirties/early forties, living in the western United States, and with one to two children attending public schools. The tables below, however, illustrate a more complex picture.

Language, race, education, and income. Overwhelmingly, participants who chose to answer the questions on language, race and income identified as English speaking, White/Caucasian, well-educated (4-year College and above) and with an annual household income above \$100,000 (see Table 1).

Employment status, age, location, and ideology. As illustrated in Table 2, approximately 11% (n=25) of women were unemployed, 13% (n= 30) of women were employed part-time, and 40% (n=88) of women were employed full-time. As may be expected of mothers with children in grade school, the highest frequency age representations were women in their 30's and 40's, with a median age of 42 years old. Notably, "Please enter your Post Code or Zip Code" was the only question answered by all 223 women. On the other hand, only 65% of participants responded to the prompt, "Ideologically, you see yourself as"; with approximately 50% of those identifying as liberal, 30% as moderate, and 20% as conservative.

Relationship to child, whom child lives with, grade, and type of school. As may be seen in Table 3, biological mothers comprised 95% of all survey participants with aunts and grandmothers making up the other 5% (see Table 3). Moreover, during the time of the most aggressive experience with another female guardian, most women indicated that their child(ren) lived with them and another parent (n=117, 52%). Most women noted that aggressive experiences occurred while children attended elementary school (i.e. kindergarten through fifth grade). Women with children in public schools made up more than 75% of responses, while 20% had children in private schools, and 5% indicated they had children in homeschooling or the "other" category.

Table 1

Distribution of Demographic Categories (Set 1)

Category	n	Total Percent	Valid Percent
Primary Language			
English	128	58	88
Spanish	8	3	6
Other (Arabic, Persian, Tagalog)	8	3	6
Did Not Answer	81	36	
Total	223	100	100
Race			
Asian	10	5	6
Black or African American	14	6	9
Hispanic or Latina	15	7	10
White or Caucasian	99	44	72
Other	4	2	3
Did Not Answer	81	36	
Total	223	100	100
Level of Education			
Less than high school	0	0	0
High school	1	1	1
Some college	12	5	9
College 2-year	5	2	4
College 4-year	40	18	27
Masters' degree	61	27	43
Doctoral degree	17	8	12
Professional degree	6	3	4
Did Not Answer	81	36	
Total	223	100	100
Income			
Less than \$24,999	0	0	0
\$25,000 to \$49,999	8	4	6
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14	6	10
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13	6	9
\$100,000 to \$124,999	33	15	24
\$125,000 to \$149,999	17	8	12
\$150,000 to \$174,999	22	10	16
\$175,000 to \$199,000	3	1	2
\$200,000 or more	30	14	21
Did Not Answer	83	36	
Total	223	100	100

Table 2

Distribution of Demographic Categories (Set 2)

Category	n	Total Percent	Valid Percent
Employment			
Not Employed	25	11	18
Employed Part-Time	30	13	21
Employed Full-Time	88	40	61
Did Not Answer	80	36	
Total	223	100	100
Age			
70-79 years old	1	1	1
60-69 years old	0	0	0
50-59 years old	23	10	17
40-49 years old	57	26	44
30-39 years old	47	21	36
20-29 years old	3	1	2
Did Not Answer	92	41	
Total	223	100	100
Location in the U.S.A.			
West	136	60	60
Central	57	26	26
East	30	14	14
Did Not Answer	0	0	0
Total	223	100	100
Ideology			
Extremely Liberal	39	18	27
Somewhat Liberal	38	17	26
Moderate	40	18	29
Somewhat Conservative	21	9	15
Extremely Conservative	4	2	3
Did Not Answer	81	36	
Total	223	100	100

Table 3

Distribution of Demographic Categories (Set 3)

Category	n	Total Percent	Valid Percent
Participant's Relationship to Her Children			
Biological Mother	141	63	93
Other	11	5	7
Did Not Answer	71	32	
Total	223	100	100
Participant's Child Lives With			
Me and Other Parent	117	52	84
Me and Partner	2	1	1
Me (only)	11	5	8
Other Parent (only)	3	1	2
Other Parent and His Partner	3	1	2
Other	4	3	3
Did Not Answer	83	37	
Total	223	100	100
Grade of Child During Participant's Most Aggressive Experience			
Elementary School K-5	122	55	81
Middle School 6-8	24	10	16
High School 9-12	4	2	3
Did Not Answer	73	33	
Total	223	100	100
Type of School Child Attended During Participant's Most Aggressive Experience			
Public (Charter +Magnet)	122	55	80
Private (Independent +Parochial)	31	14	19
Home School or Other	1	1	1
Did Not Answer	71	31	
Total	223	100	100

Aggressors' Demographics

Survey participants were invited to answer four demographic questions about the female guardian with whom they experienced the most aggressive experience. Under each survey question, participants were asked to “Please make your best guess.” The response rate for each question was approximately 65%. Table 4 illustrates the various responses.

Relationship to children, level of education, race, and employment status. Of those that answered the “Relationship to her child” question, more than 95% believed the aggressors (i.e. those that performed the aggressive acts) were biological mothers, while approximately 5% choose either adopted mother, step-mother, grandmother, sister, aunt or other. Of those that answered the “Education level of the other mother/female guardian”, approximately 40% believed the aggressor had a four-year college degree or above. Most women identified the aggressor as White/Caucasian (50%), while others were identified as Hispanic/Latina (22%), Asian (3.1%), African American (3.1%), and Other (1.3%). In respect to employment status, participants believed 40% of aggressors were un-employed, 12% employed part-time, and 15% employed full-time.

Table 4

Distribution of Aggressors' Demographic Categories

Category	n	Total Percent	Valid Percent
Aggressor's Relationship to Her Own Children			
Biological Mother	141	64	95
Other	7	3	5
Did Not Answer	75	33	
Total	223	100	100
Aggressors' Race			
Asian	7	3	5
Black or African American	7	3	5
Hispanic or Latina	22	10	15
White or Caucasian	109	49	72
Other	4	2	3
Did Not Answer	74	33	
Total	223	100	100
Aggressors' Level of Education			
Less than High School	2	1	1
High School Diploma	25	11	16
Some College	14	6	10
College 2-year	9	4	6
College 4-year	82	36	56
Masters' Degree	8	4	6
Doctoral Degree	1	1	1
Professional Degree	6	3	4
Did Not Answer	76	34	
Total	223	100	100
Aggressors' Employment Status			
Not Employed	88	40	59
Employed Part-Time	28	12	18
Employed Full-Time	34	15	23
Did Not Answer	73	33	
Total	223	100	100

Interview Participants' Demographics

Of the 377 participants who completed the survey, lived in the United States, and were mothers or female guardians with children in grades K-12, about one third provided their telephone number or email address for a follow up interview. In order to have qualitative data that would provide the greatest depth and breadth to the quantitative findings, 30 participants were purposefully selected as possible interviewees and contacted via email and/or text messaging. Of the 30, nine participants responded to emails and text messages soliciting for interviews. Figure 2 in chapter 3 illustrated the demographic variables describing the nine interviewees (in blue) and their aggressors (in gray).

Reliability Analysis

As detailed in chapter three, survey participants were asked to complete the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) and the Aggression Response Questionnaire (ARQ). The NAQ measured perceived exposure to bullying and victimization in the workplace ("NAQ," 2009). Whereas the ARQ measured how participants responded to aggression and whether they believed their responses improved, worsened or made no difference to the aggressive situations (Keashly and Neuman, 2008). Cronbach's alpha was used to measure how well survey items reliably measured a characteristic or construct in both the NAQ and ARQ (Cortina, 1993). Though the NAQ has been found to have both strong reliability and validity (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009), the adaptations for this study were such that Cronbach's alpha was used to measure characteristics and constructs in this study as well. The ARQ does not appear to have been tested for either reliability or validity, and therefore Cronbach's alpha was used for this survey instrument as well. As may be seen in Table 5, the reliability scores for the NAQ instrument as well as each of the constructs were above the recommended minimum of .70 (Peterson, 1994). The ARQ, however, had a Cronbach's alpha of .64.

Table 5

Cronbach's Alpha for Survey Constructs

Construct/Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Negative Acts Questionnaire (n=225)	.88	15
Person-related bullying (n=225)	.82	9
Work-related bullying (n=59)	.84	3
Physical intimidation (n=23)	.73	3
Aggression Response Questionnaire (n=134)	.64	11

Research Question 1: Prevalence and Forms of Aggressive Behaviors

The first research question in this study asked:

Do female guardians experience aggression from other female guardians from their children's schools? If so, what types of aggression did female guardians experience?

This research question addressed whether female guardians experienced aggression from other female guardians and the types of aggression female guardians experienced. As may be evident from the information provided in figure 1 and the demographic tables, the answer to the first research question is "yes": most survey participants (59%, n=223) indicated at least one aggressive behavior from female guardians from their children's schools. This was further confirmed with an independent sample t-test of aggregate Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) scores that tested the hypothesis that the number of aggressive acts would be zero. The t-test confirmed that the null-hypothesis could be rejected at the $p < .00$ level. In the following section, I address the second portion of the first research question: what types of behaviors did female guardians experience?

Frequency of NAQ Constructs.

To answer what types of behaviors were most commonly reported by women, quantitative analysis was conducted using the three NAQ construct scores for *person-related*

bullying, work related bullying, and physical intimidation. Person-related (PR) bullying generally follows the patterns of indirect aggression: behaviors are difficult to identify and inflicted in such a way as to make it appears there was no malicious intent. Person-related bullying behaviors include being excluded, ignored, humiliated, insulted, teased, ridiculed, gossiped about, wrongly accused and encouraged to stop volunteering. Work-related (WR) bullying also generally follows the patterns of indirect aggression, but the aggressor's purpose is to affect the victim's work. In the case of parent involvement organizations, a work related bullying incident would include participants perceiving that they were blocked from volunteer opportunities, information about the school or information about volunteering by female guardians. Physical intimidation (PI) behaviors are more direct and include being shouted at, threatened or intimidated through physical behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, or blocking the way. Descriptive statistics revealed that although all forms of aggression were experienced, person-related bullying was the most commonly experienced type of aggression (n=224, 74%), followed by work-related (n=58, 19%) and lastly, physical intimidation (n=22, 7%). Table 5 presents the descriptive data in more detail.

Table 6

Frequency of Behaviors by NAQ Construct

Construct	Number of Survey Items	n	Frequency	Min	Max	Average Score	Standard Deviation
Person-Related Bullying (PR)	9	224	813	1	4	1.38	0.81
Work-Related Bullying (WR)	3	58	145	1	4	1.39	0.78
Physical Intimidation (PI)	3	22	38	1	2	1.23	0.43

Following the descriptive analysis, linear regression analysis was used to determine whether any correlation existed between a respondent's demographics and the type of aggression she experienced. In each model, the construct score was the dependent variable and the women's demographics were the independent variables. Interestingly, neither the models run for person-related bullying, work-related bullying, nor physical intimidation scores produced significant results; the F-statistic suggested that there was no explanatory power in any of the models. In other words, the type of aggression reported was not associated with differences between women of different demographic backgrounds.

Frequency of Specific Aggressive Behaviors.

As discussed in detail in chapter three, survey participants—when reporting the pervasiveness of aggressive behaviors—could choose either: “Never,” “Now and Then,” “Monthly,” “Weekly,” “Daily.” Most women who piloted the study, however, asked that there also be numbers listed as part of the frequencies. After several iterations and feedback from the mock-participants, the frequencies shown in chapter three figure 4, were selected for the study: (0) Never, (1) between one and six times a year (yearly), (2) between seven and twelve times a year (monthly), (3) between thirteen and twenty-four times a year (weekly), (4) more than twenty-five times a year (daily). The number of participants who indicated each behavior are listed in Table 6; as are the percent of all participants who reported that behavior, the minimum score, the maximum score, the average score, and the standard deviation. For example, 167 participants (or 74.9% of all survey participants) reported having felt ignored; women who felt ignored experienced it a minimum of one to six times a year (1) and a maximum of more than 25 times a year (4). The average score for feeling ignored was (1.40) (or between one and six times a year) and the standard deviation for having felt ignored was 0.777.

There are several noteworthy findings from this analysis. First, the three behaviors most women (between 50-75%) experienced were: being ignored, excluded, and gossiped about. Women experienced each of the three between one and six times a year (average scores of 1.40, 1.45, and 1.41 respectively). Second, it is interesting that the three least experienced aggressive behaviors were two physically intimidating (PI) behaviors and one person-related (PR) behavior: teased (PR, n=12, 5.4%), intimidated through physical behaviors (PI, n=8, 3.6%), and threatened (PI, n=3, 1.3%). The women who reported these behaviors also experienced them between 1-6 times a year (average scores of 1.33, 1.38, and 1.33 respectively). It is important to note that the average scores between the most frequent and least frequently experienced aggressions were different by a few tenths of a point. Meaning that, on average, women who perceived aggressive behavior from other female guardians perceived it at similar low frequencies: one to six times a year.

The third notable finding were the number of behaviors some women experienced either weekly (between thirteen and twenty-four times a year) or daily (more than twenty-five times a year). As may be seen in Table 6, the maximum number in every category (excluding the physically intimidating behaviors) was either a three or a four, indicating that at least one woman in each of those categories perceived that aggressive behavior directed towards her occurred either on a weekly or daily basis.

A final noteworthy finding was that as the number of participants decreased so did the average scores. For example, feeling ignored had an average score of 1.40, whereas feeling teased had an average score of 1.33; indicating that women experienced being ignored *more often* than being teased. Being ignored, moreover, was also experienced by *more women* (n=167) than being teased (n=12). In other words, the less often experienced behaviors (e.g. teased), were also experienced by the fewest number of women.

Review of Results from Research Question 1

An analysis of the descriptive statistics for the NAQ constructs demonstrated what types of aggressive behaviors female guardians perceived from other female guardians, and how often they perceived them occurring. Of the three NAQ constructs, person-related bullying was reported the most, followed by work-related bullying and finally, physical intimidation. Regression analysis was used to determine whether any correlation existed between a respondent's demographics and the type of aggression she experienced. Importantly, neither the models run for person-related bullying, work-related bullying, nor physical intimidation produced significant results.

Descriptive statistics were then employed to identify the most common individual aggressive behaviors and the frequencies in which they occurred. This analysis demonstrated that the three behaviors most survey participants (between 50-75%) experienced were being ignored, excluded and gossiped about, and they experienced them between one and six times a year. The three least experienced aggressive behaviors were teased ($n=12$, 5.4%), intimidated through physical behaviors ($n=8$, 3.6%), and threatened ($n=3$, 1.3%). These behaviors were also experienced between one and six times a year.

The purpose of this section was to establish that female guardians experienced aggression from other female guardians from their children's schools, the various types of aggression that they experienced, and the frequencies with which women reported experiencing each type of aggression. In the next section, I explore the demographic and situational factors that led to the aggressive experiences.

Table 7

Frequency and Average Score Comparisons of Aggressive Behaviors

Behavior	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents	Min	Max	Average Score	SD
Ignored	167	75	1	4	1.40	0.78
Excluded	159	71	1	4	1.45	0.79
Gossiped about	126	57	1	4	1.41	0.83
Insulted	47	21	1	3	1.19	0.50
Blocked from information about the school	38	17	1	4	1.45	0.86
Blocked from volunteering	33	15	1	4	1.33	0.69
Blocked from information about volunteering	33	15	1	4	1.39	0.79
Humiliated	23	10	1	3	1.35	0.65
Wrongly accused	20	9	1	3	1.30	0.57
Shouted At	20	9	1	2	1.15	0.37
Ridiculed	16	7	1	3	1.25	0.58
Encouraged to stop volunteering	14	6	1	4	1.71	1.14
Teased	12	5	1	3	1.33	0.65
Intimidated through physical behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, or blocking my way	8	4	1	2	1.38	0.52
Threatened	3	1	1	2	1.33	0.58

Research Question 2: Accounting for Aggressive Behaviors

The second research question in this study asked:

How do demographic and situational factors account for the aggressive experiences?

- a. To what extent do aggressors' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?

- b. To what extent do participants' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
- c. To what extent do structural, cultural or agentic factors account for the aggressive experiences?

Having now established that aggression occurs between female guardians, as well as the types and frequencies of these acts of aggression, the next research question examines how demographic or situational factors may account for these experiences of aggression. To answer the first sub-question—*To what extent do aggressors' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?* — both logistic and linear regressions were used in the analyses. Qualitative analysis—using magnitude and thematic coding—was then used to analyze participants' short answer responses to ascertain whether there were other characteristics (aside from the aggressor's demographic variables) participants would use to describe the aggressor in their explanations of the aggressive experience (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2009).

Similarly, to answer the second sub-question—*To what extent do participants' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?* —logistic and linear regressions were used to analyze the quantitative data. In these models, however, the regressions were run to identify which demographic variables corresponding to the participant were associated with the most aggressive experience. Qualitative analysis—specifically magnitude and thematic coding—was used to analyze participants' short answer responses to one open-ended question, to ascertain whether there were other characteristics (aside from the self-identifying demographic variables) participants would use to describe themselves in their explanations of the aggressive experiences.

To answer the third sub-question—*To what extent do structural, cultural or agentic factors account for the aggressive experiences?*—only qualitative analysis was used. Because these were themes that emerged from the interviews (the final data collection phase), no survey questions existed that specifically dealt with these factors; therefore, no quantitative analysis was necessary. As with the former questions, magnitude and thematic coding were used to analyze participants' interview responses. The final section is a review of the results from the second research question and its three sub-questions: how demographic or situational factors account for the aggressive experiences?

Question 2a: Aggressors' Demographics and Characteristics

Quantitative and qualitative analysis were used to respond the first sub-question: how do characteristics of the aggressors account for the aggressive behaviors? I first discuss the results from the quantitative analysis using the four multiple-choice demographic survey questions. Of the 223 women who experienced at least one act of aggression from a female guardian, approximately 66% ($n \approx 148$) answered at least one demographic question regarding the woman they perceived as most aggressive (please refer to Table 4 for specific numbers). Multiple linear and binary logistic regressions were run to estimate the probability that women with particular descriptive variables would be significantly more likely to be aggressive (or perceived as aggressive).

Following this discussion, are the results of the qualitative analysis based on one open-ended survey question. Of the women who experienced at least one aggressive act from another female guardian, 57% ($n=128$) responded to the short answer survey prompt: Please tell me more about the person/people involved in this situation. How would you describe or characterize her/them? This section then concludes with a summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Quantitative results for question 2a: aggressors' demographics and characteristics.

Study participants were asked to provide answers to four demographic questions regarding the female guardian with whom they experienced the most aggressive interaction: level of education, race/ethnicity, employment status, and whether the aggressor was employed at the participant's children's school or school district. Of the 223 women who experienced at least one act of aggression from a female guardian, 66% (n=148) answered at least one demographic question regarding the woman they perceived as most aggressive.

To determine if there were statistically significant correlations between the aggressors' demographic variables and the aggressive experiences, I ran multiple linear and binary logistic regressions to estimate the probability that a particular event would occur (Anderson, Sweeney, & Williams, 2014). In other words, I used statistical software to answer the first part of the first research question: would women with particular descriptive variables be significantly more likely to be aggressive (or be perceived as aggressive)? Linear regressions may only be run with dependent variables that are continuous, unbounded and measured on an interval or ratio scale so that the six Assumptions of the General Linear Model (GLM) are met (Anderson et al., 2014). The dependent variable (Aggression Yes =1, Aggression No=0) was binary, however, and therefore binary logistic regressions were run once the dummy variables were created for each variable. The following is a summary of the results from these analyses.

Logistic regression analyses determined whether correlations existed between a binary dependent variable—Aggression Yes =1, Aggression No=0—and four binary independent variables: aggressors' employment status, aggressors' race/ethnicity, aggressor's level of education, and whether aggressors were employed at their children's school or in the school district. Both the standard and forward conditional methods were used to ascertain which

demographic variables would be significant ($p \leq .05$) in determining who would be perceived as aggressive.

After running regressions with various combinations of the independent variables, no model yielded significant results using any combination of variables; the F-statistic suggested that there was no explanatory power in any of the models. In other words, aggression was not associated with differences between women of different socio-economic backgrounds, races/ethnicities, levels of education, and relationships to her children.

Qualitative results for research question 2a: Aggressors' demographics and characteristics. Anticipating that demographic data would not wholly account for aggressors' behaviors, survey respondents were asked an open-ended question regarding the aggressors' characteristics: *Please tell me more about the person/people involved in this situation. How would you describe or characterize her/them?*

Of the 223 respondents who answered that they had experienced acts of aggression from other female guardians while their children attended grades K-12, 57% ($n=128$) provided answers to this question using 222 descriptors. As seen in Table 7, only 29% ($n=62$) of descriptors were demographic information. Instead, the majority of descriptors (55%, $n=118$) were related to personality characteristics; participants used the aggressors' personality traits 55% of the time, demographics 24% of the time, and roles 9% of the time to make sense of their aggressive experiences. The next most frequently mentioned category—aggressors' descriptions that were demographic related—were considered and accounted for in the previous section analyzing responses using demographic data and are therefore not discussed further in this sub-question analysis. A small number (7%, $n=17$) described the aggressors' behaviors as not intentional or not malicious. Table 7 displays the frequency of each category and subcategory,

and examples of participants' responses. Please refer to Appendix C for a full list of descriptors used by the participants.

Character. Women mentioned the aggressors' personalities more than one hundred times, making up 56% of all responses to this open-ended survey question. Character traits that are typically considered feminine were coded as *communal* behaviors (e.g. "social," "organized," and "conflict averse"). Only eleven aggressors' descriptions fit into this category. The most frequently used descriptors for the aggressor (n=67) were adjectives associated with "agentic" behaviors—i.e. words associated with masculine traits and words that are not generally used to describe women (e.g. "arrogant," "bossy," and "authoritarian"). This is not surprising, as previous research has demonstrated that women who act "agentially" are judged more harshly than those who act communally (e.g. Eagly & Karau, 2002).

After coding for communal and agentic descriptors, forty-seven responses remained that did not fit into either category. This group of descriptors was particularly challenging to code because the adjectives were not agentic but neither did they describe socially acceptable feminine traits; for example, "not welcoming" and "oppressing" are not generally considered agentic behaviors, but neither are they acceptable feminine traits. Therefore, the second most-frequently used descriptors (n=47) were placed in a newly category: *un-communal*.

Roles. Nineteen women (8.5%) described their aggressors with their occupation or with the volunteer role she had in the school. Four women wrote, for example, "Business owners," "Lawyers," "PTA moms," and "Established group of moms' that have been volunteering together for a while." It is interesting that when asked to describe their aggressor, some women wrote nothing more than the aggressor's occupation or volunteer role. Perhaps for some women phrases like "PTA mom" or "Seniority at school," carried enough implicit weight and meaning that no further descriptors were necessary.

Table 8

Frequency of Aggressors' Demographic and Character Descriptions

Demographics or Characteristics	Number of times mentioned	Percent	Sample Responses
<i>Character</i>	125	56	
Agentic	67		"Bossy and rigid."
Un-communal	47		"Short snippy answers made me feel like an intrusive outsider."
Communal	11		"They are all very friendly and active in school."
<i>Demographics</i>	52	23	
Unemployed	20		"Mostly stay-at-home moms."
Race	16		"White woman who didn't trust me."
Wealthy	8		"The 8:30 moms who do not work and have no care in the world because they are rich and taken care of by their husband."
Age	7		"Young moms."
Education	1		"Educated stay at home moms with husbands at software companies making lots of money and saw themselves as dedicated moms who quit work for kids' sake."
<i>Role</i>	19	9	
At school	7		"Demonstrative school employee was the ring leader, which made many of us feel unsafe because she worked with our kids."
Outside of school	12		"A very privileged and pushy defense attorney."
<i>Not Intentional/ Not Malicious</i>	17	8	"I don't think the behavior was intentional. If anything, the people were shy and I'm shy so it's hard to initiate interactions."
<i>Physical Appearance</i>	9	4	"Tall, stocky, strong." "The woman was ...dressed in clothing you would expect on a much younger woman, and was wearing quite a bit of make-up and had styled hair."
Total	222	100	

Not intentional. A second seldom-used description of the aggressors came from women who believed the aggressive behavior as not intentional or malicious. Women whose responses were coded in this category used phrases such as “Normal folks having normal interactions with friends,” or “Regular moms, I don’t believe it was ill intentioned, just not socially aware.” Many of the women who provided these answers did not complete the entire survey and often concluded by writing, for example, “I’m not taking it personally, realizing that lifestyles differ, focusing on what really matters (the kids!);” and “I didn’t want to make a big deal over it.” In addition, these women were not among those who provided their telephone number or email address for a follow-up interview; therefore, I was unable to contact anyone in the “not intentional” category for further comments on any of their survey responses.

Physical appearance. The least mentioned characteristics (n=9, 4.0%) were regarding the aggressor’s physical appearance and were therefore coded into a category labeled, *physical appearance*. Most women who responded with physical descriptions wrote brief—one or two word—answers to the open-ended question. Some women wrote, for example: “Fat,” “Less pretty,” “Un-appealing,” and “Tall, stocky, strong.” These responses might have also been considered for the *un-communal* category; not because they describe un-feminine behaviors, but because they are not usually acceptable as feminine physical traits.⁶ It is interesting to note that the aggressors were never described with (typically) feminine physical traits such as beautiful, well dressed, fit or slender.

Summary of question 2a: Aggressors’ demographics and characteristics. In response to research question 2 part (a)—*To what extent do aggressors’ demographics account for*

⁶ A glance at advertisements and magazine covers is enough to verify this; however, for an academic analysis please see Cohn and Adler (1992), Cunningham (1986), Sigelman, Sigelman, and Fowler (1987).

aggressive experiences? —quantitative and qualitative results differed. Quantitative results revealed that the characteristics of the aggressor—at least as measured in this study—were not statistically significant predictors of the aggressive experience; i.e. women’s experiences of aggression were not associated with aggressor’s socio-economic background, race/ethnicity, level of education, or relationship to her children.

Qualitative analysis revealed that more than half of respondents believed their aggressors were best described by phrases about their personality traits; in particular, participants described their aggressors using adjectives and verbs typically considered un-feminine. Women also used demographic information, and professional and volunteer roles to describe the aggressor. Finally, a small number did not describe the aggressor and instead used the open-ended response to explain that the aggressors’ behaviors was not intentional or malicious.

Question 2b: Participants’ Demographics.

In the following pages, I first discuss the quantitative results for the multiple-choice demographic survey questions. Of the women who experienced at least one aggressive act from another female guardian, approximately 65% ($n \approx 142$) responded to the eleven self-identifying demographic questions (please refer to tables one through three for specific numbers in each category). Multiple linear and binary logistic regressions were run to estimate the probability that women with particular descriptive variables would be significantly more likely to receive, report or perceive acts of aggression from other female guardians from their children’s schools.

