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A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF ADOLESCENT  
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN A CHURCH-  
BASED CONTEXT: BULLY IN THE PEW

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Andrew Sherman Baker  
December 2013

**APPROVAL SHEET**

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF ADOLESCENT  
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN A CHURCH-  
BASED CONTEXT: BULLY IN THE PEW

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To all those who