Following this discussion, are the results of the qualitative analysis based on one open-ended survey question and various interview questions. Of the women who experienced at least one aggressive act from another female guardian, 52% ($n=116$) responded to the short answer survey prompt: *In what ways (if any) did (1) culture, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) race or (5) level of education influence the challenging experience?* Whereas all nine women who were

interviewed responded to questions regarding the influence of demographics on their aggressive experiences with other female guardians. This section then concludes with a summary of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Quantitative results for question 2b: Participant demographics. In the final section of the survey, study participants were asked to provide demographic information about themselves: (1) age, (2) household income level, (3) number of children, (4) employment status, (5) employment in their children's schools or district, (6) race/ethnicity, (7) ideological baring, (8) level of education, (9) primary language, (10) children's primary residence, and (11) income compared to families in her children's schools. Of the women who experienced at least one aggressive act from another female guardian, approximately 65% ($n \approx 142$) provided demographic information about themselves.

Similar to the analysis for question 2a, regressions were run to determine if there were statistically significant correlations between demographic variables and the aggressive experiences. For these models, however, I used the *participant's* demographic variables to determine whether women with particular descriptive variables would be significantly more likely to report acts of aggression from other female guardians from their children's schools. As stated above, linear regressions may only be run with dependent variables that are continuous, unbounded and measured on an interval or ratio scale so that the six Assumptions of the General Linear Model (GLM) are met. Therefore, in the first round of tests, linear regressions were run with the aggregate score from the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) as the dependent variable and the three continuous variables (age, household income, employment status, and number of children that have attended or are attending elementary school (grades K-5)) as the independent variables. During the second round of tests, the dependent variable (Aggression Yes =1, Aggression No=0) was binary and therefore binary logistic regressions were run; the remaining

nine variables (numbers five through eleven above) were used as the independent variables. The following is a summary of the results from these analyses.

Multiple linear regression analysis. Multiple linear regression analyses determined what correlations existed between the dependent variable—the aggregate score from the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ)—and three independent variables—age, household income and number of children that have attended or are attending elementary school (grades K-5). None of the variables proved to be significant at the $p < .05$ level. These characteristics of the participant—at least as measured in this study—were not statistically significant predictors of the aggressive experience; i.e. women’s experiences of aggression were not associated with participant’s age, household income, or number of children.

Logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression analyses determined what correlations existed between a binary dependent variable—Aggression Yes =1, Aggression No=0—and eight binary independent variables: employment status, employment in their children’s schools or district, race/ethnicity, ideological baring, level of education, primary language, children’s primary residence and income compared to families in her children’s schools. Both the standard and forward conditional methods were used to ascertain which demographic variables would be significant ($p < .05$) in determining who experienced aggression.

The first model included all eight demographic categories. As illustrated in Table 9, four demographic variables proved to be significant ($p < .05$): women with a Ph.D. or Ed.D., women who identified as Asian, women who identified as extremely liberal, and women who identified as moderate were more likely to have experienced aggression.

The relationship, however, between the dependent variable (Aggression Yes=1, Aggression No=0), and the predictor variables (participants’ demographics) is non-linear; the predictions for the dependent variable do no lie outside of the zero to one interval. Therefore,

the maximum likelihood estimation equation was used to calculate the probability (p) that women—with each significant variable—would have of reporting aggression. I then ran maximum likelihood estimation analysis with combinations of the significant variables; these may be found in Table 10. Once again in this table, “p” is the calculated probability that a participant (who identifies herself in these categories), would report aggression. For example, a woman who identifies as Asian, has a Ph.D. or Ed.D., and identifies politically as extremely liberal, has a 93% chance of reporting aggression.

Table 9

Effect of Demographic Variables on Aggressive Experiences
Logistic Binary Regression: Forward Wald

Variable	p	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Ph.D./Ed.D.	.61	.97	.48	4.06	.04	2.65
Asian	.70	1.39	.68	4.15	.04	4.02
Extremely Liberal	.57	.80	.32	6.38	.01	2.23
Moderate	.52	.61	.29	4.29	.04	1.83
Constant		-.53	.18	8.77	.00	0.59

Table 10

Maximum Likelihood Estimation for Combinations of Significant Demographic Variables

Variable	Calculated Probability
Asian and Ph.D./Ed.D. and Extremely Liberal	.93
Asian and Ph.D./Ed.D. and Moderate	.92
Asian and Ph.D./Ed.D.	.86
Asian and Extremely Liberal	.84
Asian and Moderate	.81
Ph.D./Ed.D. and Extremely Liberal	.78
Ph.D./Ed.D. and Moderate	.74

For the second regression model, I ran only the four original demographic variables using the standard method. As illustrated in Table 11, only three variables remained significant

($p < .05$). This model, however, produced a small R^2 of .056 indicating that it accounted for only 5.6% of the variance in responses.

Table 11

Effect of Demographic Variables on Aggressive Experiences
Logistic Binary Regression: Enter

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Ph.D./Ed.D.	.91	.46	3.90	.04	2.47
Asian	1.42	.68	4.32	.04	4.12
Extremely Liberal	.81	.31	6.82	.01	2.25
Moderate	.50	.29	3.02	.08	1.64
Constant	-.52	.18	8.99	.00	.59

Note. Cox & Snell R square=.05, Nagelkerke R Square=.08

Summary of quantitative results for survey participants' demographics. Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that age, household income and number of children—at least as measured in this study—were not statistically significant predictors of the aggressive experience. Logistic regression analyses demonstrated that women with a Ph.D. or Ed.D., women who identified as Asian, women who identified as extremely liberal, and women who identified as an ideological moderate were more likely to have reported aggressive acts.

Qualitative results for question 2b: Participant demographics. In addition to the quantitative survey questions regarding demographics, survey participants were asked an open-ended question regarding the influence of demographics on aggression from other female guardians: *In what ways (if any) did (1) culture, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) race or (5) level of education influence the challenging experience?* Of the 223 respondents who experienced acts of aggression from other female guardians, while their children attended grades K-12, half (52%, $n=116$) provided responses to this short-answer question. Furthermore, during the interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on their short-answer responses and asked to

reflect on the variables that were—and were not—found to be significant in the quantitative analysis.

As may be seen in Table 10, the three most frequently cited demographic factors that women reported influencing their aggressive experiences were *income*, *race* and *employment status*. Interestingly, two of these differed from the three statistically significant demographic categories (i.e. *education*, *race*, and *ideological baring*) found in the quantitative analysis. Ideological baring, however, was not included in the short-answer prompt, and therefore might explain why the participants did not note it. Perhaps the most surprising discrepancy was the few times level of education was mentioned (n=29, 13.7%) by the 116 survey participants, since in the quantitative analysis, a participant's level of education—specifically a Ph.D. or Ed.D.—was the most statistically significant factor correlated with aggressive experiences. Though the qualitative findings are based on a smaller number of participants and a self-selected sample (i.e. anyone who wanted to take the time to answer this question), the qualitative findings are worth noting. Therefore, the following is an analysis of the open-ended survey question and interview responses regarding the influence of demographic data on aggressive experiences.

Table 12

Frequency of Factors Affecting Aggression

	Number of times mentioned	Percent	Sample Responses
Income	39	18	<p>“Income. We're poor, they are not.”</p> <p>“[The] school is private pay and although we all pay there is perceived status within that levels and some parents feel more above others.”</p>
Race	39	18	<p>“Race was probably the largest factor outside of me being new to the school.”</p>
Employment	37	17	<p>“My employment seems to be the biggest factor, I cannot volunteer during regular school hours and I don't get to visit as much after the bell rings.”</p> <p>“Generally, the [aggressive] group were either non-working or worked only part time.”</p>
Level of Education	29	14	<p>“If there is one piece, it may be education, as they both have very little, and have very little access to support while they are going through this trying time. On the other hand, even educated people can go through divorce in the same ugly way.”</p>
None of these Reasons	28	13	<p>“None that were obvious. We were all pretty homogeneous.”</p> <p>“I really don't know what prompted her to call.”</p>
Culture	24	11	<p>“I think the culture of being an African American played a huge part in the negative encounter.”</p> <p>“Yes, my [Asian] culture teaches me to be submissive.”</p>
Another Reason	16	9	<p>Age: “They are younger than me.”</p> <p>Religion: “We're not familiar with Catholicism, the holidays and traditions.”</p>
Total	212	100	

Income. In the quantitative analysis, a female guardian's income was not statistically correlated to experiences of aggression. Women of lower income families, for example, were not statistically more likely to report aggression. Some study participants may find this

surprising, as income was mentioned by thirty-nine women in their response to the short answer question: *In what ways (if any) did (1) culture, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) race or (5) level of education influence the challenging experience?* Of the 39 respondents that mentioned income, about half (n=19) wrote single or two-word responses such as “Income” or “Upper Class”, with no other explanation. The second half (n=20) of the respondents that mentioned income were, however, much more descriptive. For twenty respondents, the aggressive experience with another female guardian could be explained in part because the aggressors had “a lot of money”, and in part because the aggressors have “more money” than the victims of the aggression. For example, four women who did not indicate their own income level wrote about the aggressor(s) in this way: “[the aggressors] came from money;” “[the aggressors] had a lot of money;” “[the aggressors] were mostly higher income women;” and “[the aggressors] were higher SES women in charge.” The remaining responses were from women who indicated that their level of income was lower than the aggressors’ level of income. For example, two women wrote: “[the aggressors] were higher SES women in charge;” and “[the aggressor] is more upper class than me.”

Though I was unable to contact these women for further comments, I was able to interview Ana Sambold, a lawyer and conflict resolution specialist hired by school districts to resolve disputes between various parties (including conflicts between parents). When I mentioned that some survey participants believed that aggression between women was largely a problem of higher income women, she said, “That’s ridiculous. Conflict happens everywhere, in affluent communities and low-income communities. Everywhere. It’s human beings, it doesn’t matter the race or how much money they have. [Conflict] is happening everywhere.”

In summary, though a female guardian’s income was not statistically correlated to experiences of aggression, analysis of the qualitative short answer responses indicated that some

respondents felt that women of higher income were more aggressive towards each other and towards women of lower income. A conflict resolution specialist working with school districts, however, disagreed with this notion and instead corroborated the quantitative findings: aggression between parents happens in both affluent and low income communities.

Race and culture. As seen in Table 10, in response to the survey question: *In what ways (if any) did (1) culture, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) race or (5) level of education influence the challenging experience?*, participants mentioned culture twenty-four times (11.3%) and race thirty-nine times (18.4 %) to explain their challenging experiences.

Race was often mentioned as a reason why these women thought they experienced aggressive behaviors. For example, one African-American mother said, “My son went to a majority white elementary school and I think that the difference [in race] between me and many of the other parents played a role in being unwelcome in the PTA.” Interestingly, race was also used to “flaunt” a perceived advantage. One aggressive parent used her race to let other mothers know that she was an insider at the school because she shared racial identity with influential school personnel. A Hispanic mother explained that “[the aggressor] would flaunt that she and the principal were both black and were buddy-buddy.”

For the most part, however, participants conflated race and culture when explaining the aggressive behavior that occurs among women. In fact, race and culture were combined more than any other two categories to explain aggression. Some mothers explained their aggressive experiences by pointing out that they did not share the same race and culture as the majority of the mothers at their children’s school. One mother, for example, explained that aggression was a result of culture and race because, “they [the mothers] were Asian and I am Black.” Race and culture were used by these women to explain the exclusion of some of them from school

activities. As one Caucasian mother noted, “The moms [at my school] are Hispanic/Spanish speaking and [they] exclude other moms that are not.”

As mentioned earlier, quantitative analysis revealed female guardians who identify as Asian were statistically more likely to receive or report aggressive experiences. Lily, a cultural studies professor who identified as South-East Asian, provided three possible explanations for this finding. First, Lily spoke at length about the “fundamental resentment [from Caucasians] in the [United States] against immigrants in the high-tech sector” and the perception that they have taken American’s jobs. Lily explained that, “We [highly skilled immigrant Asians] were seen as these interlopers, and [have taken] away jobs from White people. I think that devolved into the school dynamics as well.”

Second, resentment of Asians came from within the Asian community as well: between those that could *code switch* and navigate the dominant culture and those who could not. These differences affected attitudes among Asian mothers and ultimately their involvement. Lily noted:

That ability [of some Asians] to navigate and negotiate the dominant White culture was a little bit different than those who were first generation immigrants. Also, among the South Asian community, folks like me can switch and go back and forth between the cultures, but there were a lot of moms who were very rooted in South Asian culture, who would usually just be very quiet and stand on the sidelines because they didn't know how to interface.

And finally, the dynamics between the Asian mothers themselves were also grounded in whether or not they had work visas or whether they had husbands with work visas because this translated into whether the mothers *had* to work or the mothers *had* to stay home. These differences affected school friendships. Lily noted, “The stay-at-home [Asian] mother versus working [Asian] mother dynamic split ethnically. Most of the mothers from India, they kept to themselves. They were stay-at-home mothers. They saw me as a working person, I didn't fit into that group.” Lily a full-time professor, described the affect this had on her first-generation

American born daughters. Her eldest was not invited—once again—to another after-school play group with Asian families. Lily told the story this way:

So, my daughter said, "Okay, if this is an Asian mom's club, how come my mom's not invited? We're Asian too." And to which, her friend said, "You're not Asian enough.".... When my daughter came back and told me this story, I said, "God, it's almost like an Asian mafia or something like that.".... We still refer to them jokingly as the Asian Mafia Mom Group. We used to joke when she was in middle school and say, "You know, we gotta write a novel and make one of these young adult novels about Asian mafia moms," and we laugh about it. That was our sort of side of private revenge, if you will. In summary, although race and culture were only referred to 63 times (30%) by the 116

survey participants, they were frequently mentioned together and explained most often as the motivation for aggression. This aggression did not just occur *across* racial groups but also *within* racial groups.

Employment status: Full-time, part-time, or unemployed. Quantitative analysis revealed that participant's and aggressor's employment status variables were *not* statistically correlated to experiences of aggression. Full-time working female guardians, for example, were not statistically more likely to receive or report aggression from unemployed female guardians from their children's schools. When magnitude coding from the short answer survey questions was combined with the nine interviews, however, participants mentioned employment status (of either the participant or the aggressor) more times than any other factor that may have influenced the challenging experience with another female guardian. The responses were variations of a similar theme: because of their work schedules women were unable to attend parent meetings, "hang out" with other women after dropping their children off at school, and volunteering more often. As a result, working women felt aggression from non-working women by being excluded, ignored and judged. For example, one study participant wrote,

The parents (mostly mothers) who do not have full time work are very close and spend a lot of time together. I am naturally excluded because I would never be available to socialize during the school day, or even immediately after school because I don't arrive home until nearly 5:30pm. They post a lot of photos of their social events on the school Facebook group and the result is that I feel more isolated.

Many women, like the participant above, felt excluded from accessing volunteer opportunities and parent organization meetings *because* they were during working hours or *because* working parents were not informed about the meetings (either the place or the time of those meetings). It appears that some parent involvement systems created by volunteers and school officials, privileged and rewarded women who were either unemployed or had flexible work schedules; systems and privilege are discussed in detail under research question 2 (c) in this chapter.

Level of education. Though in the logistic regression analysis, level of education was the most statistically significant factor correlated to the aggressions between women, survey and interview participants only mentioned education 29 times (13.7%) as a factor influencing their aggressive experiences. One mother attributed her aggressors' behaviors to a lack of education; she stipulated that the aggression would have been mitigated if both aggressors had access to more education. Another mother attributed the aggression she experienced to some women's lack of education. She noted, "I think sometimes the [non-working] women don't have as much education as the working parent or never did anything with the education they had so they want to come across as the most knowledgeable and [they typically give the message that] 'it's my way or nothing'." A third mother, Emma, also attributed the aggression she received to the aggressor's level of education and how it could set up different expectations for involvement. She said,

Sometimes, your level of education, your level of understanding, your level of ignorance, both cultural and educationally, changes where your priorities are set. So, a parent that owns her own business, she wants to be on the SSC [School Site Council] and not do anything else... wants to know where the money is going...and how it gets her kid into college. Then you have the mom who is like, "I just want my kid to have fun! And I want to have fun while I'm doing it!" You know, that's where there's going to be a clash.

Respondents framed their answers to questions regarding level of education and aggressive behaviors in one of three ways. One explanation was that women with a Ph.D. or Ed.D. experienced aggression because aggressors were *intimidated* by the victim's higher degree. One woman with a Ph.D. explained her aggressive experiences this way: "Maybe I'm more intimidating than I think I am and people want to, their instinct is to, push back just on the basis that I have [a Ph.D.]."

The second explanation respondents gave was that women with a Ph.D. or Ed.D. were *more vocal* about their opinions and as a result were the victims of more aggression. Maria, a professor of psychology, believed that if you have a doctoral degree, "you are skilled and comfortable at giving voice to your opinions. You've been at school a long time and you have learned to do that." Reflecting on the relationship between her higher education degree and her aggression experiences, Maria laughed and said, "I fully recognize that I probably create my own problems."

A third explanation was that women with a Ph.D. or Ed.D. were *more apt to recognize and report* aggression more readily because of their education and training. Lily, a professor of cultural studies summarized her feelings this way:

If you're with a doctorate and if you're in academia as a teacher and all of that.... I think we are highly analytical, highly well trained people as a subgroup. I think we might be reporting more.... Because I study race, class and gender and do post-colonial studies, I saw the micro aggressions and I read the script very differently.

Other: Age, religion, and work experience. Sixteen participants (7.5%) indicated the prevalence of other factors—not included in the question prompt—that influenced their most aggressive experience. The un-prompted variables influencing the aggressive experiences with other female guardians at their children's schools were age, religion, and work experience. Women whose age, religion and work experience did not map on to what the school or parent

involvement group privileged were isolated from social plans, and school and parent volunteer activities. Unfortunately, many responses were not detailed. For example, the only two age responses were “Age” and “Younger than me”. Other categories were slightly more descriptive; regarding religion, one mother wrote: “We're not familiar with Catholicism, the holidays and traditions. I'm not really interested in participating in their holidays and traditions that take place outside of the school.” Because her religion did not match that of the other volunteers, this participant often felt slighted, ignored and excluded.

The most detailed responses came from participants noting the variations in volunteers' work experiences. One mother wrote,

The only thing [that may have influenced the aggressive experience] was that I had a lot of experience running a business so I knew a lot about marketing and how to manage projects. I think these women didn't have that kind of experience so they might have felt threatened.

The participant went on to say that as a result of feeling threatened, the aggressive women wrongly accused her, humiliated and teased her, and gossiped about her.

Work experience—or rather, the lack of work experience—surfaced during the interviews as well. Kathleen, for example, spoke at length about how the lack of managerial experience affected dynamics between mothers at her children's school: the two leaders of her school's PTA “seemed to be grappling with how to manage a large team and how to delegate and hold people accountable for delivering those things.... [this] resulted in cutting back on programs because they felt they couldn't manage it.” I asked Kathleen why she believed the women did not delegate duties or ask for help. Kathleen was quiet for a few moments and then said, “When I think I was still aggravated and annoyed... I might have said, ‘Well, there's a control issue and they need power.’ [Now] I'm going to say, ‘I don't think they have the skills...of delegating...and holding people accountable’.” Kathleen went on to say that as a result of cutting back on volunteer programs and not managing them well, problems arose between the

PTA leaders—both white non-working women—and other parents. The first programs to be cut were the after-school inclusive programs; Kathleen explained that those programs were purposefully designed to include the diverse families in the community. The PTA leaders created programs that privileged parents who looked like them—White and unemployed. These actions—presumably caused by well-meaning volunteers with no managerial experience—caused waves of problems for parents throughout the school.

In summary, sixteen survey participants provided a few un-prompted variables—age, religion, and work experience—as factors influencing their aggressive experiences with other female guardians in their children’s schools. These women believed that their differences in age, religion and work experience caused other female guardians to be aggressive towards them because they—the participants—were different from the aggressors in these areas. Moreover, these differences were sometimes seen as a threat, and therefore resulted in further aggressive actions.

Ideology. The quantitative analysis revealed that women who were “extremely liberal” were statistically the most likely to experience or report aggression from other female guardians at their children’s schools. The qualitative analysis also revealed that political ideology mattered in shaping aggression but only two interview participants (and no survey participants) pointed to this factor; in part because few interviewees had sufficient time to answer the question.

Tracy—a moderate conservative—believed that all women *experience* aggression from other female guardians regardless of their political ideology. She also believed, however, that extremely liberal women would be reporting more aggression because they were *more unsatisfied* with their personal lives. In short, she believed that extremely liberal women who became mothers were more petulant. She said,

[Maybe] the liberal parents that are reporting being bullied [because they are] in that sort of state of dissatisfaction because they're stay at home moms and that wasn't really what

their expectation of their life was. Are they thinking, "I should be out in the workforce with my husband and/or spouse?"

The other respondent, Aliah (a political moderate) had a different explanation for the statistical significance of extremely liberal women reporting more aggression. She believed that extremely liberal women were reporting more aggression because they were actually experiencing more aggression due to the current political climate; a political climate in which a right wing conservative president rules in conjunction with a legislative branch dominated by right wing congress men and women. Though she indicated being a political "moderate" in the survey, during her the interview Aliah said, "As a liberal in a state that went red in the last election," she could not express her political views "freely" without the danger of indirect aggressive acts such as gossip about her and her family and exclusion from social activities. She said,

In the [conservative] community that I lived in, you weren't supposed to step out the box on those types of things. You weren't supposed to go to the women's march and even if you went you certainly shouldn't share that.... You could say that that [sort of liberal action] was just outside the way [the townspeople] think, outside the [conservative] box that everybody is supposed to conform and live in.... I do feel bad for the folks that are extremely liberal.

In summary, though "extremely liberal" was a variable noted in the quantitative study predictive of explaining the reporting of aggressive behaviors from other mothers, differences in political ideology was not a factor mentioned by women in their short-answer responses explaining the causes of aggression. Moreover, only two interview participants provided information to elucidate the quantitative finding. Of the two explanations given, one said that extremely liberal women reported more aggression because they were more unsatisfied with their personal lives, and the other explained that extremely liberal women reported more aggression because they experienced more aggression due to the current political climate.

Summary of qualitative results for survey participants' demographics. Fifty-nine percent of female guardians (n=223) who completed the survey experienced at least one aggressive act from another female guardian from their children's schools; of those, 52% (n=116) responded to the short answer survey prompt: *In what ways (if any) did (1) culture, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) race or (5) level of education influence the challenging experience?* Magnitude and thematic coding analyses demonstrated that female guardians believed income, race and employment to be the most significant factors influencing the most challenging experiences with other female guardians. There was not, however, a particular variable—neither income, race nor employment status—that was significantly correlated to aggression. What *did* matter to the survey participants was that they were *different* from their aggressors in one (or more) of those categories. When the victim's self-identifying factors did not map on to what the school or lead-volunteers preferred or privileged, women felt ignored, excluded and at times humiliated.

Summary for research question 2b: Survey participants' demographics. In response to research question 2 (b), quantitative and qualitative results slightly differed. Quantitative analysis identified three demographic factors as significantly correlated to aggressive experiences: women's level of *education*, *race*, and *ideological baring*. Other factors such as women's age, household income, employment status, primary language and income compared to other families in her children's schools were not significantly correlated to her aggressive experiences. Qualitative analyses, however, demonstrated that female guardians believed *income*, *race* and *employment* to be the most significant factors influencing the most challenging experiences with other female guardians; although level of education, age, religion, and work experience were also mentioned as possible contributing factors to the challenging experiences. Moreover, qualitative analysis revealed that most women believed the aggression resulted from

the demographic *differences* between themselves and the aggressor; feeling different often meant feeling ignored, excluded and humiliated.

For aggressive experiences to occur, however, there must be a system that allows the aggression to exist. As one interviewee noted: “Populations of things respond to the environment that they are in.” As such, the following section contains an analysis of survey participants’ and interviewees’ explanations of the structures, cultures and people that created, supported or challenged aggressive environments.

Question 2c: Structure, Culture, and Agency.

In response to research question 2 part (c)—To what extent do structural, cultural or agentic factors account for aggressive experiences?—qualitative analysis revealed structures, cultures and individuals’ behaviors influenced the day-to-day interactions between parents with children in grades K-12. The purpose of the following three subsections is to demonstrate how women believed that each of these factors supported or challenged inequality and aggression between parents.

Structure. Structures influence social action by either enabling or challenging social inequality and inter-personal aggression. As study participants and researchers have found, influential structures may be either tangible (e.g. a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) committee) or intangible (e.g. a school’s parent involvement policies) (L. Hubbard & C. Hands, 2011). The participants’ responses indicated that experiences of aggression and inequality were connected to structures that existed at multiple levels: federal, state, district, school and parent organizations. The following discussion is of the structures that these women participated in and used to explain their experiencing of aggression with other female guardians.

Federal and state. Participants wrote and spoke about national policies and structures that they believe influenced their aggressive experiences. For example, the need for dual income

households, longer commutes for work and affordable housing, the outsourcing of jobs and importation of workers, and the “dying coal towns” across the country all contributed to the inter-parental aggression. One parent, for example, noting the increasing need in the United States for dual income households wrote, “My husband and I both have to work, we can’t make those meetings [in the middle of the day] at the school.” Another mother wrote about the longer commutes required for “good work” and “affordable housing”; she said, “I can’t drive from home to school to work, *and* volunteer, [as a result] I get left out [of parent involvement opportunities]” (emphasis hers). As mentioned earlier, an interview participant—Lily—noted how the outsourcing of jobs and the importation of workers affected her family throughout her daughters’ schooling: “There is a fundamental resentment in the [American] community against immigrants in the high-tech sector.... We were seen as these interlopers, and took away jobs from white people.” Another interviewee--Briana-- spoke about the “dying oil and gas towns;” causing her and her family to move several times because of her husband’s work in the oil and gas industry. She noted how as a result coal-working families moving from place to place, parents in that industry remain “distant” from each other knowing that families will not be there for long. Briana said, “[There are] dying states and communities.... There’s a lot of transient folks ...like everybody’s kind of gone.... We don’t have stable volunteers,” and as a result, parents do not “invest in friendships” or “trust each other.”

Districts. School district policies have also influenced parents’ interactions with other parents. For several minority survey participants, district policies and structures that privileged the dominant culture caused them to feel excluded, ignored and humiliated by parents who knew how to navigate that dominant culture. This was the case for Dallia, a low-income, non-US native whom I had the privilege to interview. Dallia has worked with large school districts in California and is an expert in California laws and policies affecting minority and refugee

students and their families. Dallia explained that in theory, the California education laws and policies are meant to support all families equally. For example, as recently as 2014, California instituted the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) with built-in mandates for access and equality in parent-involvement opportunities. In practice, Dallia explained how the 400-page document with complex terminology advantages white middle class parents. She explained,

[Law makers] are expecting parents to go through that...and attend the meetings [that decide the policies] but not a lot of parents know it exists or can read it or can attend the LCAP meetings. [English speaking parents with resources] take advantage of this. If there is no opposition, they can do whatever they want.

According to Dallia, what they want is to shape the policies that support their interests.

As structures allow for families with privilege to gain more access to knowledge and resources, benefits may compound for them and for their children. Based on participants' responses—including Dallia's—I created figure 7 to illustrate the pattern of compounding privilege. In the following section, I further discuss this illustration, specifically as it represents compounding privileges because of schools and parent organizations' policies.

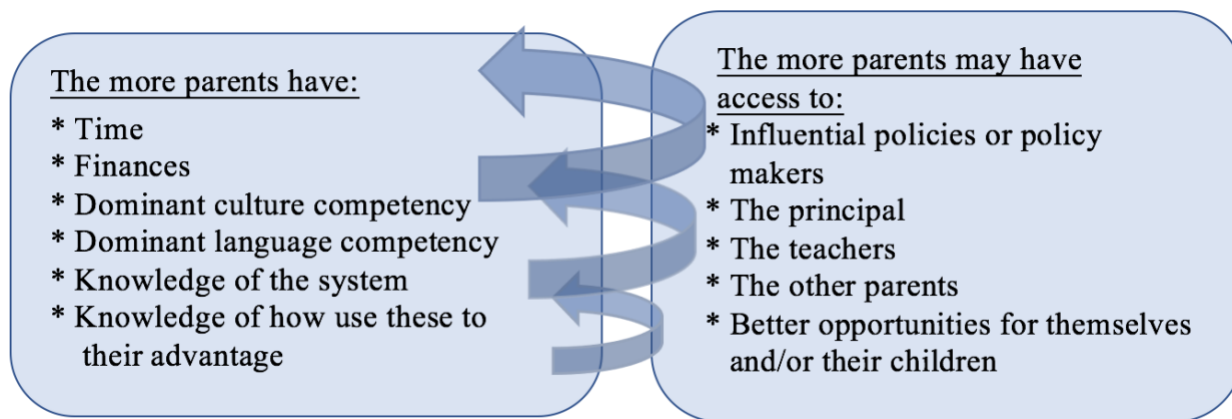


Figure 7. Patterns of compounding privilege.

I then asked Dallia if there was an office or staff dedicated to providing information and support for parents. She responded by listing several district resources that at one time supported

diverse families; these resources, she explained, no longer exist because of financial problems in California and her school district. Dallia explained that there is now only “one person and two assistants... [that] are supposed to do the work of all those [previously existing parent support programs]. “One man and two assistants,” she said, are tasked with “professional development, parent involvement, family and community engagement, and cultural sensitivity training.” Dallia sighed and said, “Yes, there is someone who could help [a parent] like me, ... but he has a lot of work and doesn’t have a lot of staff.” To access the resources her family needed, Dallia became a “squeaky wheel” and drew “a lot of attention” to herself. This made her enemies with not only school and district employees, but also with other parents frustrated by her persistent requests for the schools and district to follow laws and allocate resources for diverse families, English Language Learners and minority students.

Dallia’s interview demonstrated a common theme among minority survey participants: district policies and structures often privileged one language, culture, or income above others, and—as a result—caused minority parents to feel excluded and ignored by parents whom the district’s structures and policies reward.

Schools and parent organizations. Study participants had quite a bit to say regarding how schools and parent organizations were structured in such a way as to foster inequality and conflict between families. Participants from all over the country spoke about a group of women their schools or parent organizations privileged. Many schools and parent involvement organizations, the women noted, were structured in such a way as to reward women who *have access* to resources (such as time, finances, transportation, childcare and dominant culture competency) and knowledge of *how to use* those resources to their advantage. As demonstrated in figure 7, participants also spoke about how privileged parent volunteers’ benefits compounded: parents the system privileged had greater access to teachers and principals, to

volunteer opportunities, to each other, and to valuable information—like which teacher is the best for that grade and which coach’s team to sign up for. Parents with privileges such as these, then, also had the information and leverage to ensure that, for example, their child’s favorite activity had the funding it needed and that their child was in the best teacher’s room or with the best coach. As privileged parents gained more access to knowledge and resources, benefits for their children compounded. Parents who were disenfranchised felt that not only were those with privilege aggressive (by excluding and ignoring others), but that those with privilege became even more aggressive when parents challenged the system or those supporting it. Naturally, participants then noted that these challenges caused further aggression among the various parent populations.

Among the structural problems participants noted were: meeting times that were not conducive for working-parents or multi-child families; lack of diversity in parent-leadership groups—i.e. parents that were of a similar working status or race; lack of cultural or diversity awareness training—i.e. parents who do not know how to be inclusive, or even have the awareness that they are being exclusive; lack of parliamentary, managerial or accounting experience when dealing with—for example—seven hundred families and thousands of dollars in fundraising; and structures that allow for conflict of interest. Please see appendix C for a full list of participants’ statements regarding school and parent involvement structures.

One interviewee, Kathleen used the term *echo chamber* to explain how the structure of her children’s parent involvement groups led to inter-parental problems. Kathleen explained how policies and structures did not exist in the parent organizations to ensure diversity of any kind. She said that as a parent “you want affirmation” and “no conflict” and so “you surround yourself with like-minded people with similar ideas....and [as a result] people get disconnected

[from people not like them].” Kathleen believed that if structures do not ensure diversity, then they foster echo chambers that cause disconnection and aggression between parents.

Another interviewee, Emma, spoke about her school’s PTA structure allowing teachers who were also parents to be in the PTA. Because of this policy, her most aggressive experiences were from teachers that were also parents; she wrote, “We have six teachers in the PTA that are also parents... and [all the other parents] are afraid of speaking out.” Emma explained that she and other parents were afraid that if they did not agree to what the teacher-parents wanted, the teachers would retaliate against her children and the other parents’ children. Because of both faulty structures, and the absence of specific structures to ensure support for a diverse parent group, some parent organizations breed the discord within the very organizations meant to promote collaboration.

Another parent, Dalia, also explained how school structures that allowed privilege and access fostered friction between parents. She spoke at length about the School Site Council (SSC) at her children’s schools.⁷ Much like the parents who could access the LCAP meetings, the parents who could access the SSC meetings had a voice (and votes) for their children’s programs, while parents who did not have access to the SSC watched as funding was transferred away from programs that would help their children—for example—special-needs or English language learner programs. Dalia said,

If there are no parents representing [different interest from the privileged ones], then [the privileged parents] get to move the money where they want. I’m not saying they do it on purpose because they don’t like [other families] or English language learners or they don’t care. No, it’s that sometimes they don’t understand what [other families] need. If I am very involved with kids with IEP [Individualized Educational Plan], then I understand their needs.... So, if you are not among these [different] groups, you can never

⁷ Several states have structures and policies in place to ensure parent involvement and the representation of parents’ interests in decision-making. California, for example, mandates schools have a School Site Council (SSC) consisting of the principal, teachers, school staff and parents that develop, review and evaluate school improvement programs and budgets (<http://pubs.cde.ca.gov/tcsii/ch9/sscldrshp.aspx>).

understand or get a better understanding of their needs. So, what happens? [The people who can be there] vote on the money and it goes where they want.

While structures continue to exist that alienate some parents (e.g. meetings held during working hours by untrained volunteers) and privilege others (e.g. resource-rich women recruiting similar-minded friends), parent relationships continue to be strained in the very organizations that are meant to support families and promote parent collaboration. Faulty organizational structures do not stand, however, unless there exists the people and culture to support them. The following sections demonstrate how participants used *culture* to explain inter-parental conflict, and how various women used their individual *agency* to support or challenge aggressive systems.

Culture. When women used culture to explain why aggressive interactions occurred between female guardians, they wrote about the individualistic culture within schools and parent organizations, the individualistic culture trends of the United States, or the judgment-culture created and fostered by social media.

The individualistic culture in parent organizations was explained by one interviewee when referring to the PTA at her children's school. She said,

What has become sort of the culture of our PTA is it's a bunch of parents who are doing things for their own specific child. "My kid really wants to have a math club and therefore I'm going to start a math club, and the PTA is going to pay for it." You can see how that made some parents upset. You know?

Many women attributed the parent involvement group's culture (and in some cases even a school's culture) to the few "most involved" parents—often referred to as "the clique"—running the parent group. One mother, for example wrote about how parent group leaders that were superficial and unwelcoming caused the parent involvement groups (and the entire school) to feel superficial and unwelcoming to her and her family. She said, "The moms at my kids' school can be cliquey and superficial.... It is hard to make friends there [because] it makes the whole [school] culture not very welcoming."

I pressed some of the interviewees to explain why such cultures existed in schools and parent organizations. In response, women spoke about national trends and social media affecting day-to-day parent interactions. Emma and Lily, for example, both spoke about the powerful effect of national cultural currents; they noted the national rise in anti-minority and anti-immigrant sentiments and their effects on parent organizations. Everyone, including national leaders, Emma explained, is supporting a culture of looking out for themselves. How then, I asked her, does that affect parent organizations. Emma responded, “Well, shit runs downhill. You know?”

Other participants spoke about the role of social media. Katie, for example, addressed the conflict-inducing culture of social media. Her response summarizes the conversations that I had with other parents indicating that social media encourages judgment, unsolicited advice and opinions, and how all of that carries into parent volunteer groups. This is a portion of her interview:

Katie: I see that whole idea of should, like you should be doing this for your child, you should be doing that for your child. I see that playing out a lot with in my volunteering, it can be so damaging.... My point is that we have this feeling that we have the right to make a judgment about what someone else is doing as a parent, and really, unless someone is causing damage to their child it's really not our business.

Mara: Where do you think that comes from? Where does it come from that people feel entitled to judge others?

Katie: I think social media is a big part of this. I had this conversation with my mom who was raising us in the 80's and unless you were doing something in public people didn't really know what was going on in your home. Now we're sharing pictures and observations and videos of our kids constantly.... I think that part of [our culture] is that a lot of parents are looking for that outside affirmation that what they are doing is okay. And in that pursuit of affirmation, we tend to allow other people's judgment to substitute for our own, which makes us vulnerable to other people judging us and makes us more likely to judge other people. Because if you feel like you've done all this research on the best car seat for your baby or you've made this decision to breastfeed.... And you feel like you've made the best choice and you see someone making a different choice, you are more likely to place judgment on the choices they've made because they've made the wrong choice in making the opposite choice from you.

In sum, when women used culture to explain aggressive interactions between female guardians, they cited the individualistic culture within schools and parent organizations, the individualistic culture trends of the United States, and the judgment-culture created and fostered by social media. Despite the influence of culture, how different women *chose* to behave towards each other and *chose* to foster either inclusivity or exclusivity was essentially at the heart of each survey response and interview.

Agency. Parent involvement structures and the cultures that exist within these structures are shaped by the agency—or actions—of the people that participate in them. Organizational structures and cultures—such as schools and parent involvement groups—are “driven by the individual *actions* or *agency* of those involved;” some research suggests, individual agency has “affected change or [become] part of the reproduction of inequality” (Hands & Hubbard, 2011b, p.5). Participants in this study explained that it was either their own or an individual’s (or a group of individuals’) agency more than any other variable that constructed inequality and aggression among parents. In this section, I report on the qualitative analysis regarding agency to explain from the parents’ perspective *why* they believed aggressive actions were taken against them.

Aggressor’s agency. When mothers were asked about the challenging experiences they faced, 65% of them (n=148) expressed the common sentiment that the aggression occurred because the aggressor was different from them in some way. For example, a mother who works full-time wrote about how the difference in employment status across parents influenced her interactions with other female guardians in her children’s schools. She said, “Because I worked full time, I often felt not included since many of the mothers [who did not work] were available during the day and were much closer to each other.” In addition to employment status, participants cited several other differences that explained the aggression that they experienced

from other female guardians. Some of those differences included *physical* differences; as one mother said, “I have bright pink hair... [I was] ignored until my daughter’s graduation.” Another mother noted *race/ethnicity* as a factor; she said, “Most of the parents are Hispanic...there has been some exclusion because I am not [Hispanic].” A few participants also mentioned *age*; one mother wrote, “I am younger than most of the moms at my daughter’s school... [because of this] I sometimes feel judged/excluded.” Other women mentioned *income* differences as an explanation for the aggressive behaviors from other female guardians; one mother wrote, “I was excluded and looked down upon...because unlike [the aggressors] I cannot afford fancy clothes or enjoy their ‘lifestyle’.” Other women noted *religion* as the aggression-causing difference; one woman wrote, “We practice a different religion than [the aggressors] ...they openly make comments about us sinning, either to our faces or to our children.” Three women wrote about going through a *divorce* and feeling excluded by other parents because of their family’s changing situation; she wrote, “I’m in the middle of a difficult divorce resulting from domestic violence... [as a result, aggressors] made me feel further isolated.” Participants also used the differences of *years at a school* to explain their aggressive experiences; many women wrote something similar to this participant’s answer: “[Aggressors] ignore new parents [like us] ...they are not welcoming of people they don’t know.” Women also wrote about how differences in occupation led to aggressive interactions; one mother wrote, “I was a full time graduate student, [the aggressor] admitted to struggling to see why I was challenged with time.” In sum, participants felt that these differences caused female guardians to act in ways that not only were demeaning or alienating, but also supported inequality in parent involvement.

Participant’s agency. In addition to aggressors’ actions, some participants explained how their own actions led to aggressive experiences with other female guardians. Some mothers accounted for their own actions by explaining that they—the participants—did “not make the

effort” or “not make the time” to “stop by with my latte” and “chit chat” with the women that had made them feel excluded or ignored.

Interestingly, when most participants spoke of their actions that led to aggressive experiences, they referred to actions that *challenged* other female guardians’ behavior; behavior that participants believed supported unjust or inappropriate treatment of either their own or someone else’s children. Ana, for example, knew that choosing to “stay out of the fray” and “not giving voice to things I believe in”—for example, opposing a school assembly that “basically was making fun of Native Americans,” would have meant less aggressive experiences. Ana said, “If I speak out against [something like] that, I get slammed.... alienated, estranged and judged harshly.” Dallia, as mentioned earlier, believed that if she was not adamant about her family and other immigrant families’ rights in schools, she would have had caused less aggression to be directed towards her.

In sum, participants explained female guardians’ aggressive behavior as a result of both other female guardians’ agency as well as their own. Participants believed organizational structures (e.g. middle-of-the-day meetings inaccessible to full-time working parents) and the cultures created within these structures (e.g. parent committees that served a particular group of parents) were created and responded to by the actions of the individuals who participated; these actions served to support inequality.

Summary of question 2c: Structure, culture, and agency. Participants’ responses demonstrated how structures, cultures and agency constructed each other reflexively and influenced the day-to-day interactions between parents with children in grades K-12 – actions that supported inequality and aggression between parents. Structures that privileged some parents while excluding others, individualistic parent-group cultures that served the interests of privileged parents, an individualistic cultural trend in the United States, the pervasive judgment

culture fostered by social media, and the actions of both the participants themselves or those of other female guardians all factored into explanations for parental aggression. Figure 8 provides a visual depiction of the findings for research question 2 (c).

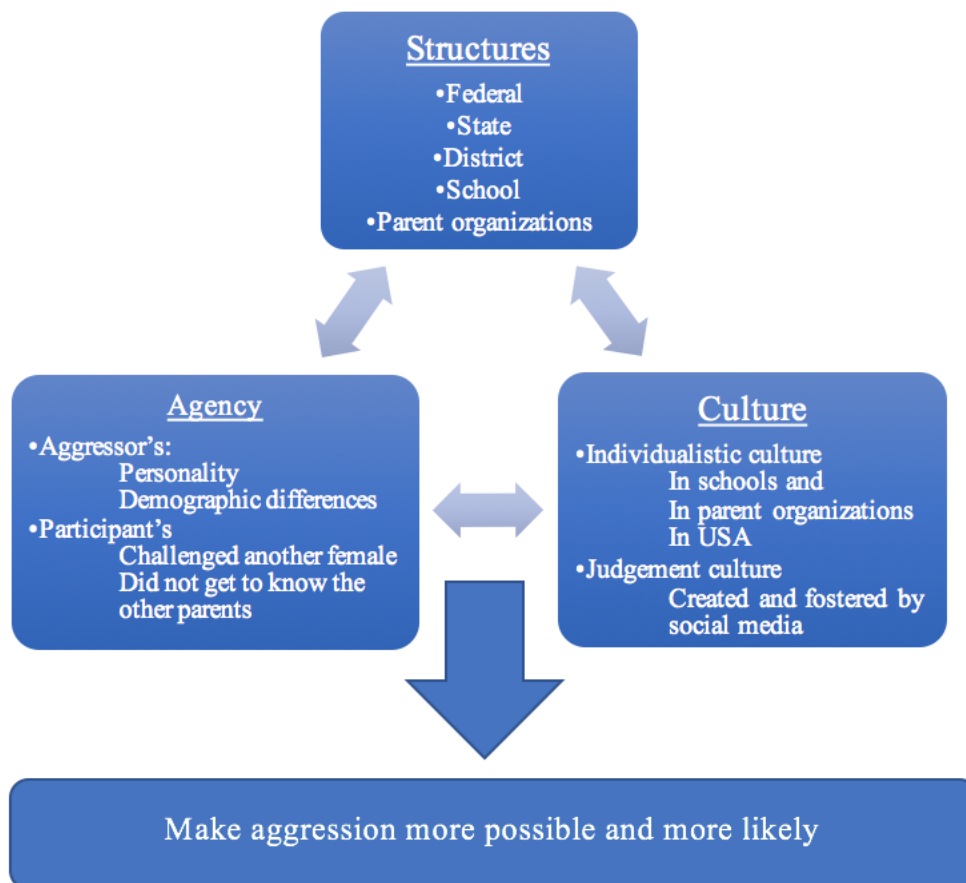


Figure 8. Aggression enabling systems.

Review of Results from Research Question 2.

This research question addressed whether demographic variables or contextual factors could account for the aggressive experiences women experienced from other female guardians in their children's schools. I created figure 9 to illustrate the full complexity of the demographic variables and contextual factors influencing aggression among female guardians in their children's schools. Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that demographic variables were significant in influencing the aggressive experiences between female guardians.

Specifically, logistic regression analyses demonstrated that women with a Ph.D. or Ed.D., women who identified as Asian, and women who identified as either extremely liberal or ideological moderate were more likely to have reported or perceived aggressive acts.

Magnitude and thematic coding, on the other hand, demonstrated that female guardians believed *income*, *race* and *employment* to be the most significant factors influencing the most aggressive experiences with other female guardians. Level of education, age, religion, and work experience were also mentioned as possible contributing factors to the challenging experiences. What most seemed to concern women was that they were *different* from their aggressors in one (or more) of those demographic categories. It became clear that when the victim's self-identifying factors did not map on to what the school or lead-volunteers preferred or privileged, women felt ignored, excluded and at times humiliated

Qualitative analysis further revealed the principle role that structures, cultures and individuals' actions play in influencing aggression between female guardians. Women explained inter-parental aggression as a result of: structures that privileged some parents while excluding others; individualistic parent-group cultures that served the interests of privileged parents; the individualistic cultural trend in the United States; the pervasive judgment culture fostered by social media; and the actions of both the participants and those of other female guardians.

Having now established that women experienced aggression from other female guardians from their children's schools, and having examined how demographic and contextual factors may have influenced the aggressive experience, it remained to be seen whether inter-female-guardian aggression affected women's involvement in their children's schools. This subject is addressed by the next research question: how do acts of aggression from other female guardians influence women's involvement in their children's schools?

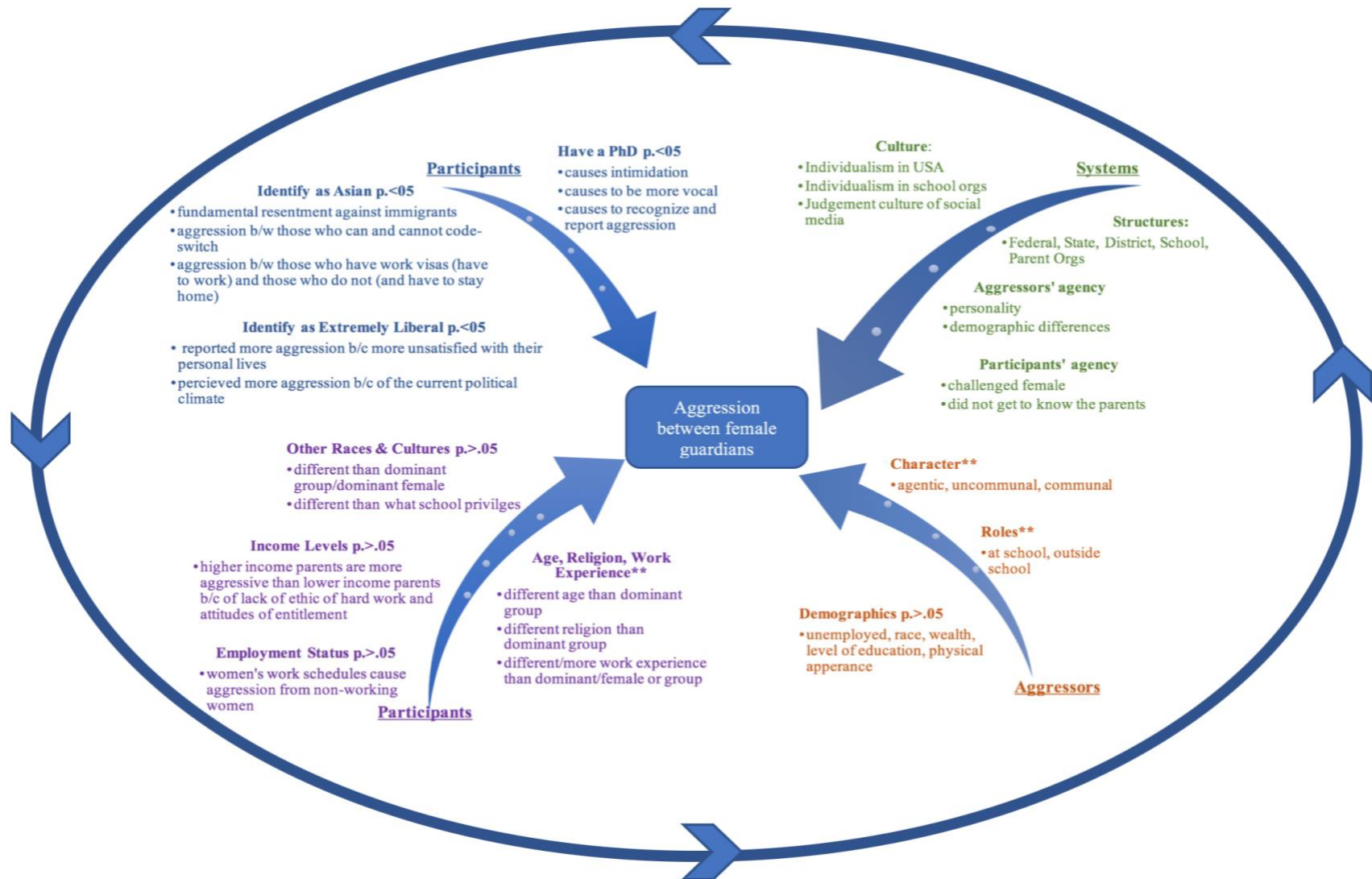


Figure 9. Visual display of the results for research question two.

Note.**Religion, work experience, character, and roles were not measured quantitatively.

Research Question 3: Impact of Aggressive Acts on Female Guardians' Involvement

The third research question in this study asked:

To what extent does aggression among female guardians impact their involvement in their children's schools?

The purpose of this research question was to determine if aggression influenced women's involvement in their children's schools, and if so, what were the effects of this aggression on their involvement. Data was analyzed quantitatively—using logistic regression analyses, and qualitatively—using categorical and thematic coding. Four multiple-choice survey questions were used to assess increased or decreased level of involvement quantitatively, while responses to one survey short-answer question were used for the qualitative analysis. The following discussion is divided into three parts: descriptive statistics, qualitative analysis, and logistic regression analysis.

Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Aggression on Involvement.

After indicating that they perceived aggression from a female guardian from their children's schools, women were asked to answer the prompt: "As a result of these experiences, I volunteered ____ for my child's/children's school(s)." Response options were: (-3) Much less, (-2) Moderately less, (-1) Slightly less, (0) About the same, (1) Slightly more, (2) Moderately more, and (3) Much more. Similarly, after describing the most aggressive experience with other female guardians, women were asked the following prompt: "As a result of this particular experience, I volunteered ____ for my child's/children's school(s)." Once again, the response options were: (-3) Much less, (-2) Moderately less, (-1) Slightly less, (0) About the same, (1) Slightly more, (2) Moderately more, and (3) Much more.

Interestingly, eighteen women (9.2%) gave different responses to “as a result of *these* experiences” and “as a result of *this* experience”. For example, two women indicated that as a result of *these* aggressive experiences they volunteered “about the same” (0). When later prompted with “as a result of *this* experience”, their responses were that they volunteered “much less” (-3). This may be explained two ways. First, it may indicate that for eleven women, the overall effect of the aggressive experiences did not alter their involvement as much as their volunteering immediately following the most aggressive experience. Alternatively, it may indicate that after recalling the most aggressive experience, women remembered reducing their volunteer time with more significance than when they were thinking of their aggressive experiences in general.

As may be seen in Table 13, descriptive statistics revealed that most women (57%, n=111) volunteered for their children’s schools “about the same” after aggressive experiences. Approximately, 35% percent decreased their volunteering, and 8% increased their volunteering after aggressive experiences. Table 14 illustrates the descriptive data in detail.

Table 13

Frequencies in Modification of Volunteer Time after Perceiving Aggression: Overview

Modification of volunteer time	As a result of <i>these</i> experiences		As a result of <i>this</i> <i>particular</i> experience	
Less (-3) (-2) (-1)	n=66	(34%)	n=52	(33%)
Same (0)	n=111	(57%)	n=89	(59%)
More (3) (2) (1)	n=18	(8%)	n=11	(7%)
Total	n=195	(100%)	n=152	(100%)

Despite acts of aggression from other female guardians, most women claimed not to have altered the amount of volunteering they did for their schools. How might this be explained? Unfortunately, I was unable to ask interviewees about their volunteer time and their thoughts on these quantitative findings. In the survey, however, women were prompted to describe in detail how aggressive experiences affected their involvement in their children's schools. In the following section, responses of the 181 women who answered this open-ended question are examined.

Table 14

Frequencies in Modification of Volunteer Time After Perceiving Aggression: Detailed Responses

Modification of volunteer time	As a result of <i>these</i> experiences		As a result of <i>this</i> <i>particular</i> experience	
Much less (-3)	n=26	(13%)	n=25	(16%)
Moderately less (-2)	n=12	(6%)	n=9	(6%)
Slightly less (-1)	n=28	(14%)	n=18	(12%)
About the same (0)	n=111	(57%)	n=89	(59%)
Slightly more (1)	n=9	(4%)	n=6	(4%)
Moderately more (2)	n=0	(0%)	n=3	(2%)
Much more (3)	n=9	(4%)	n=2	(1%)
Total	n=195	(100%)	n=152	(100%)

Qualitative Analysis of the Impact of Aggression on Involvement.

Immediately following the multiple-choice question “As a result of these experiences, I volunteered [much less, moderately less, slightly less, same, slightly more, moderately more, much more] for my child's/children's school(s),” participants had the opportunity to respond the short-answer survey prompt: “Please describe in detail how these experiences affected your involvement in your child's/children's school(s).” One hundred eighty-one (92%) women who

answered the multiple-choice question, also answered the short-answer survey prompt. Twenty-six women did not answer the question and were excluded from the analysis, leaving 155 (80%) responses for thematic coding. Responses that did answer the question were grouped into six categories, as illustrated in Table 15: as a result of aggression, women (1) did not alter their involvement, (2) altered where and when they involved, (3) reduced the amount of volunteering time, (5) stopped volunteering, or (6) increased volunteering.

Table 15

Frequencies in Short-Answer Responses for Modifications in Volunteer Activities

Category	Number of times mentioned	Percent	Sample Responses
<i>Did not alter involvement</i>	81	52	<p>“[Aggressive acts] did not affect my involvement at all.”</p> <p>“None. I [volunteered] for my child and the school's needs, not my feelings.”</p>
<i>Altered where and when volunteered</i>	28	18	<p>“I try not allow the actions of others affect how I volunteer, however, it has driven the activities I choose to volunteer at (SSC rather than PTA).”</p> <p>“I was still involved, but chose to help teachers directly...instead of the horrible PTA moms!”</p>
<i>Lessened volunteer time</i>	26	17	<p>“[I] don't volunteer much now.”</p> <p>“I pulled back from volunteering with our school's primary fundraiser.”</p>
<i>Stopped volunteering</i>	11	7	<p>“I have stopped volunteering altogether and only attend minimal functions to avoid conflict.”</p> <p>“We stopped trying to help and volunteer at all.”</p>
<i>Volunteered more</i>	9	6	<p>“Dealing with moms like this only makes me want to volunteer more and get involved.”</p> <p>“Pushed me to want to be more visible and seen as an asset to the school and my children's experience there.”</p>
<i>Total</i>	155	100	

Most women (52%, n=81) who responded the open-ended question about the effects of aggression on their involvement in their children's schools, wrote simple, short-phrases regarding how their involvement *did not change*. For example, some women wrote that aggressive experiences "Did not affect" their involvement in her children's schools, while others simply responded by writing: "None" or "N/A". Interestingly, the women who wrote longer responses generally included something about their children. For example, one woman wrote, "I tried not to let that [aggressive behavior] get in the way of doing something positive for my child or his class." Similarly, another mother wrote, "I was still involved because my kids are more important [than the aggressive experiences]." It appears that for many women, doing something positive for their children—like volunteering in the school—mediated the effects of aggression on volunteer time.

The second most frequently mentioned theme (n=28, 18%) came from the women who *altered where and when* they participated in volunteer activities. Some women wrote about altering their activities to "avoid certain groups of women" while others wrote about altering their activities to "avoid the drama." Other women wrote about changing from group activities to individual volunteer opportunities. For example, one mother wrote, "I now stick to [activities] that are individual volunteer opportunities such as classroom support, where I don't have to collaborate with a large group of moms." In sum, rather than altering the amount of time dedicated to volunteering for their children's schools, twenty-seven women chose to alter the time and place of their involvement.

The third category came from the responses of the 26 women (17%) who *reduced* the amount of time spent volunteering for the school because of the aggressive behaviors from other female guardians. For example, one mother wrote, "I pulled back from volunteering with our

school's primary fundraiser [after the aggressive acts]." Interestingly, one mother's response was more detailed than the others were, and it included how the teacher's request for volunteers kept her and her family involved in school events. She wrote, "When I didn't feel welcome at PTO events, our family stopped participating in a lot of them and I stopped volunteering unless a teacher asked for volunteers."

The fourth category came from the responses of the women who *stopped* volunteering for their children's schools because of the perceived aggressive behaviors from other female guardians (n=11, 7%). These women's explanations were brief and to the point. For example, one woman wrote, "I gave up wanting to do more," another wrote, "I basically stopped volunteering," and yet another responded by writing, "We stopped trying to help and volunteer at all." Only two women explained their responses in detail. One said she chose to "stop coming to help out altogether" because she did not want to hear the women talking about her; and the second chose to "stop volunteering altogether" because she wanted to "avoid conflict" with the other female guardians.

The final category came from the nine women (6%) who explained how the aggressive behaviors had *increased* their involvement. The nine responses had a similar theme: the women felt that if they increased their involvement, they would make more connections and therefore feel less excluded or ignored. For example, one mother who increased her involvement after experiencing aggressive acts from other female guardians explained that, "It seemed like [the aggressors] were all friends having a great time and it made me want to be a part of the group. Volunteering allowed me to meet the ladies one on one at different levels;" and, as a result, she was no longer excluded. She wrote, "I became part of the group." Another mother noted how she increased her volunteer time after the aggressive experiences because "I've tried to do more

to make connections” so that she did not feel “left out.” In their own ways, these women explained how an increase in their volunteer time helped reduce or mediate the aggressive experiences with other female guardians from their children’s schools.

In summary, one hundred fifty-five women responded to the short-answer survey prompt “*Please describe in detail how these experiences affected your involvement in your child’s/children’s school(s).*” Thematic coding of qualitative data led to six categories: (1) the women who said they did not alter their involvement, (2) the women who altered where and when they were involved, (3) those that reduced the amount of volunteering time, (4) those that stopped volunteering, and (5) those that increased volunteering for their children’s schools in response to aggression from other female guardians from their children’s schools.

Logistic Regression Analysis on the Modification of Volunteer Time and Participants’ Demographics

Following the descriptive analysis, logistic regression analysis was used to determine whether any correlation existed between modification in volunteer time and the respondent’s demographics. In each model, the modification in volunteer time was the dependent variable—Less=0, Same=1—and the women’s demographics were the independent variables.

Originally, a multinomial regression was the appropriate analysis method to analyze three binary variables: *less volunteering* (0), *same volunteering* (1) and *more volunteering* (2). However, of the women who responded to having volunteered more after perceiving aggression, only ten chose to answer demographic questions. These low sample numbers resulted in discarding—in this analysis—the responses for *more volunteering*, and proceeding with the binary logistic regression using the two remaining variables: where *less volunteering*=0 and *same volunteering*=1. Despite running various combinations of the demographic categories, none of

the variables proved to be significant at the $p < .05$ level. In other words, differences between women who volunteered less and those who volunteered at the same level were not associated with either age, household income level, number of children, employment status, employment in their children's schools or district, race/ethnicity, ideological baring, level of education, primary language, children's primary residence, and income compared to families in her children's schools.

Logistic Regression Analysis on the Modification of Volunteer Time and Aggressive Acts

Logistic regression analysis was also used to determine whether any correlation existed between more, same, or less volunteer time spent in children's schools and various aggressive acts. As before, in each model, the modification in volunteer time was the dependent variable. The independent variables in this round of regressions were the various aggressive acts women may have experienced. In the first set of regressions the three NAQ constructs (person related, work related, and physical intimidation) were used as independent variables. In the second set of regressions, the constructs were deconstructed and each of the fifteen aggressive acts were used as the independent variables. Once again, the more volunteering category was discarded and binary logistic regressions were used where less volunteering = 0 and same volunteering = 1.

Regressions using the three NAQ constructs. Three binary independent variables describing types of aggression were tested: person related aggression (excluded, ignored, humiliated, insulted, teased, ridiculed, gossiped about, wrongly accused, encouraged to stop volunteering), work related aggression (blocked from volunteer opportunities, blocked from information about the school, and blocked from information about volunteering for the school), and physically intimidating aggression (shouted at, threatened, and intimidated through physical

behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, or blocking the way).

Please refer to Table 5 for the frequency and average scores of these constructs.

Two of the three constructs proved to be significant: *work related* and *person related*. As may be seen from Table 16, both constructs were negatively correlated to the dependent variable (*modification in volunteer time*), meaning that women who experienced either work related aggression or person related aggression were significantly less likely to volunteer the same amount of time after experiencing aggressive acts from other female guardians.

Table 16

Binary Logistic Regressions of Two NAQ Constructs

Model #	Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
1	Work Related	-0.58	0.18	10.27	0.00	0.56
	Constant	0.79	0.20	15.07	0.00	2.20
2	Person Related	-0.17	0.06	8.06	0.00	0.85
	Constant	1.05	0.28	14.60	0.00	2.86

Note: Model 1: Note: Cox & Snell R square= .11, Nagelkerke R square= .14
Model 2: Cox & Snell R square= .07, Nagelkerke R square= .10

Regressions using the fifteen aggressive acts. During the second round of regressions, the NAQ constructs were deconstructed so that the fifteen aggressive behaviors in the NAQ could be considered as independent variables: excluded, ignored, humiliated, insulted, teased, ridiculed, gossiped about, shouted at, threatened, wrongly accused, blocked from information about volunteering, blocked from information about the school, blocked from volunteering, encouraged to stop volunteering, and intimidated through physical behaviors. Please refer to table six under research question one for their frequencies and average scores.

Both the standard and forward conditional methods were used to ascertain which aggressive actions would be significant in determining whether participants made any modification in their volunteer time. As mentioned previously, the forward conditional method

considered the multiple independent variables and ordered them according to which was most statistically significant in the model. Table 17 demonstrates these results: three aggressive behaviors proved to be significant ($p < .05$): *blocked from volunteering*, *encouraged to stop volunteering*, and *excluded*.

Table 17

Logistic Regression Results for Modification in Volunteer Time as the DV and Specific Aggressive Acts as IVs

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Blocked from information about volunteering	-1.92	0.60	10.12	0.00	0.15
Encouraged to stop volunteering	1.45	0.70	4.33	0.04	4.27
Excluded	-0.44	0.22	4.10	0.04	0.65
Constant	1.19	0.30	15.84	0.00	3.27

Note: Cox & Snell R square= .17, Nagelkerke R Square= .23

Women who were *encouraged to stop volunteering*, were statistically *more* likely to continue volunteering the same amount of time for their children's schools, while women who *were blocked from information about volunteering* and felt *excluded* by other female guardians, were significantly *less* likely to volunteer the same amount of time. Perhaps even more interesting, is that none of the other variables, including physical intimidation, were statistically associated with alterations in volunteer time.

There may be several explanations for this. A statistical explanation might be that many of the aggressive behaviors were highly correlated with each other and caused variables that might otherwise have been significant to cancel each other out. I therefore ran a two-tailed bivariate correlation of the fifteen aggressive behaviors; and, indeed, many had a Pearson Correlation (r) higher than .5. For example, *excluded* and *ignored* had an r of 0.827 ($p < 0.01$). In the highly correlated variable pairs (where $r > .5$), one of the variables was removed and the

regression was run again. For example, in the case of excluded and ignored, *excluded* had the higher *r* with remaining variables, and therefore removed, leaving *ignored* to be run in the next correlation. This was done eleven times—once for each set of highly correlated variables—starting with the highest correlated pair. This process left four variables that represented all the others: *ignored*, *humiliated*, *shouted at*, *threatened*, and *blocked from information about volunteering*. Interestingly, this last regression resulted in only *blocked from information about volunteering*, as statistically significant; see Table 18 below.

Table 18

Logistic Regression Results for Modification in Volunteer Time as the DV and Low-Pearson Correlation Aggressive Acts as IVs

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Blocked from information about volunteering	-1.65	0.47	12.12	0.00	0.19
Constant	0.76	0.20	14.92	0.00	2.14

Another method to determine variable correlation was to run dimension reduction (factor analysis). Factor analysis would demonstrate whether highly correlated aggressive behaviors would group into descriptive categories (or factors) that could then become new (aggregated) variables. Analytic software produced three compounds; after numerous attempts to recombine variables and running more logistic regressions with those combinations, the results were not any clearer or more parsimonious and were discarded.

Review of Results from Research Question 3

How then, are the results in Table 18 to be understood? Why would women who were blocked from volunteering and felt excluded be significantly less likely (than all other groups) to continue volunteering the same hours, while women who were encouraged to stop volunteering, continued volunteering the same amount of time? As mentioned above, I was unable to ask interviewees

about their volunteer time nor their thoughts on these quantitative findings. However, based on short answer responses throughout the survey and the feelings expressed by the interviewees, it seems likely that female guardians were tenacious and determined to do what they believed was in the best interest of their child; even if that meant continuing to volunteer after she had been explicitly told not to. Another possible interpretation explaining volunteer time is related to their motivation to protect their child from aggressors. In the following discussion of the final research question, I substantiate these claims using the women's responses to open-ended survey questions. First, however, I review the quantitative findings for how female guardians responded to aggressive behaviors, and whether their responses improved, worsened, or made no difference to the aggressive situation.

Research Question 4: Factors That Influenced Female Guardians' Ability to Navigate Aggressive Behaviors

The fourth research question in this study asked:

How did female guardians respond to aggressive behaviors, why did they choose those responses, and did their responses improve, worsen, or make no difference to the aggressive situation?

For answers to this question, data from three survey questions—one multiple-choice, two open-ended—were used; responses were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively (respectively). The quantitative analysis was based on the respondents' answers to a matrix-style multiple-choice question based on research by Keashley and Neuman (2013) and Briggs (2015). Women were asked to select which methods they used in response to the most aggressive experience with another female guardian from their children's schools, and whether they—the participants—believed those responses had altered the situation. Descriptive statistics were first used to

display the most frequently used responses and their perceived effects. Logistic regressions were then run to determine if correlations existed between demographic variables and the participants' responses to the aggression.

The qualitative analysis was based on the respondents' answers to two open-ended questions: first, women were asked to provide the reasons they chose (or did not choose) the responses in the multiple-choice prompt. Second, women were asked to provide the three factors that most helped them to navigate the most challenging situation with another female guardian from her children's schools. Categorical coding along with additional descriptive and comparative coding helped to identify codes and themes in the responses to both questions. The following discussion is divided into five sections: two sections of quantitative analysis, two sections of qualitative analysis, and a summary of the findings.

Quantitative Analysis

During the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics allowed for an initial assessment of the responses used after the most aggressive interaction with another female guardian, and whether women perceived that their strategies improved, worsened or had no effect on the situation. Logistic regressions were then run to examine the demographic variables that may have influenced women to deploy certain responses more or less often.

Descriptive statistics. After answering questions regarding aggressive experiences, women were prompted to answer questions about their responses to the aggressive behaviors. The first prompt was a multiple-choice matrix of eleven responses to aggressive behavior (as may be seen in Appendix C). As mentioned in chapter three, responses were created based on the research by Keashly and Neuman (2008) and Briggs (2015). The eleven prompts were: (1) Ignored it did nothing, (2) Talked with family/other parent/partner, (3) Talked with friends, (4)

Avoided the individual, (5) Talked to other parents in the same volunteer group, (6) Talked to other parents at the school not in the same volunteer group, (7) Talked to school staff, (8) Reduced number of volunteer hours for the school, (9) Talked to parents at different schools, (10) Stopped volunteering for the school, and (11) Transferred to another volunteer opportunity at the school. Participants could also fill in the box labeled “Other”. Of the 223 women who indicated having experienced at least one aggressive experience from other female guardians, 134 (60%) indicated having used at least one of the response methods provided by the prompt.

When reporting the effectiveness of each response category, women could choose either (0) did not use this approach, (1) used this approach and it worsened the situation, (2) used this approach and it made no difference to the situation, or (3) used this approach and it improved the situation. Table 19 illustrates the *number of participants who used that response*, what *valid percent* of participants reported using that response, and the number and percentage of respondents who believed their response made the situation *better*, *worse*, or *had no effect*. For example, 25 women (or 19% of the 134 participants who responded to this survey question) reported having “stopped volunteering for the school” in response to the most aggressive act from another female guardian; and, 14 (56%) of the women who chose to stop volunteering for the school, believed that this response made no difference to the situation.

Table 19

Frequencies of Responses Used and Perceived Effectiveness

Response	Number of participants who used this response	Valid Percent	Better (3)		No Effect (2)		Worse (1)	
			n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Ignored it did nothing	91	(68)	19	(21)	<i>70</i>	<i>(77)</i>	2	(2)
Only Ignored it, did nothing	26	(19)	7	(27)	<i>19</i>	<i>(73)</i>	0	(0)
Talked with family/ other parent/ partner	90	(67)	44	(49)	<i>45</i>	<i>(50)</i>	1	(1)
Talked with friends	90	(67)	42	(23)	<i>46</i>	<i>(51)</i>	2	(2)
Avoided the individual	72	(54)	26	(36)	<i>42</i>	<i>(58)</i>	4	(6)
Talked to other parents in the same volunteer group	53	(40)	<i>23</i>	<i>(43)</i>	21	(40)	9	(17)
Talked to other parents at the school not in the same volunteer group	51	(38)	<i>25</i>	<i>(49)</i>	21	(41)	5	(10)
Talked to school staff	40	(30)	<i>23</i>	<i>(58)</i>	10	(25)	7	(18)
Reduced number of volunteer hours for the school	37	(28)	13	(35)	<i>19</i>	<i>(51)</i>	5	(14)
Talked to parents at different schools	32	(24)	15	(47)	<i>16</i>	<i>(50)</i>	1	(3)
Stopped volunteering for the school	25	(19)	9	(36)	<i>14</i>	<i>(56)</i>	2	(8)
Transferred to another volunteer opportunity at the school	23	(17)	<i>15</i>	<i>(65)</i>	5	(22)	3	(13)
Other	12	(9)	3	(25)	<i>5</i>	<i>(42)</i>	4	(33)

Note. Highest percentages in each category are italicized.

As may be evident from Table 19, the most frequently used responses were not always the most effective. For example, the four most used responses were *ignored it did nothing*, *talked with family/other parent/partner*, *talked with friends*, and *avoided the individual*. Most women who used these responses, however, selected that *it made no difference to the situation* (2). Conversely, *transferred to another volunteer opportunity* was one of the least used strategies (n=23, 17%), but perceived as one of the most effective responses.

Though *ignored it did nothing* was the most frequently selected response (number of women=91, or 68% of the women who responded to this survey question), it should be noted that many women who chose *ignored it, did nothing*, also chose another response. For example, of the women who selected *ignored it, did nothing*, eighteen *talked with school staff*, twenty *reduced volunteer hours*, and seventeen *transferred to another volunteer opportunity*. When disaggregated, 26 women (19%) of those who responded to this survey question, *only* responded with *ignored it, did nothing*.

If aggregated, *talking to someone* would be the most frequently used strategy (n=122, 91%). Indeed, three of the *talking to* categories (*talked to other parents in the same volunteer group*, *talked to other parents in the school*, and *talked to school staff*) were among the most effective in making the aggressive situation better. It should be noted, however, that the remaining three *talking to* someone categories were among the least effective in making the situation better; most women who selected *talking with family/other parent/partner*, *talked with friends*, *talked to parents at different schools*, also selected that *it made no difference to the situation* (2).

Most surprising were the number of responses that largely made no difference to the situation. This calls for further analysis, particularly since I was unable to discuss these findings

during the interviews. In the following pages, I discuss the logistic regression analysis run to determine whether any relationship existed between participant or aggressor demographic information and the type of responses used, and the qualitative analysis that examined the explanations women gave for choosing the various responses.

Logistic regressions. Logistic regression analysis was used to determine whether any relationship existed between participant or aggressor demographic information and the type of responses used. In each model, a different response strategy was used as the dependent variable, while the participant and aggressor demographic variables were the independent variables. Nine of the eleven models produced significant results ($p < .05$); *ignored it*, *did nothing* and *talked to school staff* were the two models to not produce significant results. Table 20 illustrates the results for each of the nine models. The responses are listed in the same order as above: descending order for the number of participants who used that response.

The model with *ignored it*, *did nothing* (as the dependent variable) was run twice. The first time the model included all 91 participants who had selected *ignored it*, *did nothing*, even if they had selected other responses as well. This model yielded seven significant variables. However, since most of the women who selected *ignored it*, *did nothing*, did in fact, do something, model was run a second time, but with only the 26 participants who had *only* selected *ignored it*, *did nothing*. This last model yielded no significant results and is therefore not included in Table 20. Interestingly, in the nine models, the participant's degree was the most frequently occurring category of independent variables ($n=7$, 25%). Perhaps female guardians' educational attainment explains, in part, how they chose to respond to aggression from other female guardians.

Table 20

Effect of Demographic Variables on Responses to Aggressive Experiences

#	Dependent Variable	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagel -kerke R ²	Significant Variable(s)	B
1	Talked with family/other parent/partner	.19	.15	Income: \$175,000 to \$199,999 Valued: strongly agree Income: \$125,000 to \$149,999 Race: Asian Degree: doctoral	1.25 -1.58 0.75 0.98 -0.72
2	Talked with friends	.20	.18	Degree: 4-year college Degree aggressor: master's Income: \$175,000 to \$199,999 Income: moderately lower	0.84 1.16 0.85 0.70
3	Avoided the individual	.20	.18	Ideology: extremely liberal Race: White Degree aggressor: some college Ideology: somewhat conservative	-0.73 0.91 1.05 -0.64
4	Talked with parents in the same group	.06	.05	Race: White	0.62
5	Talked with parents not in group	.07	.06	Degree: professional, MD or JD	1.54
6	Reduced volunteer hours	.16	.13	Income: \$175,000 to \$199,999 Degree aggressor: doctoral Employment status: part-time Degree: master's	0.84 2.20 -0.53 -0.41
7	Talked with parents at different schools	.12	.10	Degree: 4-year college Valued: somewhat disagree Race: Hispanic	0.41 1.08 -0.67
8	Stopped volunteering for the school	.37	.14	Child lives: only with me Ideology: somewhat liberal Degree: some college	1.04 0.51 0.67
9	Transferred to another volunteer opportunity	.14	.12	Child lives: only with me Ideology: somewhat liberal Degree: some college	1.04 0.51 0.67

To aid in this discussion, I created Table 21 (a reduced version of Table 20) that lists only the participants' degree as independent variables. One interesting pattern is that women with higher degrees such as an MD or JD were significantly more likely to talk with parents *in* the same school, whereas women with only a four-year college degree were statistically more likely to talk to friends and parents *outside* of the school. Notably, women with a master's degree were significantly more likely to *reduce* their volunteer hours after experiencing aggression, while women with some college but no degree were significantly more likely to have *stopped* volunteering for the school or *transferred* to another volunteer opportunity. Perhaps most peculiar was the finding that women with a doctoral degree were significantly less likely to *talk with other family members, or the other parent/partner*.

Table 21

Effect of Degree as Demographic Variable on Responses to Aggressive Experience

#	Dependent Variable	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagelkerke R ²	Significant Variable(s) <i>Participants' Degree Only</i>	B
1	Talked with family/ other parent/partner	.19	.15	Doctoral	-0.72
2	Talked with friends	.20	.18	4-year college	0.84
5	Talked with parents not in group	.07	.06	MD or JD	1.54
6	Reduced volunteer hours	.16	.13	Master's	-0.41
7	Talked with parents at different schools	.12	.10	4-year college	0.41
8	Stopped volunteering for the school	.37	.14	Some college, no degree	0.67
9	Transferred to another volunteer opportunity	.14	.12	Some college, no degree	0.67

Note: The Cox & Snell and Nagelkerke values represent those of the entire models as listed in Table 20.

Summary of quantitative findings. Descriptive statistics revealed three findings. First, the three responses women most frequently used after the most aggressive experience with another female guardian were: *ignored it did nothing*, *talked with family/other parent/partner*, and *talked with friends*. Though *ignored it did nothing* was the most frequently selected response (n=91), most women who chose *ignored it, did nothing*, also indicated having responded in another way. When disaggregated, few women (n=26) responded with only *ignored it, did nothing*. Moreover, if the *talking to* categories were aggregated into one category (called “talking to someone”) then that would have been the most frequently used response post-aggression. Finally, and most surprising, were the number of responses (though frequently used) that largely made no difference to the aggressive situation.

Logistic regressions using the eleven multiple-choice aggression responses and women’s demographics revealed several findings. Nine of the eleven aggression responses produced a total of twenty-eight significant results ($p < .05$). Of those, the participant’s degree was the most frequently occurring category of independent variables. It appears that female guardians’ educational attainment explains, in part, how they chose to respond to aggression from other female guardians.

Qualitative Analysis

This section is divided into two subsections. In the first, I discuss the responses to an open-ended survey question in which women gave justifications for choosing (or not choosing) the responses in the multiple-choice prompt (discussed in the previous section on quantitative analysis). In the second section, I discuss the responses to a second open-ended question wherein women described the methods and tools they found to be most helpful while navigating the most aggressive experiences with other female guardians. The purpose of including these

open-ended questions in the survey was threefold: to better understand the decision-making process of female guardians when confronted with aggression from other female guardians, to better understand the context in which they made those decisions, and to examine the connections between their responses to open-ended questions and the multiple-choice questions that preceded them. The purpose of the following analysis, then, is to demonstrate the answers to those questions.

Justifications for responses to aggression listed in the prompt. Of the 223 women who indicated having experienced at least one aggressive experience from other female guardians, 87 (39%) responded to the open-ended question: *Please explain in more detail why you chose or did not chose the responses listed above*—regarding the eleven prompts discussed in the previous section. Responses that did not answer the question were excluded in the analysis. For example, if a participant wrote, “There was no tangible wrong done, just a sense of feeling [ignored],” her response was excluded. Responses that did answer the question were grouped into categories labeled—as often as possible—using direct quotes from the participants. Table 22 demonstrates the responses that could be placed into broader categories, while Table 23 lists the individual responses that could not be combined to form broader categories.

Qualitative analysis led to three findings: first, the reasons that women gave for what they chose to do after the act of aggression were varied and complex; second, the most frequently mentioned justifications for their actions were an interesting combination of helpfulness (i.e. “talking helps”) and hopelessness (e.g. “they’ll never change”). In their responses, neither theirs nor their aggressors’ demographics were mentioned in the justification for responses to aggression.

As may be evident from the two tables, there were almost as many types of responses as there were participants that responded to the question; this caused theme creation to be somewhat of a challenge. The variation in responses, however, is itself a finding: how women justify responses to aggression is varied and complex; much like other social phenomena, these women's reasons for their actions cannot be placed neatly within a few thematic frames.

The second finding is also interesting; the three most frequently mentioned justifications for their responses were: (1) aggressors will never change, (2) talking helps, and (3) not making the situation worse for her children. Sixteen women, for example, believed that their responses were justified because there are “some people who will never change” and therefore, “why bother.” This may explain the high numbers of women (see Table 14) who chose to *ignore it, do nothing* or *avoided the individual*. It may also explain why most women who chose those responses also believed that their response had *no effect* on the aggressive situation.

The frequently used justification for responses to aggression, “talking helps,” may explain why—as mentioned above—275 women responded to the aggression by talking to either friends, family, school staff or other parents. It does not explain, however, why most of those women also claimed that talking to someone either made no difference or made the situation worse. There appears to be a dissonance between women's beliefs and the outcomes of their actions. Presumably, participants believed their responses to aggression would make the situation better; why respond in a way that would make an aggressive situation worse? Once again, more time with interviewees and continued research would be necessary to better understand these intricacies.

The third most frequently mentioned justification for responses to aggression came from women who chose to respond in certain ways in order to not “make a situation worse for [their]

own kids.” If women believed that responses to aggression would mean negative consequences for their children, it is no wonder that many of those women chose either *ignored it did nothing* or *avoided the individual* in response to the multiple-choice question preceding this open-ended question.

A third finding from the qualitative analysis, was that though there were twenty-three independent demographic variables that correlated significantly with various responses to aggression, none of the respondents to the open-ended question mentioned either their or their aggressors’ demographics in their *justification for responses* to aggression. This is particularly interesting since most of these respondents mentioned at least one demographic reason as a *cause* of aggression against them (please see Table 8 above for more information). Perhaps it was easier for women to believe how demographic variables influenced their aggressors, than it was for them to believe how demographic variables influenced their own decision making.

In summary, women’s justifications for choosing (or not choosing) the responses in the multiple-choice prompt were varied and complex. The most frequently mentioned justifications were an interesting combination of helpfulness (i.e. “talking helps”) and hopelessness (e.g. “they’ll never change”); evidently, women’s actions were shaped by their beliefs. Notably, neither participants’ nor their aggressors’ demographics were mentioned in the justification for responses to aggression. This is interesting as demographics were often used to explain the aggressive experiences. In the following section, I review the methods and tools women found to be the most helpful while navigating the most aggressive experiences with other female guardians.

Table 22

Participants' Explanations for Responses to Aggression, Multiple Participants

I chose this/those response(s) because_____	n	Sample explanation
She will never change	16	"There is no easy way to make people who are exclusive turn into inclusive people so why bother."
Talking helps	10	"Talking to [others] helped me realize I am not the only one in this situation or feeling the same way."
I wanted to protect children	7	"I didn't want to make a situation worse for my own kids."
Her actions were not a big deal	7	"I didn't think that it was that serious a situation to warrant talking to others."
I wanted to deal with it directly	4	"I felt it would be best to deal with the issue directly."
School staff should know	3	"I had to go to administrator because bullying is a serious allegation."
I did not want confrontation	3	"I prefer to avoid confrontation."
She would not affect my actions	2	"I am not the type of parent that was going to stop volunteering because of a negative experience with a parent."
I wanted to get to know other parents	2	"I wanted to get to know other parents ... make my own friends."
I was advised to respond that way	2	"I got advice from another source & prayer."
No one cares	2	"Nobody (at the school) really cared about how I felt."
It helped me stay calm	2	"That [response] helped me to stay calm."
School staff cannot help	2	"The school can't really control the private actions/voice/etc. of the PTO people."
I have other opportunities	2	"There are other opportunities where my contributions are appreciated."
We are leaving/moving	2	"We were moving."

Table 23

Participants' Explanation for Responses to Aggression, Single Participant

I chose this/those response(s) because_____	n	Sample explanations
I was the problem	1	"I knew that it was most likely me not the others involved."
Eye for an eye	1	"Since the other mom ignored me it was normal choice to [ignore] her."
I can't stand it	1	"I chose not to ignore the situation because I can't stand when people behave that way."
I did not want to be judged	1	"Avoiding them helped me not feel so judged."
I felt grateful	1	"I felt grateful for my situation and could understand how a mother in a different situation might feel."
I wanted to model the behavior	1	"I chose not to ignore this mother as I saw this as an opportunity to model appropriate navigation of challenges."
I wanted to protect a teacher	1	"I did not speak with school officials or the teacher because I did not want the teacher to get in trouble."
I wanted to protect others	1	"I felt the need to protect the other committee members."
I wanted to show I'm educated	1	"To show this person that I am an educated parent who fully understands her rights."
I wanted to show I was not afraid	1	"I approached her directly to show I was not afraid."
I wanted to gain perspective	1	"To gain outside perspective."
I wanted to feel justified	1	"I wanted justification that I do well when volunteering for my son."
I wanted to put an end the situation	1	"To put end to situation."
I was committed to the work	1	"I was committed so I would not reduce my time. It was important to me."
I was new in town	1	"I was new in town, did not know anybody."
There was no alternative	1	"It is better to address the issue head-on, rather than let it fester and get worse."

Tools used to navigate through aggressive experiences. After recounting details regarding the most aggressive experience with another female guardian (e.g. aggressor's demographics, and where and when aggression took place), women were asked to *Please provide at least three factors that most helped you navigate this situation. The three things that helped me the most were_____*. Of the 223 women who indicated having experienced at least one aggressive experience from other female guardians, 128 (57%) responded to this open-ended question. Each woman gave an average of two factors that most helped, resulting in a total of 326 factors mentioned. As may be seen in Table 24, the 326 factors were analyzed and used to create twenty-three codes, which were then grouped into five themes (italicized in Table 24): my character and personality; my knowledge; talking to and support from others; distancing and disassociating myself; and focusing on my child. Aspects of the participant's *personality or character* were the most frequently mentioned factors (n=91, 27%) helping women navigate the aggression. Women's *knowledge, skills and experience* were mentioned almost as frequently (n=83, 25%), as were women's use of *conversations with—and getting support from—others* (n=75, 23%). *Distancing and disassociating myself* and *focusing on my child* were helpful for many women, though not mentioned as frequently (15% and 9% respectively). The following discussion examines each of the overarching themes.

Table 24

Participants' Three Factors That Most Helped Navigate the Aggressive Situation

<i>Theme and subcategories</i>	<i>Number of times mentioned</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>My Character & Personality</i>	91	27
My character	26	
My confidence & self esteem	21	
My kindness	21	
My assertiveness	12	
My faith	6	
My patience	5	
<i>My Knowledge</i>	83	25
My education and experience	27	
My knowledge and skills	26	
My knowledge of me	16	
My knowledge of others	14	
<i>Talking to & Getting Support from Others</i>	75	23
Talked to and support from school staff	26	
Talked to and support from other parents	19	
Talked to and support from friends	14	
Talked to and support from spouse and family	13	
Talked to and support from therapist	3	
<i>Distancing & Disassociating Myself</i>	49	15
Did not care or minimized the problem	20	
Stopped volunteering*	13	
Walked away	11	
Avoided her/them/the situation*	8	
Ignored her/them/the situation*	8	
Transferred to another volunteer opportunity*	5	
Time	4	
<i>Focusing on my Child</i>	28	9
Total	326	100

Note. (*) Indicates a factor that was listed in preceding multiple choice survey questions.

Development of a chart. As a result of the analysis, I created a chart (illustrated in figure 10) to better understand the methods women used to navigate aggression. The five responses were placed along two continuums. The y-axis (as it were) indicates whether the method would have been visible only to the participant (internal) or to others (external). The x-axis indicates whether the aggression navigating tool depended solely on the participant (self-dependent) or used the services or support of others (other-dependent). For example, a woman's use of a personality trait or characteristic—like being patient—may have been visible only to herself (internal) and may have been entirely dependent on her own thoughts and wishes regardless of others' influence or support (self-dependent). That same aggression navigation tool—being patient—may have also been seen by others (external) and may have been based on the previously expressed wishes of her family and friends (other-dependent). Thus, though each of the five themes tends toward one quadrant over the others, there is overlap across all categories.

My knowledge is purposefully placed in the center of the other four quadrants for two reasons. First, because knowledge gain or use may be both unwitnessed (internal) and observed (external), and because it may be developed through an internal thought process (self-dependent) or be derived from an external source (e.g. a teacher) (other-dependent). Second, *my knowledge* is in the center of the diagram because I believe it is the key in navigating aggressive behaviors from other female guardians.

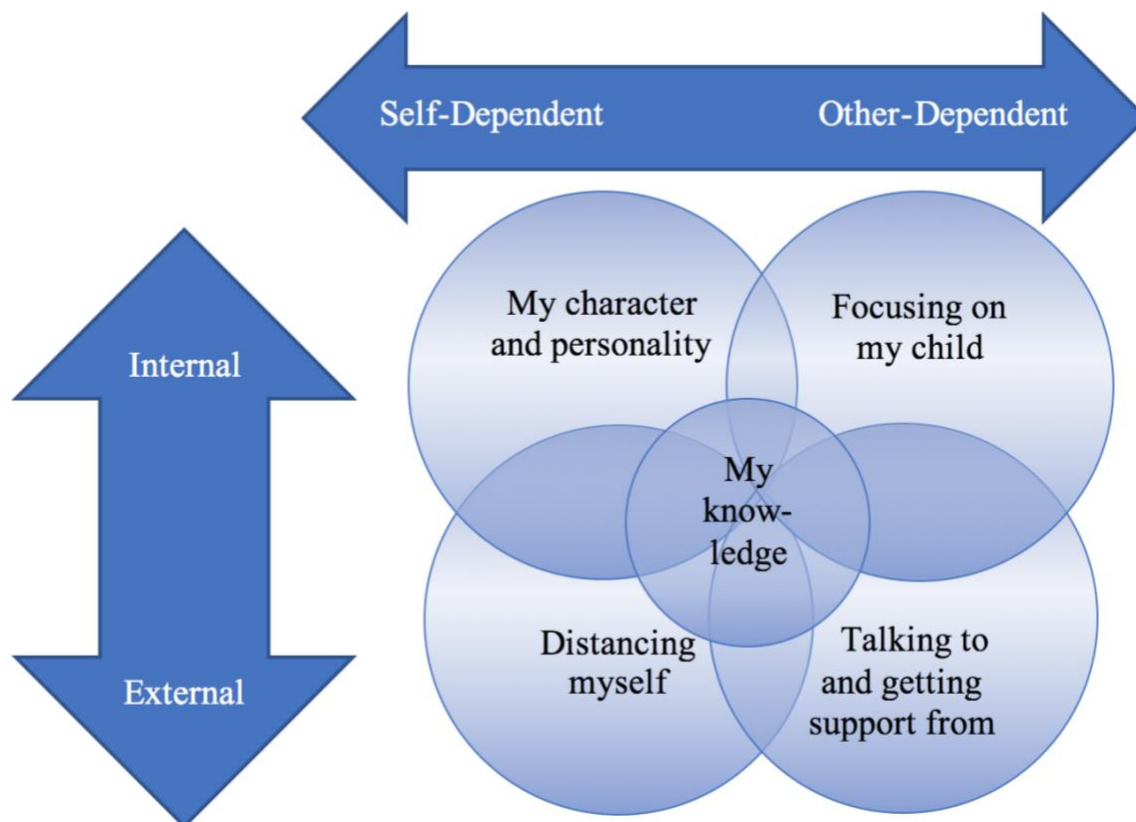


Figure 10. Aggression-navigation tools chart.

As illustrated previously in figure 7, women who *knew* how to navigate the systems of parent-involvement (or at least knew how, when and where to access people who *did* know the systems) had the possibility of increasing their resources and compounding their privileges. Similarly, in figure 7, women who knew the best way to get what they wanted (whether that was, for example, avoiding the aggressors or having school staff resolve the problem), they could use the navigation tools that would work best for them (whether that was, for example, focusing on her child or talking to family members).

My character and personality. Responses in this category came from women who used internal, self-dependent tools to navigate aggression from other women. More than any other category, ninety-one women (27%) believed at least one of their personality traits or

characteristics were most helpful dealing with aggression from other women. Helpful traits were largely passive and self-dependent (e.g. "... [I am] easy going."), though thirty-three women (21 "kindness" and 12 "assertive") found their active and other-dependent traits as helpful (e.g. "Having a direct conversation with this parent..."). Table 25 lists six of the ninety-one responses from women who believed *their character and personality* were most helpful in navigating aggression from other female guardians.

Table 25

Example Quotes from "My Character and Personality" as a Helpful Navigation Tool

Helpful Factor	n	Quote
My character	26	"I am very positive and don't really take comments very seriously. [I am] easy going."
My confidence & self esteem	21	"Being secure enough in myself to not need to be everyone's friend."
My kindness	21	"Being nicer to her. Going out of my way to speak to her. Treating them kindly."
My assertiveness	12	"Having a direct conversation with this parent several days later to better understand each other."
My faith	6	"My faith- relationship with God. Lots & lots of prayer & 'being still'."
My patience	5	"Patience-letting them say what they need to say, and then coming back around to them when they have come down from their elevated state of emotion."

My knowledge. The second most frequently cited aggression-navigating tool was *women's own knowledge*. Though many women provided short-answers (e.g. "My education"), other women included where or when they had gained the knowledge that helped them navigate the aggressive behaviors. One woman explained that in her role as administrator she had gained the knowledge of how to "follow up" and where she could "find a mediator to help." Another woman explained that more than anything else, the knowledge and skills she had gained from being "a teenager in the 90s in [a] low-income area" best helped her navigate the aggressive

experience. Though the source of knowledge was not often included in responses, it is evident that women understood that knowledge gained from their education and experiences, and knowledge of themselves and of others were instrumental in navigating aggressive experiences with other female guardians. Table 26 lists four of the 83 responses from women who believed their knowledge was most helpful in navigating aggression with other female guardians.

Table 26

Example Quotes from “My Knowledge” as a Helpful Navigation Tool

Helpful Factor	n	Quote
My education and experience	27	“My understanding as an administrator myself how to follow up, and also knowing that I can find a mediator to help.”
My knowledge and skills	26	“I was a teenager in the 90s in a low income area- this isn’t new.”
My knowledge of me	16	“Understanding my role and how I could try to extend myself more.”
My knowledge of others	14	“Being good at understanding that their challenges are about the pain they are in, and not about me.”

Talking to and getting support from others. Responses in the category of *talking to and getting support from others* came from women who used external, other-dependent methods to navigate aggressions from other women. For example, if someone *talked to or received support from school staff*, it would have been noticed by others (e.g. the school staff) (external), and the response depended on the actions of others (other-dependent).

Nearly a quarter of the women who responded to this open-ended question, claimed engaging with others as a successful aggression-navigating tool. This is not surprising as most responses to a (previously discussed) multiple-choice question were under the over-arching category *talking to* someone else (either a family member, friend or other parent) (see Table 19, “Responses Used and Perceived Effectiveness”). What is surprising, however, are the number of women (n=26) who wrote that *talking to and getting support from school staff* was one of the

three most helpful aggression-navigating tools. In response to a previous question (see Table 14), forty women said they used the strategy *talked to school staff*, but only seven of them said it made the situation better, ten said it had no effect, and twenty-three said talking to other staff made the situation worse. Perhaps the discrepancy was a result of the way the questions were worded. The multiple-choice question asked, “During the most negative situation...which of the following best represents your responses?” While the open-ended question asked them to provide “three factors that most helped navigate this situation.” It may be that participants understood “responses” to mean something different than “factors that helped”. Though discussed further in chapter 5, were this study to be run a second time, feedback from participants about survey construction and further analysis of question wording would be paramount. Table 27 lists five of the seventy-five responses from women who believed *talking to others* was among the most helpful tools in navigating aggression from other female guardians.

Distancing and disassociating myself. The fourth most frequently mentioned aggression-navigating tool was *distancing and disassociating myself* from the aggressors or from the situation. This included responses that were also part of the multiple-choice prompt: *ignoring it, avoiding the individual, stopping volunteering, and transferring to another volunteer opportunity*. New codes in this category include: *did not care or minimized the situation, walked away, and time*.

Table 27

Example Quotes from “Talking to and Support from Others” as a Helpful Navigation Tool

Helpful Factor	n	Quote
Talked to and support from school staff	26	“Talking directly with the school administration to get the straight facts.”
Talked to and support from other parents	19	“Talking about the issue with other parents who also saw this parent as a problem.”
Talked to and support from friends	14	“I had a lot of other friends who wanted to get involved and who supported me.”
Talked to and support from spouse and family	13	“My husband- he balances me when I'm overly intuitive, overly sensitive, or just want to lash out.”
Talked to and support from therapist	3	“Professional therapy and coaching. This is a very difficult season in my life.”

Responses in this category came from women who used external, self-dependent methods to navigate aggression from other women. For example, if someone *stopped volunteering* it would have likely been noticed by others (external), but the response depended on the actions of the participant (e.g. “I quit.”) (self-dependent). After analyzing the quantitative data, it was not surprising to find that this was one of the least mentioned response categories. In response to the multiple-choice survey question, distancing methods had largely “no effect” on the aggressive situation. For some women (n=49, 15%) who answered this open-ended question, however, distancing methods were among the most helpful navigation tools; particularly *not caring about* or *minimizing* the problem seemed most helpful. It is also interesting to note that four women did not indicate what their exact actions were, but instead simply wrote the word “time”, and one woman wrote three words: “time and space.” Table 28 lists seven of the forty-nine responses

from women who believed *distance and disassociation* were among the most helpful methods when navigating the most aggressive experience with other female guardians.

Table 28

Example Quotes from “Distancing & Disassociating Myself” as a Helpful Navigation Tool

Helpful Factor	n	Quote
Did not care or minimized the problem	20	“[I] decided not to care.”
Stopped volunteering	13	“Quitting...[I] stopped volunteering.”
Walked away	11	“The ability to walk away.”
Avoided her/them/the situation	8	Avoiding those parents for the next week or so at drop off and pick up times.
Ignored her/them/the situation	8	“I ignored her in the moment. I ignored her thereafter.”
Transferred to another volunteer opportunity	5	“[I went] to other events instead and connect myself to nicer moms.”
Time	5	“Time and space.”

Focusing on my child. The final category created was *focusing on my child*. Responses in this category came from women who used internal, self-dependent (or other-dependent methods) to navigate aggression from other women. For example, if they had “focused on [their] children and made sure they were enjoying themselves” it would have likely not been noticed by others (internal), but the response was depended on the actions of others (e.g. children attending the event) (other-dependent). In creating this category, it was interesting to note that there were no responses regarding setting an example for other women (instead of their child), or focusing on their work (instead of their child). It was also interesting that the verbs women used when constructing their sentences/responses; women who wrote about focusing on their child used verbs like: focused; supported; engaged; helped; communicated; listened; and loved. Those verbs were nowhere to be found in any of the other response categories. Table 29 lists three of

the twenty-eight responses from women who believed *focusing on their child* was one of the most helpful methods when navigating the most aggressive experience with other female guardians.

Table 29

Example Quotes from “Focusing on my Child” as a Helpful Navigation Tool

Helpful Factor	n	Quote
Focusing on my child	28	“I focused on my children and made sure they were enjoying themselves.” “[The] example I am setting my child.” “Remembering that I was there for my daughter, not them.”

Summary of qualitative findings. The purpose of this qualitative analysis was to better understand the decision-making process of female guardians when confronted with aggression from other female guardians, to better understand the context in which they made those decisions, and to examine the connections between their responses to open-ended questions and the multiple-choice questions that preceded them. Qualitative analysis yielded two overarching findings in response to these. First, for a variety of reasons women responded in different ways to aggression from another female guardian; there were almost as many reasons for how and why they responded as there were women who explained those decisions. Second, there were clear connections between the open-ended questions and the multiple-choice questions that preceded them.

An unanticipated development from the findings was the aggression response methodology chart (see figure 10). Women’s responses to aggression could be placed along two continuums: whether the method of response to aggression was visible to the participant (internal) or to others (external), and whether the method they developed to deal with the aggression depended on the participant’s own actions (self-dependent) or the actions of others

(other-dependent). The creation of a chart (figure 10) allowed for a clearer, more parsimonious analysis of the 326 responses.

Review of Results of Research Question 4

This research question addressed what strategies female guardians used to respond to aggression from other female guardians, why they chose those responses, and whether those responses improved, worsened, or made no difference to the situation. Women's responses to three survey questions—one multiple-choice, two open-ended—yielded some noteworthy findings.

Quantitative analysis revealed the three responses women most frequently used after the most aggressive experience with another female guardian were: *ignored it did nothing*, *talked with family/other parent/partner*, and *talked with friends*. If aggregated, the *talking to someone* categories would have been the most frequently used method. Interestingly, most women who selected *ignored it, did nothing* also selected having used another response; if only the participants who only selected *ignored it did nothing* are counted, then *ignored it, did nothing* was one of the least used responses to aggression. Descriptive statistics also demonstrated that the most used responses were not always the most effective. The most surprising finding were the number of responses that had no effect on the aggressive situation.

Logistic regressions were then run to determine whether any relationship existed between participant or aggressor demographic information and the type of responses used. Nine (of the eleven) aggression responses produced a total of twenty-eight significant results. Overall, the participant's degree was the most frequently occurring category of independent variables. Educational attainment appeared to explain, in part, how women responded to aggression: women with higher degrees such as an MD or JD were significantly more likely to talk with

parents *in* the same school, whereas women with only a four-year college degree were statistically more likely to talk to friends and parents *outside* of the school. Notably, women with a master's degree were significantly more likely to *reduce* their volunteer hours after experiencing aggression, while women with some college but no degree were significantly more likely to have *stopped* volunteering for the school or *transferred* to another volunteer opportunity. Perhaps most peculiar was the finding that women with a doctoral degree were significantly less likely to *talk with other family members, or the other parent/partner*.

Qualitative analysis also yielded noteworthy findings. First, women explained their responses to aggression in various ways; there were almost as many reasons for decision making as there were women who explained those decisions. Second, participant's *personality or character* (e.g. "my confidence") were the most frequently mentioned factors helping women navigate aggression. Women's *knowledge, skills and experience* (e.g. "my higher education degrees") were mentioned almost as frequently, as were women's use of *conversations with—and getting support from—others*. *Distancing and disassociating myself and focusing on my child* were helpful for many women, though not mentioned as frequently. Finally, a female guardian's response chart was created following the coding and analysis of the 326 most helpful methods women used to navigate the most aggressive experience with another female guardian. The chart (illustrated in figure 10) allowed for a clearer, more parsimonious analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In the United States, the returns to education are significant (Krueger & Lindahl, 2001). Scholars have consistently demonstrated parent involvement as having the largest effect on educational success (Boocock, 1972; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Lareau, 1989). In other bodies of literature, scholars have demonstrated the effects of aggression on the mental, physical and emotional well-being of women (Hays, 1996). Given that a key driver in educational success is parent involvement, that women continue to be the most involved parents (Quindlen, 2005; Rotkirch, 2009), and that aggression affects women so deeply, understanding how aggression influences women's involvement in their children's schools is needed to develop programs and policies that support women's involvement in their children's education. This mixed-methods study was meant to be a step towards understanding this intersectionality (of education, women, aggression and school involvement) so that women would be better supported in becoming involved in their children's education, and children's education would be better supported by their female guardians.

In the following discussion, I first review the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the methodology. I then summarize the findings within the context of the existing literature. This chapter then concludes with the limitations and delimitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and the significance of the study.

Review of Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent women experienced aggression from other women while attempting to become involved in their children's schools, how aggression affected their involvement, how female guardians navigated through the aggressive

interactions with other female guardians, and the structures, cultures or individual's actions that ameliorated or worsened the aggression. The findings of this study were framed by four research questions. These questions were:

1. Do female guardians experience aggression from other female guardians?
 - a. If so, what kinds of aggression did female guardians experience?
2. How do demographic and situational factors account for the aggressive experiences?
 - a. To what extent do aggressors' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - b. To what extent do participants' demographics account for the aggressive experiences?
 - c. To what extent do structural, cultural or agentic factors account for the aggressive experiences?
3. To what extent does aggression among female guardians impact their involvement in their children's schools?
4. How did female guardians respond to aggressive behaviors, why did they choose those responses, and did their responses improve, worsen, or make no difference to the aggressive situation?

Review of Methodology

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods survey design whereby I invited female guardians with children in kindergarten through twelfth grade to participate in an online-survey with closed and open-ended questions; I then interviewed nine of those participants after they completed the survey. The participants were contacted using snowball sampling via email and social media. The survey contained forty-seven questions (thirty-two

closed ended questions and fifteen open-ended) regarding: their level and frequency of parent involvement, the various forms of aggression they may have encountered, their perceptions of the aggressive events and the aggressor(s), their responses to the aggression, and their advice for school staff and other female guardians. After the survey data was analyzed, purposefully selected survey participants were contacted for follow-up interviews. The nine interviewees were asked to elaborate on their own stories, and to offer comments and possible explanations for the quantitative findings.

The first phase of data analysis entailed examining the responses to the multiple-choice and Likert-style questions from the survey. This quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, linear and logistic regression analysis. The second and third phases of data analysis consisted of examining the responses to the open-ended survey questions and the interview questions (respectively). Qualitative data was analyzed using categorical and in-vivo coding.

To address the first research question, survey participants were asked to complete the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) comprised of fifteen survey items. The items asked participants whether they had experienced the fifteen aggressive behaviors, and if so, how often they had experienced each: never, yearly (between 1 and 6 times a year), monthly (between 7 and 12 times a year), weekly (between 13-24 times a year, or daily (more than 25 times a year). I conducted an independent sample t-test of aggregate Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) scores to test the hypothesis that the number of aggressive acts would be zero. Then, to answer what types of behaviors were most commonly reported by women, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the three NAQ construct scores for *person-related bullying*, *work related*

bullying, and *physical intimidation*. This same procedure was done with each of the fifteen aggressive behaviors.

To answer the second research question, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. In addition to the NAQ, survey participants were asked fifteen demographic questions about themselves and four regarding the female guardian from whom they experienced the most aggression. Multiple linear regression and logistic regressions were run to identify which demographic variables (if any) were associated with the experiencing aggression. Qualitative analysis (using categorical and thematic coding) was then used to analyze participants' short answer responses to ascertain whether there were other characteristics (aside from demographic variables) that participants would use to explain aggression from other female guardians; and whether findings from open-ended questions would match those of the close-ended questions. Categorical and thematic coding were also used to analyze participants' open-ended and interview questions to ascertain how structures, cultures and individuals' actions influenced aggression between female guardians.

Once again, to answer question three, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. In the survey, participants were asked to provide responses to four multiple-choice questions regarding their modifications (or non-modifications) of their volunteer time post-aggression. Descriptive analysis was used to assess how many women modified (or did not modify) their volunteer time in their children's schools because of aggressive experiences with other female guardians in general, and because of the most aggressive experience with another female guardian specifically. Following the descriptive analysis, logistic regression analysis was used to determine whether any correlation existed between modification in volunteer time and (1) the respondent's demographics, (2) NAQ constructs, and (3) the fifteen individual aggressive

acts. During the qualitative analysis, categorical and thematic coding were used to examine the open-ended responses to one open-ended survey question regarding how aggressive experiences had affected women's involvement in their children's schools.

To address research question four, participants were asked to complete the Aggression Response Questionnaire (ARQ)—comprised of eleven items. The items asked participants whether they had used any of the eleven responses to aggression, and whether each response worsened, made no difference, or improved the situation. Descriptive statistics were first used to display the most frequently used responses and their perceived effects. Logistic regressions were then run to determine if correlations existed between demographic variables and the participants' responses to the aggression.

The qualitative analysis for the fourth research question was based on the respondents' answers to two open-ended questions: first, women were asked to provide the reasons chosen or not chosen in the multiple-choice prompt. Second, women were asked to provide the three factors that most helped in navigating the most challenging situation with another female guardian from their child's school. Categorical coding along with additional descriptive and comparative coding helped to identify codes and themes in the responses to both questions.

Discussion of Findings

The research questions were designed with the central purpose of this mixed-methods study: to begin to understand the dynamics of women's experiences of aggression from other female guardians from their children's schools, and the effects of the aggression on their involvement in their children's education. Those questions then led to several findings discussed in detail in chapter four. Taken together, these findings provide several contributions to the existing literature. Though parent-involvement, feminist, and aggression theories are rarely

mentioned side-by-side, the following discussion merges these three fields alongside the findings from the present study. As with chapter four, the discussion of findings is organized by the corresponding research question.

Prevalence and Forms of Aggressive Behaviors

The majority of women (59%, $n=225$) who participated in this study experienced aggression from other female guardians from their children's schools. The Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) was used to assess what types of aggression women experienced and how often each type of aggression was experienced. Of the three NAQ constructs, person-related bullying was reported the most (75%), followed by work-related bullying (18%) and finally, physical intimidation (7%). Survey participants' experiences included: being ignored (75%), excluded (71%), and gossiped about (57%). They experienced those behaviors, on average, between one and six times a year. The three least experienced aggressive behaviors were being teased (5%), intimidated through physical behaviors (4%), and threatened (1%). These behaviors were also experienced, on average, between one and six times a year. These findings support what numerous scholars have previously identified: women experience aggression from other women (e.g. Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Buss & Perry, 1992) and women primarily use forms of indirect aggression (such as gossip and exclusion) (Cashdan, 1998; Green et al., 1996; Lagerspetz et al., 1988).

Women of various demographic backgrounds reported various forms of aggression. It should be noted, however, that as mentioned in chapter two, previous literature (e.g. Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Lareau, 1989) has demonstrated that due to several factors, women of lower-income families may not be as involved in their children's schools as women of upper-income

families. Therefore, aggression between parents may have played out quite differently with parents in low-income schools.

To determine whether any correlation existed between a respondent's demographics and the type of aggression she experienced, regression analyses were run using the NAQ constructs as the dependent variables and participants' demographics as the independent variables. Importantly, neither the models run for person-related bullying, work-related bullying, nor physical intimidation produced significant results. As I did not encounter research that discussed the effect demographic variables had on the types of aggression reported, these findings may be an important addition to the literature on women and aggression.

Demographic and Contextual Factors that Accounted for Aggressive Behaviors

Aggressive actors' demographics and characteristics. When examining how aggressors' demographic data accounted for negative experiences, quantitative and qualitative results differed somewhat. Quantitative results revealed that the four characteristics of the aggressor—at least as measured in this study—were not statistically significant predictors of the aggressive experience; in other words, women's experiences of aggression were not associated with the aggressor's socio-economic background, race/ethnicity, level of education, or relationship to her children.

These findings may be an important contribution to the literature on women and aggression. In one study regarding aggression, Harris (1992) noted that “Few racial differences were found, but it appeared that blacks might have been relatively more likely to exhibit physical aggression and whites to exhibit nonphysical aggression” (p.201). In this study however, there was no statistical significance between the differences in the aggressors' races. In a later study, Harris (1996) found that, “Anglos reported experiencing more aggression in their lifetime than

Hispanics as both target and aggressor” (p.843). The results from this study also contradict this finding; there were no statistically significant differences between the differences in the participants’ reporting of aggression.

Qualitative analysis revealed that participants named aggressors’ demographic information only about 25% of the time to account for their aggressors’ behavior. Most women (56%) believed their aggressors’ behavior was best accounted for by the aggressors’ personality traits. Interestingly, aggressors were most often described with verbs and adjectives typically considered un-feminine. Some women (8.5%) pointed to the aggressor’s professional and volunteer roles in explaining the aggression, while other women (7.5%) did not describe the aggressor and instead explained that the aggressors’ behaviors were not intentional or malicious. Lastly, a small number of women (4%) used a description of the aggressor’s physical appearance to account for the aggressive behavior.

These findings, particularly that aggressors were most often described with verbs and adjectives that are typically considered un-feminine, corroborate existing theories regarding women and aggression. As noted in chapter two, it is well-established that women are expected to act in feminine, “communal” ways; that is, behaving in a nurturing, caring, healing, peaceful, helpful, kind, sympathetic and soft-spoken manner (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Men, on the other hand, are expected to act “agentically”, that is, behave in an assertive (e.g. aggressive, ambitious, and forceful) manner, demonstrate self-expansion (e.g. self-confidence and self-reliance), and carry out tasks with an urge to master them (e.g. use control, competency and task orientation) (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Moreover, women using the aggressor’s professional and volunteer roles to account for the aggression, is also predicated by existing literature; research in the last twenty-five years has consistently

proven that both men and women have implicit, sub-conscious expectations of the roles they are meant to fulfill, and the methods in which they are to fulfill them (Brenner & Bromer, 1981; V. Cooper, 1997; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Schneider et al., 2010).

Participant's demographics. When examining how participants' demographic data accounted for negative experiences, quantitative and qualitative analyses differed. Quantitative analysis (using logistic regressions) revealed that women who identified as having a *doctoral degree*, women who identified as *Asian*, and women who identified as either *extremely liberal* or ideological *moderate* were statistically more likely ($p < .05$) to have reported aggressive acts. Qualitative analysis, on the other hand, did not reveal that certain women reported more aggression. Instead, thematic coding revealed that women believed they experienced aggression because of the demographic *differences* between themselves and the aggressor. Differences in *income*, *race/culture* and *employment* were the most frequently mentioned variables influencing the most aggressive experiences with other female guardians. Differences in level of education, age, religion, and work experience were also mentioned as possible contributing factors to the aggression. These findings validate the theory of homophily ("love of the same") or the *queen bee syndrome*: similarity is preferred and breeds connection, while dissimilarity fosters contention and breeds disconnection (McPherson et al., 2001).

The quantitative findings also add to our understanding of various theories related to aggression and demographic data. First, the finding that women with a *Ph.D. or Ed.D.* were statistically more likely to have reported receiving aggression, corroborates Heilman and Okimoto (2004, 2007) and Heilman et al.'s (2004) theories about women who succeed, the communality deficit and the penalties for success. In the latter study, for example, Heilman et

al. (2004) postulated that when women are acknowledged to have been successful (e.g. attaining a terminal degree), they are less liked and personally derogated (than equivalently successful men); moreover, these negative reactions occur only when the success is in an arena that is distinctly male in character (e.g. academia). As quoted in chapter two, Heilman et al. wrote, “What is most critical to remember is that...it is only women, not men, for whom a unique propensity toward dislike is created by success in a nontraditional work situation” (p.426).

Second, these findings add to our understanding of how race and ethnicity may influence women’s reporting of aggressive experiences with other women. To my knowledge, there are not studies on aggression where women who identify as Asian, are part of the demographic groups studied. Moreover, in this study, *Asian* encompassed women from the Middle-East to the South-Pacific. This calls for a more nuanced understanding of the geographic or cultural distinctions between Asian women, and the influence of those distinctions on aggression. Clearly more researcher is needed where aggression is studied not only across demographic groups, but within them as well.

Third, the finding that women who identified as *extremely liberal* or *moderate* were statistically more likely to have reported aggression adds more nuanced information to the aggression literature. First, there do not appear to be studies concerning the correlation of politically *moderate* women and experiences of aggression. Second, in her study, Cooper (1997) found that liberal-minded women were more harshly treated by conservative-minded women⁸. Perhaps the present study reveals that, in addition to liberal-minded women experiencing more

⁸ As noted in chapter two, Cooper contrasted the results between women who held more traditional views of sex roles (e.g. women as homemakers and men as breadwinners) versus the women who held non-traditional views of sex roles (e.g. men and women should share household and child rearing duties).

aggression, they report more aggression as well. To date there does not appear to be other studies that either corroborate or contradict either Cooper or my findings.

Structure, culture, and agency. As researchers have previously found, participants' responses demonstrated how structures, cultures and agency constructed each other reflexively (Cole, 1996; Hands & Hubbard, 2011a) and influenced the day-to-day interactions between parents with children in grades K-12 – actions that supported inequality and aggression between parents. School structures that allowed some parents to be involved while excluding others, a parent-group culture that served the interests of privileged parents, an individualistic cultural trend in the United States more generally, the pervasive judgment culture fostered by social media, and the actions the women in this study all factored into explanations for parental aggression.

There is much written in the literature about how school structures, cultures and the individual privilege held by some parents and not others cause alienation and marginalization (e.g. Davies, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Hands & Hubbard, 2011a; Heath, 1982; Lareau, 2011; Mapp, 2003; Noguera & Wing, 2006). Indeed, these topics could be expanded. In regards to this study, however, it is important to note that some study participants (with certain races, incomes, and employment status) were privileged by the school while others were not; this point is further elaborated below. The system of privilege caused aggression between female guardians. As a result, many women lessened their involvement in their children's schools.

Qualitative analysis of open-ended survey questions and interview responses demonstrated the importance of having a school culture that is welcoming, communicative and trustworthy; particularly towards historically marginalized groups. This corroborates the findings of numerous scholars (e.g. Epstein, 2001; Hiatt-Michael, 2010; Walker et al., 2005).

Indeed, as mentioned in chapter four, women often cited the feeling of being unwelcomed as the reason they either altered their volunteering or stopped volunteering altogether. Scholars have suggested that the key to rebuilding relationships with various groups of parents is to create a culture of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Mapp, 2003; Schneider et al., 2010). The absence of structures that support building communication, trust and a welcoming culture certainly make their creation more challenging.

Indeed, I found (as others have before me, e.g. L. Hubbard & C. Hands, 2011), that influential structures were both tangible (e.g. a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) committee) and intangible (e.g. a school's parent involvement policies). Moreover, I found, as Bourdieu (1986), Lareau (1989, 2011), Epstein (2001), C. Cooper (2007) and many others have found, that structures constantly privileged one "type" of parent over all others. In most cases, the privileged parents were White, English-speaking, middle-to-upper income families. Indeed, as Lavandez and Armas (2011) noted in their work with Latino and African American families, minority women in this study wanted parent involvement programs to be culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate.

Interestingly, for some participants in this study, being the (un-privileged) minority simply meant being different than the majority. Whether that was a White mother feeling aggression from non-White mothers at her daughters' predominately Hispanic school, or a wealthy stay-at-home mother feeling isolated because women who ran the PTO were highly-educated, working women. Perhaps if their children's schools had structures and a culture in place that respected community funds of knowledge and utilized multi-lateral communication strategies, then women who were different from the majority would have experienced less aggression from other female guardians.

As mentioned above, women in this study believed that not only did the culture within the school walls influence aggression between female guardians, but also that individualistic cultural trends in the United States and the judgment culture fostered by social media influenced aggression between female guardians. There is a substantial amount of literature about how a country's culture influences its education system and yet, how culture is often ignored by educators (Banks, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). There is also abundant literature on how social media affects every aspect of people's lives, including educational systems (see for example, Fuchs (2017)); these topics, however, are well-beyond the purview of this paper.

The actions of both the participants themselves and those of other female guardians were key factors influencing parental aggression. Borrowing terminology from Hands and Hubbard's (2011) work, I found that school structures, school culture and school and family partnerships were "driven by the individual actions or agency of those involved;" individuals either affected change or "became part of the reproduction of inequality" (p.5). Corroborating what other scholars (e.g. Tracy, 1991) have found previously, the few women who challenged other women (in defense of their own children or in defense of other women), believed they brought aggression upon themselves by doing so. For some women, these beliefs may stem from a "blame the victim mentality": a belief system whereby the cause of suffering is due to a victims' own behavior or characteristics, and not those of the aggressor (Janoff-Bulman, 1979).

Altering frameworks. Concluding the findings from the second research question in chapter four, figure 8 ("Aggression enabling systems") illustrated how structures, cultures, and agencies made aggression more possible and more likely for women whose children attend grades K-12. This conceptual framework was inspired by the work of Salin (2003), that was

later adapted by Twale and De Luca (2008), and discussed in detail in Briggs (2015)⁹.

Essentially, their frameworks demonstrated that there existed (1) *enabling structures and processes* that allowed bullying to take place (such as the lack of policy on aggression or the privileging of certain people and their resources); 2) *precipitating circumstances* that escalated the probability of bullying occurring (such as scarcity of resources or changes in the organization); and (3) *motivating structures and processes* (such as power imbalances and reward systems) that motivated bullying (Salin, 2003; Twale and De Luca, 2008).

The present study may add nuanced information to these previous studies on aggression. For example, based on my findings, in addition to the factors listed as precipitating aggression, I would add two factors: "personality, beliefs, and ensuing actions" and "feeling marginalized or neglected". In addition to the factors listed as enabling structures and processes, I would add: "culture of individualism", "social media" and "giving privileged to some while ignoring others."

Impact of Aggressive Acts on Female Guardian's Involvement

Descriptive statistics revealed that most women (57%, n=111) volunteered for their children's schools "about the same" amount of time after experiencing aggression. Approximately, 35% percent decreased their volunteering, and 8% increased their volunteering after aggressive experiences. Women cited numerous reasons for altering or not-altering their volunteer time. Women who claimed to not have altered their volunteering wrote comments such as "None. I [volunteered] for my child...not my feelings." Women who altered the place where they volunteered wrote comments such as, "I was still involved, but chose to help teachers directly and worked with the ASB kids instead of the horrible PTA moms!" While women who

⁹ For reference, see Salin (2003) and Twale and DeLuca's (2008) frameworks in Appendix F, "Supplemental Information".

altered their volunteer time wrote comments like, “I don’t volunteer much now.” Women who stopped volunteering wrote, for example, “I have stopped volunteering altogether and only attend minimal functions to avoid conflict.” Interestingly, the women who volunteered more after perceiving aggression from other female guardians wrote comments like this one: “Dealing with moms like this only makes me want to volunteer more and get involved in what is going on.”

Regression analysis revealed two of the three NAQ constructs were significantly correlated to altering volunteer time; women who experienced either work related aggression or person related aggression (but not physical intimidation) were significantly less likely to volunteer the same amount of time after experiencing aggressive acts from other female guardians. Regressions were then run using the fifteen individual aggressive behaviors; three of the fifteen aggressive behaviors proved to be significant ($p < .05$): *blocked from volunteering*, *encouraged to stop volunteering*, and *excluded*. Women who were *encouraged to stop volunteering*, were statistically *more* likely to continue volunteering the same amount of time for their children’s schools, while women who *were blocked from information about volunteering* and felt *excluded* by other female guardians, were significantly *less* likely to volunteer the same amount of time. Interestingly, none of the other variables, including physical intimidation, were statistically associated with alterations in volunteer time.

Because this is the first known study to measure the effect of aggression on women’s involvement in their children’s schools, the above-mentioned findings, further add to our understanding of the factors that enable and inhibit female guardians’ involvement in their children’s education. The closest related literature, however, are the studies cited in chapter two that examined the psychological effects of indirect aggression. The research team of Owens et al. (2000a), for example, found that the teenagers’ acts of indirect aggression led to, on

occasions, a desire by the girl victims to leave the school and/or thoughts of suicide. When studying adults, Kaukiainen et al. (2001) demonstrated that indirect aggression affected adults physically, psychologically and psychosocially. Women manifested psychosocial symptoms including: “family problems, alcohol abuse, lack of willingness to work, and isolation in private life” (p.368). In summary, the research is clear; whether studying children or adults, indirect aggression affects people in general, and women in particular. These studies are especially poignant because of the critical importance of a mother’s psychological well-being on the well-being of her children ((Bornstein et al., 2012; Sear & Mace, 2008; Thoits, 1989).

Factors that Influenced Female Guardians’ Ability to Navigate Aggressive Behaviors

Quantitative analysis revealed the three responses women most frequently used after the most aggressive experience with another female guardian were: *talked with family/other parent/partner* (67%), *talked with friends* (67%), and *avoided the individual* (54%). The least used responses were *stopped volunteering for the school* (19%) and *transferred to another volunteer opportunity at the school* (17%). Descriptive statistics also demonstrated that the most used responses were not always the most effective. The most striking finding were the overwhelming number of responses that either had no effect or made the situation worse.

These findings add to both the literature on women and aggression, and parent involvement. Similar to previous studies (Briggs, 2015; Keashly & Neuman, 2013), the most frequently used responses were passive—such as talking to others, ignoring the behavior or avoiding the individual(s). Unlike previous studies, however, the least used responses were also passive (*stopped volunteering for the school* and *transferred to another volunteer opportunity*). In both Briggs (2015) and Keashley and Neuman’s (2013) work, the least used responses were the more direct ones such as, confronting the individual. This is not surprising as the response

options in the present study only included indirect responses and did not include direct responses¹⁰.

Interestingly, the responses most women used in response to the aggression (ignoring, avoiding, and talking to others) could also be interpreted as the aggressive behaviors experienced most often (ignored, excluded, and gossiped about). In fact, if two women who had a misunderstanding responded by avoiding each other and talking to other parents for support, then those same women may have completed the survey feeling that they were the victim of aggression. What one may have used as a support system (e.g. talking to others), the second may have perceived as aggression (e.g. gossiping).

As Briggs (2015) suggested, this back and forth may create a “perpetuating cycle of aggression” whereby how one woman copes with perceived aggression, the other perceives as aggressive, and responds with her own coping mechanisms, that then the first deems as further evidence of aggression; it is possible for a behavior to be both supportive and destructive (p. 316).

Perhaps the most poignant contribution to the parent involvement and aggression literature is that despite women using various—indirect—responses to the aggression, the aggressive situation often remained unchanged, and at times became worse. As Briggs (2015) suggested in her discussion, “This finding suggests that while it may seem easier to choose strategies that do not confront the aggressor, some of these indirect strategies may actually cause more harm” (p. 315).

¹⁰ As mentioned in chapter three, the responses provided in the Aggression Response Questionnaire (ARQ) were purposefully selected after reviewing the responses most used by the participants, and perceived as most effective by those same participants in Briggs (2015) and Keashley and Neuman’s studies (2013).

Results from the logistic regression may further contribute to the aggression literature. Logistic regressions revealed nine (of the eleven) aggression responses produced a total of twenty-eight significant results. Overall, the participant's educational degree was the most frequently occurring category of independent variables that effected how they chose to respond to aggression from other female guardians. Women with an MD or JD were significantly more likely to talk with parents *in* the same school, whereas women with only a four-year college degree were statistically more likely to talk to friends and parents *outside* of the school. Women with a master's degree were significantly more likely to *reduce* their volunteer hours after experiencing aggression, while women with some college but no degree were significantly more likely to have *stopped* volunteering for the school or *transferred* to another volunteer opportunity. Finally, and perhaps most peculiar, was the finding that women with a doctoral degree were significantly less likely to *talk with other family members, or the other parent/partner*.

Qualitative analysis yielded further noteworthy findings. There were almost as many reasons for decision making—in determining what to do after the experience of aggression—as there were women who explained those decisions. The three most frequently mentioned justifications for their responses to aggression were: *aggressors will never change* (n=16), *talking helps* (n=10), and *wanting to protect children* (n=7). Interestingly, though participants used demographics to explain their aggressive experiences, they did not use demographics to explain or justify their responses to aggression.

Women's responses to the open-ended prompt: *what three factors most helped you navigate aggressive experiences?* resulted in them identifying their own *personality or character* (e.g. "my confidence"). Women's *knowledge, skills and experience* (e.g. higher

education degrees) were mentioned almost as frequently, as were women's use of *conversations with—and getting support from—other. Distancing and disassociating myself and focusing on my child* were helpful for many women, though not mentioned as frequently. Women's responses to aggression could be placed along two continuums: whether the method of response to aggression was visible to the participant (internal) or to others (external), and whether the method they developed to deal with the aggression was blamed on the participant's own actions (self-dependent) or the actions of others (other-dependent).

Limitations and Delimitations

As with all studies, there exist limitations and delimitations. This study is delimited in scope as it specifically studied female guardians who experienced aggression from other female guardians in their children's schools, who lived in the United States, and who currently had children in kindergarten through twelfth grade. As a result, this study is missing several perspectives. First, it does not include male guardians who have experienced aggression, and it does not include women who experienced aggression from male guardians. This study also excluded the experiences of women who have already experienced aggression from other female guardians before their children even begin kindergarten, and women whose children have completed schooling. Also, not included in this study were the perspectives of women from other countries, women who did not have access to email, the internet or a computer, and women who did not fluently speak English or Spanish. Moreover, as there is no national data base of email addresses of women with children in grades K-12, snowball sampling was used; therefore, millions of women across the country may not have received the email or social media invitation. Finally, this study does not include the perspectives of men and women who had positive experiences with other male or female guardians.

Limitations

This study also has several limitations. First and foremost, there existed a strong selection effect for those who responded to the survey, and even more so for those who volunteered to be interviewed. Several factors may have contributed to this. First, only women with access to email, Facebook, or Twitter would have had access to the survey. Second, the length of the survey may have excluded women who did not have the time to complete it; as noted in the literature review, women increasingly have less time away from work and/or children. Third, the length of the survey may have contributed to both survey fatigue (i.e. not completing the survey) and brevity in response to open-ended questions. Fourth, selection bias may have skewed the data towards the opinions of female guardians who were interested in discussing inter-female aggression, and away from women who either did not think their aggression experiences worth noting or those who did not wish to recount an emotionally difficult experience.

A further significant limitation may be social desirability (i.e. the tendency to portray oneself in a positive manner) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Responses regarding the level and frequency of involvement in their children's education, the effects of aggression on their involvement, and how women responded to the aggression may have been strongly influenced by social desirability. Biased responses may "mask the true relationships between two variables" and inhibit the researcher from interpreting the data objectively (Podsakoff, et al., 2003, p. 881).

A third limitation may involve the Negative Acts Questionnaire. Results may be skewed because the very nature of indirect aggression is that the victim does not know where the aggression came from (e.g., "Did I really get excluded from that meeting?") or if what she

experienced would be considered aggressive in the first place (e.g., “Maybe it was just a misunderstanding?”).

A fourth significant limitation in this study was that findings were solely based on the perspective of the participant; explanations of the aggressive experiences, the circumstances surrounding them and the details about either the victims or the aggressors could not be verified. Moreover, a second reader did not review the transcription or coded data. Therefore, as mentioned in the discussions above, both quantitative and qualitative results should be examined critically and not generalized to the larger population.

A final limitation is that the results are not generalizable. The findings, however, were never meant to be generalized to all female guardians, but rather to represent the experiences and effects of inter-female guardian aggression of a small, diverse group of women.

Positionality and Researcher Bias

I am a mom; I have a mom; I have many mom friends (most of them are working moms); I was a high school teacher and my husband is a kindergarten teacher; I have been a stay-at-home mom, I have worked from home with a baby, and I have worked while my child is in “school”. I am a White-Hispanic American, from a middle-high income family. Politically I lean left of center, but I am also Catholic and a feminist. The combination and complexities of the aforementioned may have been strong limitations for a study on mothers and their involvement in their child’s/children’s school(s).

Some researchers wrestle with the problem of subjectivity and go to great lengths to attempt objectivity. Other researchers, such as Peshkin (1988), derive their validity from the very act of becoming aware of their subjectivity and naming it: “subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17). Peshkin would argue that as a researcher, I am in more danger

of skewed findings by pretending and claiming objectivity than if I knowingly acknowledge my inevitable subjectivity. It is my hope that—as Peshkin claims—if I am cognizant of my subjectivity, it can be a strength: I can be “unshackled from the orientations that [I] did not realize were intervening in [the] research process” (p. 17).

In addition to these potential biases mentioned above, I recognize that there may exist even more subtle biases. Historically, certain voices have been disempowered and have been left out of academic and political discussions (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005); entire groups have been marginalized by the dominant group. As a privileged graduate student, I may be adding to the privileging of some voices and the silencing of others.

Furthermore, I have conducted two studies (both qualitative in nature) where I interviewed full-time working mothers about their involvements in their children’s schools (Vicente 2012a and Vicente 2012b); I heard—over and over—an unchallenged narrative about “bullies” and “stay-at home” moms. I found myself becoming angry with stay-at-home mothers and angry at a school system that rewarded them and penalized working mothers. Then, two years later, in the fall of 2014, I had my own child, and for a year and a half, I was a stay-at-home mother; during the following two years, I transitioned back into the working world. My anger turned into understanding, compassion and sadness. To say that I have developed certain expectations of what the data would yield and that I am grappling with a priori conclusions is an understatement. However, as Wolcott (1990) and Peshkin (1988) have suggested in attempting a full and honest disclosure, the effects of biases may be somewhat mediated while the trustworthiness of the study and the researcher may increase.

Recommendations for Future Research

As long as education continues to be a determining factor in a child's future, and as long as parents continue to be a determining factor in the success of their child's education, research on parent involvement in children's education will continue to be an important field of study. Furthermore, as it has been soundly established that parent involvement influences the educational outcomes of their children, studies on the factors that enable or inhibit successful parent involvement will continue to be necessary. The findings of this study have demonstrated the complexity of experiences of aggression and the need to further examine parent-to-parent interactions as a significant factor in parents' involvement in their children's schools.

There are several research modifications that would further illuminate the significance and effects of parent-to-parent interactions in children's schools. Having now established that aggression occurs between female guardians and that it effects their school involvement, a more in-depth understanding of parents' experiences is necessary; ethnographic studies or cross-case comparisons would add valuable insight. An ethnographic study within a school site, for example, would yield richer contextual data: structures, cultures and individuals' actions enabling or inhibiting aggression could be examined more fully. Similarly, a cross-case analysis of two or three schools would also significantly contribute to the literature; one such study could include a high-income school, a middle-income school, and a low-income school. Alternatively, as race and level of education were consistently found to be statistically significant factors, other studies could compare schools with families of various race or education levels. In sum, further qualitative work would allow for deeper exploration of the factors that contributed to the aggressive behaviors, and richer data that might yield solution-based findings.

As mentioned above, a serious limitation to this study was that it only surveyed female guardians. As fathers and other male guardians become more involved in their children's education (Winquist Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997), it would be important to understand how inter-parent relations in schools are welcoming or excluding both male and female participation. For a better understanding of this phenomenon, studies should be conducted with male and female participants who experienced aggression from either male or female guardians.

In addition, as mentioned previously, the results of this study were based on the participation of women living in the United States. However, because of snowball sampling, more than four hundred women from outside of the United States completed the survey. Interestingly, approximately three hundred were from Australia and ninety were from Spanish speaking countries. Clearly, a study of inter-parent relations in other countries and cultures is necessary.

Moreover, findings regarding specific populations (e.g. various races, education levels, etc.) yielded interesting results but were based on a small number of participants. Research that purposefully examined larger numbers of specific populations would allow for a better understanding of the dynamics studied and produce more generalizable findings.

Further work is also needed if scholars and practitioners are to develop an instrument that gauges parent-involvement and/or the prevalence of aggression between parents in school. To date, there is no instrument that scholars or practitioners could use in schools throughout the country. The Harvard Family Research Project, for example, has an extensive parent engagement survey for practitioners to use, but—as of December 2017—does not include questions regarding inter-parent aggression or inter-parent support for parent involvement.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, research must be conducted on the ways that women support each other and enable parent participation in schools. If policies are to be created to support family and community engagement, it would be unwise to create them based solely on what not to do. A much wiser and practical policy implementation would have first considered the factors that do enable and support family and community engagement in schools.

Significance of the Study

Five years ago, I interviewed eleven women about their involvement in their children's schools. Ten of the eleven spoke at length about the influence that other female guardians' aggressive behaviors had on their involvement. Concurrently, as I was reviewing studies on the factors that enabled or inhibited parent involvement, I was unable to find a study on either the existence of inter-female-guardian aggression in schools or the effects of such aggression on parents' involvement.

The first step in solving a problem is to acknowledge that there is one. Therefore, the first step in this study was to demonstrate empirically that female guardians act aggressively towards other female guardians in their children's schools and that this aggression affects women becoming involved in their children's education. In a time where schools increasingly need families to provide more support and resources, not less, parents inhibiting other parents' involvement is a problem that needed to be acknowledged.

More than identifying the existence of a problem, this study was meant to provide an understanding of how prevalent aggression is among female guardians, the effects of aggression on their involvement, what factors enabled or inhibited the aggression, and what factors worsened, made no difference or improved the challenging situation.

The results of this study demonstrated that aggression between female guardians is prevalent across the country and occurs in a variety of schools, regardless of family and schools' demographic composition. This study further demonstrated that, for many women, aggressive behaviors from other female guardians negatively affected their involvement in their children's schools. The women in this study identified: several factors that caused the aggression; structures, cultures and individuals' actions that enabled the aggression; and the responses that helped, worsened or did not alter the aggressive behaviors. These results carry implications for scholars in the fields of mental health and gender studies, for policy makers, scholars and practitioners in the field of education, for family members, and for all women. This discussion is divided into two parts. The first section contains the main findings and their implications for those involved in the field of education; the second section contains some practical implementation suggestions based on the findings from this study.

Implications for Policy Makers and Practitioners

As there is a steady increase in the federal, state and local policies requiring parents' involvement in schools, the results of this study may be noteworthy to education policy makers and practitioners. First, it would be important for everyone involved in education to recognize that aggression between female guardians occurs. Second, to recognize that it occurs to women of different demographic backgrounds in a variety of schools; it is *not* a singular problem in upper-income schools. Third, to be aware that—at least as understood from the women in this study—there are certain groups of women that are reporting more aggression, and perhaps are experiencing more aggression: women with a Ph.D., women who identify as Asian, and women who identify as politically extremely liberal or as moderate.

Fourth, to acknowledge that school and parent-group systems contain structures, cultures, and individuals that privilege one group of parents over others; as a result, schools jeopardize losing much needed resources and support. A strong recommendation for policy makers and practitioners is to investigate who their system privileges, and how those groups are privileged. In most schools, for example, parents who did not work, who spoke English, and who knew how to navigate the dominant culture were able to access more volunteer opportunities and more resources that benefited their own children. It should be noted, however, that in some schools, the dominant culture was that of a group typically thought of as a minority, for example, a school made up of low-income Spanish-speaking families; the parents that were neither low-income nor Spanish-speaking felt isolated and excluded. Moreover, while in some schools and parent-groups the system privileged one race or economic status over another, in other schools and parent-involvement groups, privilege was held by parents who were also teachers or staff in the district. Knowing that those teacher-parents could have influence over children's success, made non-teacher-parents reluctant to disagree or challenge them; as one interviewee said, "they [the teacher-parents] are going to get whatever they want out of that meeting."

Fifth, many women altered either the amount of volunteering or where and when they volunteered. For example, they altered their activities to "avoid certain groups of women" or "to avoid the drama." Other women wrote about changing from group activities to individual opportunities. If, for example, there are plenty of "room moms" but educators cannot get parents to attend fundraising events, there may (or may not) be inter-parent dynamics affecting women's involvement in their children's schools.

Sixth, most aggression between female guardians is indirect—it is hidden from plain sight. And finally, educators should recognize that for some women (n=23) *talking to school*

staff was the most successful method to navigating post-aggression. For other women (n=17), however, talking to school staff had no effect on the aggression or made the situation worse. Moreover, it is lamentable that most women believed that nothing they did would have either mattered to anyone or would have altered the situation.

Perhaps as government officials and school staff become more aware of the prevalence and effects of aggression among parents, they may use this information to better support families' involvement in their children's schools. By better understanding the factors that enable or inhibit aggressive behaviors, school staff may develop practices and policies to better support families' engagement.

Practical Strategies for Policy Makers and Practitioners

Throughout the survey, participants wrote suggestions for how school staff and parent volunteers could decrease aggressive interactions and increase parent participation for both school meetings and volunteer events. The following are some practical strategies based on the participants' suggestions and the findings from this study; the strategies are categorized under four categories: awareness, diversity, inclusion, and staff training.

Awareness. The first step to solving a problem is becoming aware that there is one. Perhaps parents at some schools do not experience aggression (e.g. parents do not feel that they are excluded from volunteer activities or blocked from volunteering). Or, perhaps, like most women in this study, parents in most schools experience aggression on a yearly, monthly, weekly and even daily basis. One way to know, is to ask the parents themselves: Are you experiencing aggression from other parents, and how it is affecting your involvement? It would also be imperative to ask: How are school staff contributing or ameliorating the problems? Do parents perceive aggression or only parents from certain demographic groups (e.g. lower income families

or minority families)? Is there more than one side of the story? Do not, as one woman wrote in the survey, “[ask] only the PTA president if there is a problem. She IS the problem.” How (if at all) do the school or the parent involvement groups privilege one type of parent over another? For example, do the low-income families have equal access to volunteer opportunities? Are those families equally represented in decision making bodies? What is it that parents need in order to feel included and welcomed?

In order to attain this information, an information gathering system is required. Several parents suggested that schools create a safe and anonymous system for parents to write comments, concerns and suggestions about volunteers and volunteer activities. As mentioned earlier, some women believed teachers who were also parents should not be in the decision-making bodies of parent involvement groups. There was not a safe reporting system, however, and therefore these women did not feel safe speaking to the school staff about their concerns in fear of retribution. Other parents suggested that principals and school counselors gain awareness of the dynamics between parents by attending non-decision making meetings at least once a year.

Finally, if information is gathered and new practices are implemented, there must also then be an awareness of the *effectiveness* of the new implementations. In other words, there must be an information feedback loop, whereby those who changed their practices know the efficacy of their alterations.

Diversity. Numerous parents believed that increased diversity in parent involvement groups would not only ameliorate many of the problems parents face, but help different (and often overlooked) groups of children. As Dalia said in her interview, “If there are no parents representing [different interests] then.... [those who make decisions] don’t understand what [other families] need.” One way to diversify is to provide volunteer information that is accessible

to all demographic groups. As one parent explained, her school—that is largely comprised of Hispanic and Ethiopian families—only provided volunteer information in English. Many non-English speaking parents felt intimidated or embarrassed: they did not know where to look for information on volunteering, and if they did find the information, they could not understand the instructions.

Most working women who wrote suggestions asked that schools diversify the time and place of volunteer activities. As one woman noted, “Although working moms can’t be at every event, there are things that they can do at home or on their lunch break.” Moreover, if all volunteer events and meetings are between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., most working parents are excluded. One working mother suggested increasing diversity of volunteers through a “fair and/or random process...like a lottery system”. She explained that her children’s school had a “stand in line first-come first-serve” volunteer sign-up system that naturally excluded working parents from ever being either in line or served.

Working and non-working parents suggested schools diversify the length of volunteer activities as well as the length of commitment. Some parents suggested that they would be less hesitant to volunteer if they knew it was not a year-long commitment. Other parents wrote that they could have arranged for childcare if the events were “not always so time consuming.”

Inclusion. Women in this study wrote at length about the need for schools and parent involvement organizations to be more welcoming and inclusive. Beyond the suggestions mentioned above, women also wrote that schools might ameliorate aggression between parents by hosting events that facilitate relationships among the parent community. For example, one mother noted that at “every PTA event [the PTA members] huddle in a corner” and only “talked to each other the whole night.” She suggested that activities be purposefully constructed in such

a way as to create more bonds rather than separation between parents. Multiple participants wished their children's schools had systems in place for new parents to feel welcomed and included. Four women suggested that schools create a combination of volunteer orientations and/or volunteer manuals. This, women believed, would help "set the tone" for the year and make "the expectations clear." One participant suggested that events not be dependent on family finances. She wrote that in her children's school, only the wealthy families attended parent events because no one else could afford to go; although "all families are invited", non-wealthy families "are too embarrassed" and do not attend.

Several participants wrote about creating a culture of inclusion through support systems. Most of these women noted that they were either low-income families, single parents, or part of a blended family. Two women wrote that when younger children are not allowed at volunteer events or meetings and childcare was not provided; naturally, parents without external resources (e.g. a family member to care for the younger children, or the finances to hire a babysitter) felt excluded. A few women also mentioned that on volunteer forms, there was only enough space for one parent, phone number or email address. Not only did this cause problems between the separated parents (i.e. "Which one of us gets to put their name on the form and get information from the school?"), but it also caused problems between the parent-group leaders themselves, as they played favorites deciding which parent they wanted most involved.

Moreover, becoming a more inclusive school, some working women wrote, is as simple as providing volunteer information in a timely manner; women noted that field trips and school plays, for example, were often announced a few days before the event. Had they been given more notice, they could have made arrangements to attend or even help at the event.

Creating inclusive parent involvement, therefore, may come in many forms: allowing other/younger children to attend events or providing childcare; providing space for more than one parent to include their information on volunteer forms; or simply by providing volunteer information in a timely manner.

Staff training. Interestingly, several women wrote that most of their problems with other parents stemmed from interactions with school staff. Many women explained that problems arose between parents because teachers were not aware that they “show favoritism” and “[staff] are not aware of themselves and their biases.” One woman suggested that there “should be a way that teachers check themselves to see if they are playing favorites.” To avoid these problems, one parent suggested that staff training “should require...personal growth workshops.”

Another group of women explained that problems arose between parents because school staff were not made aware of legal cases involving the children at the school. One mother suggested that school leaders and teachers “read every legal custody arrangement and court order on every child in your school that has a divorced family.” Parents wrote that volunteers, teachers, and even principals had allowed children to go home with the “incorrect” parent; in one case, volunteers had unknowingly allowed a parent with a restraining order to take a child home during an after-school fundraising event.

Summary. Practical suggestions include: gaining awareness by developing information gathering systems (e.g. anonymous surveys); diversifying involvement opportunities; inclusion strategies that create support for parents who wish to volunteer; and ensuring that staff (including volunteer staff) are trained and prepared to work with families.

Implications for Support Persons

This study may also carry implications for practitioners in the field of mental health. As noted in chapter two, aggression—specifically indirect aggression—has been found to cause women mental, emotional and even physical harm (Crick and Bigbee, 1998). Other scholars (e.g. Bornstein et al., 2012) have noted the effects of the mothers’ mental health on her family members. Perhaps with the knowledge provided by these findings, mental health professionals may be better able to support women and their families.

As women largely responded to aggression from other female guardians by talking to someone, results of this study also carry implications for women’s family members and friends. Increased awareness of the existence and effects of aggressive behaviors on women may help those individuals in her daily life who wish to better support her.

Implications for Female Guardians

This study revealed that aggression between female guardians exists, that it is pervasive, and that it can have a negative impact on women’s involvement in their children’s schools. To minimize aggressive experiences or to believe it is only affecting one racial or economic group (for example the mother who wrote, “[aggression] is pretty limited to white upper middle class women”) is to deny the experiences of more than two hundred women in this study. Moreover, to deny the prevalence and effects of inter-female guardian aggression is to allow it to continue unabated. May the results of this study carry implications for all female guardians: how to recognize and name aggression, how to better identify the factors that enable or inhibit it, and as a result, begin to construct solutions for how we can diminish aggressive behaviors and support women’s involvement in their children’s education.

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APPENDIX A: EMAIL SOLICITATION

(In English)

Dear Mothers and Female Guardians,

If you have children in grades K-12 (or homeschooling ages 5-18), this survey is for you:

in

English: http://usd.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0P8V81RwSgC0hmd

en Español: http://usd.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3xuIXZbyg4xBF1X

This research is for a fellow mother's dissertation to attain her Ph.D.

This international survey was created to be **anonymous** so that parents and guardians would provide **honest** answers. It will take approximately 12-15 minutes to complete.

Please help her explore the power of mothers and guardians in their children's schools.

Thank you very much,

Mara Vicente Robinson
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Facebook: [ParentsAreAmazing](#)

LinkedIn: [Mara Vicente Robinson](#)

Twitter: [@parentsare123](#)

(In Spanish)

Estimadas Madres y Tutoras,

Si usted tiene niños en los grados Kinder-a-Grado 12 (o que tengan una edad entre 5-18 años si reciben educación en el hogar).

Esta encuesta es para usted:

in

English: http://usd.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0P8V81RwSgC0hmd

en Español: http://usd.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3xuIXZbyg4xBF1X

Esta investigación es para la tesis de una madre compañera para lograr su doctorado.

*Esta encuesta internacional fue creada para ser **anónima** con la intención de que las madres y tutoras contesten **honestamente**. Les llevara aproximadamente de 12-15 minutos terminarla.*

Por favor ayúdenla a explorar el poder de las madres y tutores en las escuelas de sus hijos.

Muchas gracias,

*Mara Vicente Robinson
Estudiante de Doctorado
de la Escuela de Ciencias de Liderazgo y Educación
Universidad de San Diego*

Email: MaraVicente@SanDiego.edu

Facebook: [ParentsAreAmazing](#)

LinkedIn: [Mara Vicente Robinson](#)

Twitter: [@parentsare123](#)

(Email sent to request follow-up interviews)

Dear Amazing Momma,

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out my dissertation survey.
Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview? It will not take longer than 30 minutes.

Please let me know any available times you may have.

Thank you very much,

-Mara Vicente Robinson

Mara Vicente Robinson
Doctoral Candidate
School of Leadership and Education Sciences
University of San Diego

Email: MaraVicente@SanDiego.edu

Facebook: [ParentsAreAmazing](#)

LinkedIn: [Mara Vicente Robinson](#)

Twitter: [@parentsare123](#)

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1.1

Dear Amazing Parents and Guardians, Thank you very much for taking the time to do this survey and for forwarding the link to mothers and female guardians of children in grades K-12 (or homeschooling ages 5-18). I constructed this survey for my dissertation in order to better understand parents' and guardians' involvement in their children's schools. In academia (universities and colleges) we now understand the impact that principals and teachers have on parents' and guardians' involvement. What we do not know, and what I hope you will help us understand, are the effects parents and guardians have on each other. This international survey was created to be anonymous so that parents and guardians would provide **honest** answers. It will take approximately 12-15 minutes to complete. If the survey process is interrupted, you may continue it at any time by logging onto the *same* computer/device.

Please help us further empower parents, students, schools and communities by participating in this survey. Thank you very much, Mara Vicente Robinson

Doctoral Candidate

School of Leadership and Education Sciences

University of San Diego

Please select the right arrow below to review the consent form and begin the survey.

Page Break

Q1.2 Consent Form for the Study Entitled: Individuals' and group's influences on parents' and guardians' involvement in their children's schools. **Purpose of the research study:** Mara Robinson is a doctoral candidate in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a dissertation research study she is conducting. The purpose of this research study is to better understand the influence that different people, schools and school structures have on parents' and guardians' involvement in their children's schools. **What you will be asked to do:** If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire.

Individuals who piloted this survey took an average of fifteen minutes to complete the survey, depending on their answers and level of detail provided.

Foreseeable risks or discomforts: Sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day: San Diego Mental Health Hotline at 1-800-479-3339 or locate a number or resource in your local area: <http://www.crisistextline.org> **Benefits:** While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped researchers better understand how schools and individuals influence how, when, and where parents and guardians become involved in their children's education.

Confidentiality: Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential. Information from this study will only be reported as a group and not individually.

Compensation: Because of the anonymous nature of this research you will receive no compensation for your participation in the study.

Voluntary Nature of this Research: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

1) Mara Vicente Robinson, MEd (Doctoral Candidate, Researcher)

Phone: 302-540-0293

Email: maravicente@sandiego.edu

2) Fred Galloway, Ed.D. (Dissertation Chair/Faculty Advisor)

Phone: 619-260-7435

Email: galloway@sandiego.edu

Q1.3 Please select one of the following options:

- ☐ I have read and understand this form and consent to the research described herein. I may print a copy of this consent form for my records if I choose to. (1)
- ☐ I choose not to participate in this research study. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q1.3 = I choose not to participate in this research study. (2)

Q1.4

Please note, this survey will take approximately 12-15 minutes to complete.

If the survey process is interrupted, you may continue it at any time by logging onto the same computer/device.

Thank you very much for your time.



Q1.5 Are you a *female* parent or guardian with child/children ages 4-19?

(adoptive, biological, foster or step parent; aunt, cousin, grandparent, etc.)

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q1.5 = No (2)

End of Block

Parent Involvement

Q2.1 This survey is being sent out internationally.

Please provide country name and zip or post code, it matters very much.



Q2.2 In which country do you currently reside?

Page Break

- o United States of America (1)
- o Afghanistan (196)
- o Albania (2)
- o Algeria (3)
- o Andorra (4)
- o Angola (5)
- o Antigua and Barbuda (6)
- o Argentina (7)
- o Armenia (8)
- o Australia (9)
- o Austria (10)
- o Azerbaijan (11)
- o Bahamas (12)
- o Bahrain (13)
- o Bangladesh (14)
- o Barbados (15)
- o Belarus (16)
- o Belgium (17)
- o Belize (18)
- o Benin (19)
- o Bhutan (20)
- o Bolivia (21)
- o Bosnia and Herzegovina (22)
- o Botswana (23)
- o Brazil (24)
- o Brunei Darussalam (25)
- o Bulgaria (26)
- o Burkina Faso (27)
- o Burundi (28)
- o Cambodia (29)
- o Cameroon (30)
- o Canada (31)
- o Cape Verde (32)
- o Central African Republic (33)
- o Chad (34)
- o Chile (35)
- o China (36)
- o Colombia (37)
- o Comoros (38)
- o Congo, Republic of the... (39)
- o Costa Rica (40)
- o Côte d'Ivoire (41)
- o Croatia (42)
- o Cuba (43)
- o Cyprus (44)
- o Czech Republic (45)
- o Democratic People's Republic of Korea (46)
- o Democratic Republic of the Congo (47)
- o Denmark (48)
- o Djibouti (49)
- o Dominica (50)
- o Dominican Republic (51)
- o Ecuador (52)
- o Egypt (53)
- o El Salvador (54)
- o Equatorial Guinea (55)
- o Eritrea (56)
- o Estonia (57)
- o Ethiopia (58)
- o Fiji (59)
- o Finland (60)
- o France (61)
- o Gabon (62)
- o Gambia (63)
- o Georgia (64)
- o Germany (65)
- o Ghana (66)
- o Greece (67)
- o Grenada (68)
- o Guatemala (69)
- o Guinea (70)
- o Guinea-Bissau (71)
- o Guyana (72)
- o Haiti (73)
- o Honduras (74)
- o Hong Kong (S.A.R.) (75)
- o Hungary (76)
- o Iceland (77)
- o India (78)
- o Indonesia (79)
- o Iran, Islamic Republic of... (80)
- o Iraq (81)
- o Ireland (82)
- o Israel (83)
- o Italy (84)
- o Jamaica (85)
- o Japan (86)
- o Jordan (87)
- o Kazakhstan (88)
- o Kenya (89)
- o Kiribati (90)
- o Kuwait (91)
- o Kyrgyzstan (92)
- o Lao People's Democratic Republic (93)
- o Latvia (94)
- o Lebanon (95)
- o Lesotho (96)
- o Liberia (97)
- o Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (98)
- o Liechtenstein (99)
- o Lithuania (100)
- o Luxembourg (101)
- o Madagascar (102)
- o Malawi (103)
- o Malaysia (104)
- o Maldives (105)
- o Mali (106)
- o Malta (107)
- o Marshall Islands (108)
- o Mauritania (109)
- o Mauritius (110)
- o Mexico (111)
- o Micronesia, Federated States of... (112)
- o Monaco (113)
- o Mongolia (114)
- o Montenegro (115)
- o Morocco (116)
- o Mozambique (117)
- o Myanmar (118)

- o Namibia (119)
- o Nauru (120)
- o Nepal (121)
- o Netherlands (122)
- o New Zealand (123)
- o Nicaragua (124)
- o Niger (125)
- o Nigeria (126)
- o North Korea (127)
- o Norway (128)
- o Oman (129)
- o Pakistan (130)
- o Palau (131)
- o Panama (132)
- o Papua New Guinea (133)
- o Paraguay (134)
- o Peru (135)
- o Philippines (136)
- o Poland (137)
- o Portugal (138)
- o Qatar (139)
- o Republic of Korea (140)
- o Republic of Moldova (141)
- o Romania (142)
- o Russian Federation (143)
- o Rwanda (144)
- o Saint Kitts and Nevis (145)
- o Saint Lucia (146)
- o Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (147)
- o Samoa (148)
- o San Marino (149)
- o Sao Tome and Principe (150)
- o Saudi Arabia (151)
- o Senegal (152)
- o Serbia (153)
- o Seychelles (154)
- o Sierra Leone (155)
- o Singapore (156)
- o Slovakia (157)
- o Slovenia (158)
- o Solomon Islands (159)
- o Somalia (160)
- o South Africa (161)
- o South Korea (162)
- o Spain (163)
- o Sri Lanka (164)
- o Sudan (165)
- o Suriname (166)
- o Swaziland (167)
- o Sweden (168)
- o Switzerland (169)
- o Syrian Arab Republic (170)
- o Tajikistan (171)
- o Thailand (172)
- o The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (173)
- o Timor-Leste (174)
- o Togo (175)
- o Tonga (176)
- o Trinidad and Tobago (177)
- o Tunisia (178)
- o Turkey (179)
- o Turkmenistan (180)
- o Tuvalu (181)
- o Uganda (182)
- o Ukraine (183)
- o United Arab Emirates (184)
- o United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (185)
- o United Republic of Tanzania (186)
- o Uruguay (188)
- o Uzbekistan (189)
- o Vanuatu (190)
- o Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of... (191)
- o Viet Nam (192)
- o Yemen (193)
- o Zambia (580)
- o Zimbabwe (1357)



Q2.3 Please enter your Post Code or Zip Code:

Q2.4

On average, each year my child/children attended elementary* school

I attended parent-only** meetings _____.

* U.S. grades K-6, approximately ages 5-12

** For example: the PTO/PTA, the School Site Council (SSC), Team Boosters, Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), etc).

- ☐ Never (0)
- ☐ Yearly 1-6 times a year (1)
- ☐ Monthly 7-12 times a year (2)
- ☐ Weekly 13-24 times a year (3)
- ☐ Daily more than 25+ times a year (4)

Q2.5

On average, each year my child/children attended elementary* school

I volunteered** _____.

* U.S. grades K-6, approximately ages 5-12

**This includes any volunteer activity for the school except attending parent-only meetings)

- ☐ Never (0)
- ☐ Yearly 1-6 times a year (1)
- ☐ Monthly 7-12 times a year (3)
- ☐ Weekly 13-24 times a year (4)
- ☐ Daily more than 25+ times a year (3)

Q2.6 In what ways have you volunteered for your child's/children's school(s)?

Q2.7 Why did you choose these volunteering activities in particular?

Q2.8 Do you feel that your level of involvement adequately meets the needs of the school(s)?

- ☐ Definitely not (-2)
- ☐ Probably not (-1)
- ☐ Probably yes (1)
- ☐ Definitely yes (27)

Q2.9 The more I volunteer for my child's/children's school(s), the more I feel personally valued:

- ☐ Strongly disagree (-3)
- ☐ Disagree (-2)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (-1)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (0)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (1)
- ☐ Agree (2)
- ☐ Strongly Agree (3)

Page Break

Q2.10 How often have you encountered the following behaviors from mothers/female guardians from your child's/children's school(s)?

I felt I was _____

	Never (0)	Yearly 1-6 times a year (1)	Monthly 7-12 times a year (2)	Weekly 13-24 times a year (3)	Daily more than 25+ times a year (4)
Excluded (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ignored (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Humiliated (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insulted (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teased (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ridiculed (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gossiped about (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shouted at (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatened (21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wrongly accused (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blocked from volunteering (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blocked from information about volunteering (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blocked from information about the school (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraged to stop volunteering (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intimidated through physical behaviors such as finger- pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, or blocking my way (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block

Q3.1 *On the previous page you noted experiencing challenging or negative interactions with other mothers/female guardians from your child's/children's school(s).*

The following questions will ask you to reflect on those experiences.

Q3.2

Please describe the challenging experiences with female guardians from your child's/children's school(s):



Q3.3 As a result of these experiences, I volunteered ____ for my child's/children's school(s):

- ☐ Much less (-3)
- ☐ Moderately less (-2)
- ☐ Slightly less (-1)
- ☐ About the same (0)
- ☐ Slightly more (1)
- ☐ Moderately more (2)
- ☐ Much more (3)

Q3.4 Please describe how these experiences affected your involvement in your child's/children's school(s):

Q3.5 If you had been able to volunteer more frequently, what services and/or resources could you have offered the school(s)?

Q3.6 Please explain what factors you believe caused the mothers/female guardians to behave the way they did:

Q3.7

*For the next few questions, please try to remember in detail **the most** negative or challenging situation with mothers/female guardians from your child's/children's school(s).*



Q3.8 Approximately how long ago was this event?

- ☐ It is currently happening (1)
- ☐ less than 1 year ago (2)
- ☐ less than 2 years ago (3)
- ☐ less than 3 years ago (4)
- ☐ less than 4 years ago (5)
- ☐ less than 5 years ago (6)
- ☐ less than 6 years ago (7)
- ☐ less than 7 years ago (8)
- ☐ less than 8 years ago (9)
- ☐ less than 9 years ago (10)
- ☐ less than 10 years ago (11)
- ☐ less than 11 years ago (12)
- ☐ less than 12 years ago (13)

Q3.9

Please, this is optional but extremely important.

At the time of this event, what was the name of the **school** and the **school district**?



Q3.10 What type of school is this?

- ☐ Public (1)
- ☐ Public Charter (2)
- ☐ Public Magnet (3)
- ☐ Private Independent (no religious affiliation) (4)
- ☐ Private Parochial (with a religious affiliation) (5)
- ☐ Home-school or Co-op Program (6)
- ☐ Other: (7) _____

Q3.11 Please provide the grade of your child at the time of this event.

(Please note, if you are residing outside of the United States the following grades correspond with the traditional U.S. schooling system.)

- ☐ Kindergarten, ages 5-6 (1)
- ☐ 1st Grade, ages 6-7 (2)
- ☐ 2nd Grade, ages 7-8 (3)
- ☐ 3rd Grade, ages 8-9 (4)
- ☐ 4th Grade, ages 9-10 (5)
- ☐ 5th Grade, ages 10-11 (6)
- ☐ 6th Grade, ages 11-12 (7)
- ☐ 7th Grade, ages 12-13 (8)
- ☐ 8th Grade, ages 13-14 (9)
- ☐ 9th Grade, ages 14-15 (10)
- ☐ 10th Grade, ages 15-16 (11)
- ☐ 11th Grade, ages 16-17 (12)
- ☐ 12th Grade, ages 17-18 (13)

Q3.12 As a result of **this particular** experience, I volunteered ____ for my child's/children's school(s):

- ☐ Much less (1)
- ☐ Moderately less (2)
- ☐ Slightly less (3)
- ☐ About the same (4)
- ☐ Slightly more (5)
- ☐ Moderately more (6)
- ☐ Much more (7)

Q3.13

Please describe the *most* negative or challenging situation.

(1) Was it with an individual or a group?

(2) What happened?

(3) How often does this happen?

Q3.14 Please tell me more about the person/people involved in this situation.
How would you describe or characterize her/them?

Q3.15 In what ways (if any) did (1) culture, (2) income, (3) employment, (4) race or (5) level of education influence the challenging experience?

Q3.16 Please provide at least three factors that most helped you navigate this situation.

The three things that helped me the most were _____:

Q3.17 During this experience, what was your relationship to your child/children in this school?

I was the _____ :

- ☐ Adoptive mother (1)
- ☐ Biological mother (2)
- ☐ Foster mother (3)
- ☐ Step mother (4)
- ☐ Grandmother (5)
- ☐ Sister (6)
- ☐ Cousin (7)
- ☐ Aunt (8)
- ☐ Guardian Other (9) _____

Q3.18

*Although there may have been many mothers/female guardians involved in the negative or challenging experience, the following questions pertain to the **one** mother/female guardian you most strongly associate with this negative or challenging experience.*



Q3.19 Which statement best describes the employment status of the mother/female guardian with whom you experienced the most challenging interactions?

If you do not know, please make your **best guess**:

- ☐ Not employed (0)
 - ☐ Employed, part time (1)
 - ☐ Employed, full time (2)
-



Q3.20 What was the relationship to her child/children in this school?

If you do not know, please make your **best guess**:

She was the _____ :

- ☐ Adoptive mother (1)
 - ☐ Biological mother (2)
 - ☐ Foster mother (3)
 - ☐ Step mother (4)
 - ☐ Grandmother (5)
 - ☐ Sister (6)
 - ☐ Cousin (7)
 - ☐ Aunt (8)
 - ☐ Guardian Other (9) _____
-



Q3.21 What is the highest level of education the mother/female guardian completed?
If you do not know, please make your **best guess**:

- ☐ Less than high school diploma (1)
 - ☐ High school diploma (or equivalent including GED) (2)
 - ☐ Some college (but no degree) (3)
 - ☐ College 2-year graduate (4)
 - ☐ College 4-year graduate (8)
 - ☐ Master's degree (5)
 - ☐ Doctoral degree (for example: has a Ph.D. in Science or an Ed.D. in Education) (6)
 - ☐ Professional degree (for example: is a lawyer or medical doctor) (7)
-



Q3.22 Please select the race/ethnicity that you believe *most closely* describes the mother/female guardian with whom you experienced the most challenging interactions.

If you do not know, please make your **best guess**.

- ☐ White/Caucasian (1)
 - ☐ Black or African American (2)
 - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
 - ☐ Asian (4)
 - ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
 - ☐ Hispanic or Latina (6)
 - ☐ Other (7) _____
-



Q3.23 Is the mother/female guardian with whom you experienced challenges employed at your child's/children's school district or school(s)?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ I do not know (3)

End of Block

Q4.1

During the most negative or challenging situation with mothers/female guardians from your child's/children's school(s), which of the following best represent your responses?

	Did not use this approach (0)	Used this approach and it worsened the situation (1)	Used this approach and it made no difference to the situation (2)	Used this approach and it improved the situation (3)
Ignored it, did nothing (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoided the individual (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduced the number of volunteer hours for the school (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transferred to another volunteer opportunity at the school (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stopped volunteering for the school (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked with other parents in the same volunteer group (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked with other parents at the school (not in the same volunteer group) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked with parents at different schools (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked with family/other parent/partner (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked with friends (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked with school staff (such as principal, secretary, or teacher) (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other : (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q4.2 Please explain in more detail why you chose (or did not choose) the responses listed above:

Page Break

Q4.3

The following questions are the key to this study.

Please take your time answering them in as much detail as possible.

Q4.4 What advice would you give to another mother/female guardian in a similar challenging situation?

Q4.5

What advice would you give to a teacher, principal or staff member who asked you:

"How could I have helped? Is there anything the school could have done differently?"

Q4.6 If there is anything else you think I (the researcher) should know that would be relevant for this study on parents' and guardian's involvement in their child's/children's school(s), please include it here:

End of Block

Q7.1

Thank you!

This is the last section.

Just a few more questions on your demographics and you are done.

Q7.2

Which statement best describes your current employment status?

- ☐ Not employed (0)
- ☐ Employed, part time (1)
- ☐ Employed, full time (2)

Q7.3 Choose one race/ethnicity you most strongly identify with:

- ☐ White/Caucasian (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latina (6)
- ☐ Other (7) _____

Q7.4 Ideologically, you see yourself as:

- ☐ Extremely Liberal (-2)
- ☐ Somewhat Liberal (-1)
- ☐ Moderate (0)
- ☐ Somewhat Conservative (1)
- ☐ Extremely Conservative (2)

Q7.5 The number of children in your home that have attended or are attending *elementary school* (Grades K-6, approximately ages 5-12):

Q7.6 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than a high school diploma (1)
- ☐ High school diploma (or equivalent including GED) (2)
- ☐ Some college (but no degree) (3)
- ☐ College 2-year graduate (4)
- ☐ College 4-year graduate (8)
- ☐ Master's degree (5)
- ☐ Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D.) (6)
- ☐ Professional degree (JD, MD) (7)

Q7.7 What was the primary language spoken in **your** childhood home?
(please choose only one)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Arabic (1) | <input type="radio"/> Korean (9) |
| <input type="radio"/> Chinese (2) | <input type="radio"/> Laotian (10) |
| <input type="radio"/> English (3) | <input type="radio"/> Persian (11) |
| <input type="radio"/> French (4) | <input type="radio"/> Russian (12) |
| <input type="radio"/> German (5) | <input type="radio"/> Spanish (13) |
| <input type="radio"/> Hindi (6) | <input type="radio"/> Tagalog (14) |
| <input type="radio"/> Italian (7) | <input type="radio"/> Vietnamese (15) |
| <input type="radio"/> Japanese (8) | <input type="radio"/> Other (16) _____ |

Q7.8 With whom does your child/do your children reside **the majority** of the time?

- ☐ Only with me (1)
- ☐ With me and other parent in same household (2)
- ☐ With me and partner (not parent) in same household (3)
- ☐ Only with other parent in a different household (4)
- ☐ With other parent and his/her partner in a different household (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____

Q7.9 Are you employed at your child's/children's school districts or schools?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q7.10 What is your year of birth?

Q7.11 Information about income is very important for this study. Please indicate the answer that includes your entire household income (the previous year) before taxes.

- ☐ Less than \$24,999 (1)
- ☐ \$25,000 to \$49,999 (2)
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$74,999 (3)
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999 (4)
- ☐ \$100,000 to \$124,999 (5)
- ☐ \$125,000 to \$149,999 (6)
- ☐ \$150,000 to \$174,999 (7)
- ☐ \$175,000 to \$199,999 (8)
- ☐ \$200,000 or more (9)

Q7.12 How does your family income level compare to other families in your child's/children's school?

My family income level is _____:

- ☐ Much lower (-2)
- ☐ Moderately lower (-1)
- ☐ About the same (0)
- ☐ Moderately higher (1)
- ☐ Much higher (2)

End of Block

Q8.1 Dear Parents and Guardians, I am very thankful that you took the time to complete this survey. If you know other mothers/female guardians who should receive this survey, please forward this to them. If you would be willing to help me further understand parent and guardian involvement, please provide your email address and/or telephone number below. A single follow-up interview would be less than thirty minutes. **This is completely OPTIONAL**, but would be very valuable to my work. Please know that I keep all personal identifying information private and I will **not** use it in **any way** when reporting this study's results.

- ☐ Email (1) _____
- ☐ Phone number (2) _____

Q8.2

Please click on the right arrow to submit your responses.

End of Block

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Note: Question topics are numbered; actual questions are bolded; probing questions are italicized.

Introduction: Hi, this is Mara Robinson, *is this [name]?* Thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview with me. *Is this still a good time to talk?* Great, thank you. This is going to take about thirty minutes. At the twenty-five-minute mark, I will let you know we only have five minutes left, if you want to keep talking I would love that, but if you need to go, I want to make sure you have the last five minutes for anything else you wanted to ask or talk about. *Does that sound good?* Great. Also, you can stop the interview at any time and for any reason, and that's perfectly fine. *Okay?* Great. Let's get started!

1. In the survey, you indicated that you are [demographic information], is that correct?
 - a. Can you tell me a little more about yourself? Something I would not know just from the survey?
2. In the survey, you wrote about the most challenging experience with another female guardian from your children's schools. You wrote, "[verbatim reading of response]."
 - a. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the experience?
 - b. I'm a new parent at your children's schools and I wanted to become more involved in their schools, what advice would you give me?
3. As you know, I'm studying women's interactions with each other. My study shows that many women across the country have experienced aggression from other female guardians.
 - a. Why do you think that is?
 - b. What do you think causes the aggressive interactions?
 - c. Do you think culture has anything to do with what the aggressive experience?
 - i. So what would be the ideal school culture?
 - d. Do you think there were structures that caused aggressive interactions?
 - i. Is there a PTA or any sort of parent volunteer group at the school?
 - ii. So what would be the ideal school structure?
 - e. Do you think there were people's actions or inactions that caused the aggressive experiences?
4. I wanted to share with you some of the results from the surveys. I analyzed the quantitative data—i.e. all the answers to the survey that were multiple choice (not fill in the blank)—and I got some interesting results. Three demographic variables ended up being significantly correlated to aggression. That means that women with these three variables were statistically more likely to receive or perceive aggression from other female guardians. *Does that make sense? Do you have any questions about that?* I'd like to share them with you and see if you have any thoughts about it.

- a. When I looked women's level of education, only women with a doctoral degree were more likely to receive or perceive aggression. **What are your thoughts on that? Why do you think that might be?**
 - b. When I looked women's races and ethnicities, only women who identified as Asian were more likely to receive or perceive aggression. **What are your thoughts on that? Why do you think that might be?**
 - c. And finally, when I looked at how women identified ideologically, women who identified as extremely liberal were more likely to receive or perceive aggression. **What are your thoughts on that? Why do you think that might be?**
 - d. *I wanted to point out that you mentioned "[factors]" as most influencing the aggressive experience. Can you tell me more about that?*
5. I wanted to share with you a result of the quantitative analysis that surprised me, and I was hoping you could tell me your thoughts. Based on my previous research, I thought women who worked full time would experience the most aggression from women who did not work. Likewise, I thought women how did not work would be the most aggressive group. That is not what the results of this survey indicated. What my data shows is that all sorts of women experience aggression in all sorts of quantities. In other words, women who don't work were just as likely as women who work full time, to experience aggression from other women. Likewise, women who work full time were just as likely to be aggressive as women who don't work.
- a. **My question is, what do you think of my findings? What do you think about the fact that working moms and stay-at-home moms were just as likely to be aggressive and receive aggression? Why do you think that is? Did these results surprise you?**
6. We are coming up to the end of our interview. We have [minutes] left. **Is there anything else you wanted to tell me about or do you have any questions for me?**

Conclusion: Thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview with me. If after we get off the phone you think of anything you wanted to ask me, or anything else you would like to share with me, please call, text or email me. Again, I wanted to say thank you for sharing your story.

APPENDIX D: REVISED NEGATIVE ACTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Construct	Original item wording and NAQ-R item #	Female Guardian Aggression Survey Rewording
Person-related bullying (PRB)	Being ignored or excluded (6)	Excluded (1)
	Being ignored or excluded (6)	Ignored (2)
	Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach... (12)	Ignored (2)
	Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work (2)	Humiliated (3)
	Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes, or your personal life (7)	Insulted (4)
	Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm (20)	Teased (5)
	Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work 2	Ridiculed (6)
	Spreading gossip or rumors about you (5)	Gossiped about (7)
	Having allegations made against you (17)	Wrongly accused (10)
	Hints or signals that you should quit your job (10)	Encouraged to stop volunteering (14)
	Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial tasks (4)	<i>No question created</i>
	Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes (11)	<i>No question created</i>
	Persistent criticism of your errors or mistakes (13)	<i>No question created</i>
	Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with (15)	<i>No question created</i>
Work-related bullying (WRB)	Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (e.g. sick leave) (19)	Blocked from volunteer opportunities (11)

	Someone withholding information which affects your performance (1)	Blocked from information about the school (12)
	Someone withholding information which affects your performance (1)	Blocked from information about volunteering for the school (13)
	Being ordered to do work below your level of competence (3)	<i>No question created</i>
	Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines (3)	<i>No question created</i>
	Excessive monitoring of your work (18)	<i>No question created</i>
	Being exposed to an unmanageable workload (21)	<i>No question created</i>
<i>Physical intimidation (PI)</i>	Having your opinions ignored (14)	<i>Ignored (2)</i>
	Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (8)	<i>Shouted at (8)</i>
	Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse (22)	<i>Threatened (9)</i>
	Intimidating behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way (9)	<i>Intimidated through physical behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, or blocking my way (15)</i>

APPENDIX E: DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Dependent Variables

Description		SPSS code	Detailed code
Aggression Experiences			
	Aggressive experiences, yes or no	AggressionYesNo	Binary variable, 1=Yes, 0=No
	Aggressive experiences, aggregate score	AggressionSum	Numeric scale, $0 \leq$
	Person-related bullying, yes or no	PersonRelatedYesNo	Binary variable, 1=Yes, 0=No
	Person-related bullying, aggregate score	PersonRelatedSum	Numeric scale, $0 \leq$
	Work-related bullying, yes or no	WorkRelatedYesNo	Binary variable, 1=Yes, 0=No
	Work-related bullying, aggregate score	WorkRelatedSum	Numeric scale, $0 \leq$
	Physical intimidation, yes or no	PhysicalRelatedYesNo	Binary variable, 1=Yes, 0=No
	Physical intimidation, aggregate score	WorkRelatedYesNo	Numeric scale, $0 \leq$
Responses to Aggression			
	Responded to Aggression, yes or no	RespondedYesNo	Binary variable, 1=Yes, 0=No
	14 responses including “Stopped volunteering” and “Talked with friends”	14 codes including “StoppedVolunteering” “TalkedFriends”	14 binary variables where 1=Yes, 0=No

Independent Variables

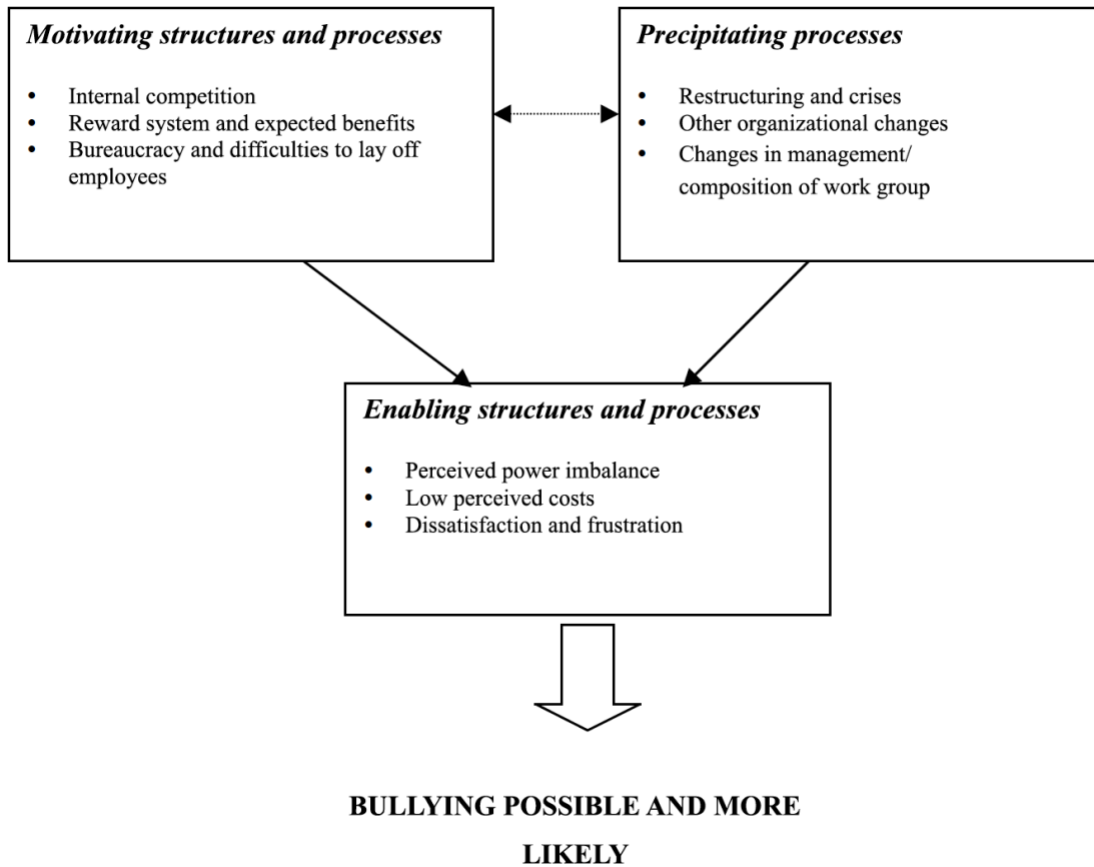
Description	Coding
Participant Demographics	
Employment status	Three dichotomous variables with “Not Employed” as the reference category. These variables include “Employed, part time,” and “Employed Full Time.”
Race – ethnicity	Six dichotomous variables with “White/Caucasian” as the reference category. These variables include, “American Indian or Alaska Native” and “Asian”
Ideology	Five dichotomous variables with “Extremely Liberal” as the reference category. These variables include “Somewhat liberal” and “Moderate”
Level of education	Seven dichotomous variables with “Less than high school diploma” as the reference category. These variables include, “High school diploma” and “Some college (but no degree)”
Primary language spoken in childhood home	Fifteen dichotomous variables with “English” as the reference category. These variables include “Arabic” and “Chinese”
With whom does child live most of the time	Five dichotomous variables with “Only with me,” as the reference category. These variables include, “With me and other parent,” and “With other parent and his/her partner”
Employed at children’s school or school district	Dichotomous variable with 1=Yes, 0=No
Income	Six dichotomous variables with “Less than \$24,999” as the reference category. These variables include, “\$25,000-\$49,000,” “\$50,000-\$74,999,” and “\$200,000 or more”
Zip code	Five digits (Numeric- Scale)
Country of residence	One hundred five dichotomous variables with “United States of America” as the reference category. These variables include “Afghanistan,” and “Zimbabwe”
Year of birth	Number of Years (Numeric – Scale)

Number of children attending or have attended elementary school	Number of Children (Numeric – Scale)
<hr/>	
Parent Involvement	
Volunteer frequency	Five dichotomous variables with “Never” as the reference category. These variables include, “Yearly, 1-6 times a year,” and “Monthly, 7-12 times a year,”
Parent group volunteer frequency	Five dichotomous variables with “Never” as the reference category. These variables include, “Yearly, 1-6 times a year,” and “Monthly, 7-12 times a year,”
Needs of school	Four dichotomous variables with “Definitely not” as the reference category. These variables include, “Probably not,” and “Definitely yes”
Feeling valued	Seven dichotomous variables with “Strongly disagree” as the reference category. These variables include, “Disagree,” and “Somewhat disagree”
<hr/>	
Aggression Experience	
Person-related bullying	Number – Scale (based on results of NAQ-R)
Work-related bullying	Number – Scale (based on results of NAQ-R)
Physical intimidation	Number – Scale (based on results of NAQ-R)
Child’s grade at the time	Thirteen dichotomous variable with “Kindergarten” as the reference category. Other variables include “1 st grade” and “12 th grade”
Type of school child attended at the time	Six dichotomous variables with “Public” as the reference category. These variables include, “Public Charter,” and “Public Magnet”
Relationship to child at the time	Nine dichotomous variables with “Biological mother” as the reference category. These variables include, “Foster mother” and “Grandmother”

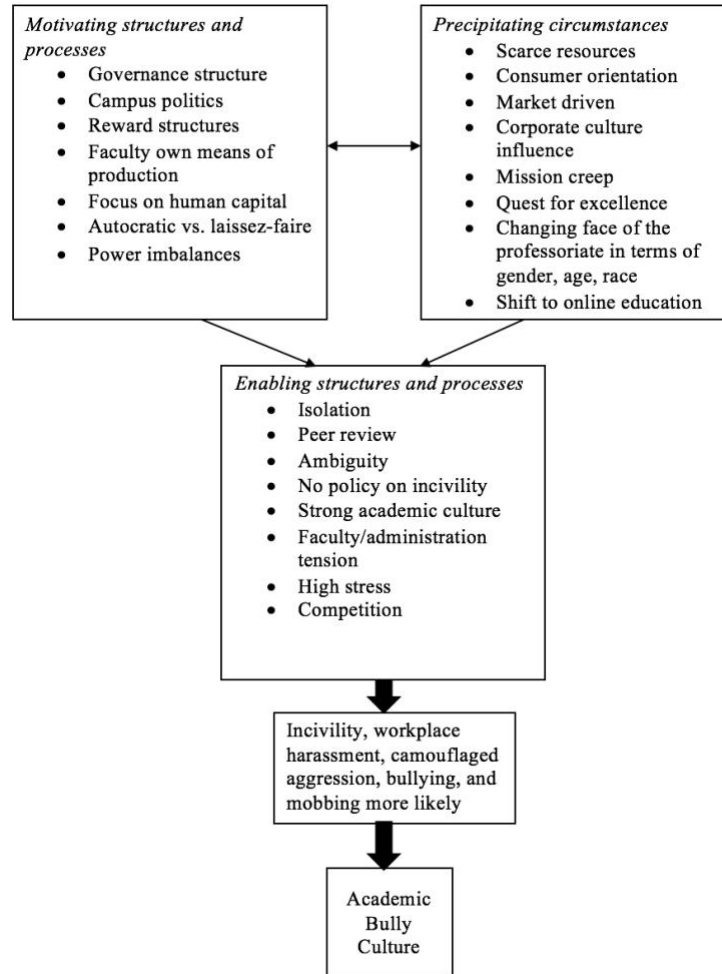
Alteration in volunteer time after aggression in general	Three dichotomous variables with “About the same” as the reference category. These variables include, “More,” and “Less”
Alteration in volunteer time after most aggressive experience	Three dichotomous variables with “About the same” as the reference category. These variables include, “More,” and “Less”
<hr/>	
Aggressor Demographics	
Employment status	Three dichotomous variables with “Not Employed” as the reference category. These variables include “Employed, part time,” and “Employed Full Time.”
Employed at children’s school or school district	Dichotomous variable with 1=Yes, 0=No
Race	Six dichotomous variables with “White/Caucasian” as the reference category. These variables include, “American Indian or Alaska Native” and “Asian”
Relationship to her child at the time	Nine dichotomous variables with “Biological mother” as the reference category. These variables include, “Foster mother” and “Grandmother”
<hr/>	
Aggression Responses	
Non-action and reactions	Number – Scale (based on results of NAQ-R)
<hr/>	

APPENDIX F: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

A. *Salin's (2003) framework of the enabling, motivating, and precipitating structures and processes in the work environment that contribute to bullying*



B. Twale and DeLuca's (2008) framework of the enabling, motivating, and precipitating structures and processes in the higher-education work environment that contribute to bullying



C. Demographic cross-tabulation for survey participant and aggressors

Degree's Earned:

		Degree Earned of Survey Participant								
		Less than High School	High School	Less than College	College 2-year	College 4-year	Masters	JD or MD	Ph.D. or Ed.D.	Total
Degree Earned of Aggressor	Less than High School									
	High School					1				1
	Less Than College		2	1	1	6			1	11
	College 2-year		1			4				5
	College 4-year	1	7	3	5	19	1		1	37
	Masters	1	10	5	2	34	5			57
	JD or MD		1	1		8	2	1	2	15
	Ph.D. or Ed.D.		1	1		3			1	6
	Total	2	22	11	8	75	8	1	5	132

Employment Status:

		Employment Status of Survey Participant			Total
		Not Employed	Employed Part-Time	Employed Full-Time	
Employment Status of Aggressor	Not Employed	75	4	3	93
	Employed Part-Time	8	2	1	14
	Employed Full-Time	7	1	2	13
	Total	98	7	8	135

Race:

		Race/ Ethnicity of Survey Participant					
		White/ Caucasian	Black/ African American	Asian	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic/ Latina	Total
Race/ Ethnicity of Aggressor	White/ Caucasian	75	4	3	1	10	93
	Black/ African American	8	2	1		3	14
	Asian	7	1	2		3	13
	Hispanic/ Latina	8		2		5	15
	Total	98	7	8	1	21	135

D. “Character” Category in Response to Survey Question 3.14: Please tell me more about the person/people involved in this situation. How would you describe or characterize her/them?

- These words are verbatim as used by the survey participants. If the word(s) were used by more than one participant, this is indicated by the “x” and the number of participants who used that word. For example, “x2” is a word that was used by two participants to describe their aggressors.

<u>Communal</u>	(Agentic continued)	<u>Un-communal</u>	(Un-Communal continued)
1. Conflict averse	18. Mean x2	1. Not smile x2	
2. Hesitant	19. Mean girl x2	2. Not welcoming x2	37. Oppressing
3. Social	20. authoritarian	3. Not friendly	38. Passive
4. Outwardly very friendly, smiling etc. to those in power positions	21. bossy x2	4. Un-flexibles	Aggressive
5. Popular	22. demanding x2	5. Unhappy	39. Privilege
6. Involved	23. Intimidating	6. Unwelcoming	40. Snoot
7. Regular	24. Self-assured	7. Didn't care	41. Sometimes real, other times volatile
8. Extrovert x2	25. High expectations	8. Dishonest	
9. Organized	26. Convey control	9. Dysfunctional	42. Stuck up
10. Normal	27. Controlling x8	10. Lack vision	43. Threatened
	28. Take over	11. Not solution oriented	44. Uptight
	29. Domineering	12. Overprotective	
	30. Over-empowered	13. Overly inquisitive	
	31. Overbearing	14. Overburdened	
	32. Pushy x2	15. Stage mom	
<u>Agentic</u>	33. aggressive	16. Inappropriate	
1. Aggressive	34. brash	17. Alcohol abusers	
2. Over the top	35. Entitled x2	18. Burnt-out	
3. Nasty	36. Materialistic	19. Crazy	
4. Negative	37. Dismissive of others	20. Hurting	
5. Judgmental x4	38. Limelight	21. Idiot	
6. Rude x2	39. No outside interest	22. Not socially aware	
7. Standoffish	40. Not inclusive	23. Awkward	
8. arrogant	41. Know-it-All	24. Point Loma	
9. Important role	42. always right	25. Jealousy	
10. Manipulative	43. Thinks better than me	26. Nosey	
11. Rigid x2	44. Thinks has perfect children	27. Odd	
12. Rule-follower	45. Very confident	28. Sad	
13. Type A x2	46. Blind to faults	29. Afraid	
14. Two faced	47. Holds grudge	30. Aloof	
15. Short/snippy	48. Self-involved	31. Angry	
16. Conflictual interactions with others	49. Self-righteous	32. Anxious	
17. Confrontational	50. Self-serving	33. Elitist	
		34. Ignoring	
		35. In denial	
		36. Insecure x 2	

Date: 3-30-2017

IRB #: IRB-2017-58

Title: Bullies and allies near the playground: Mother's experiences of aggression and support in their children's schools

Creation Date: 3-29-2017

End Date: 3-30-2018

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Mara Vicente

Review Board: USD IRB

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
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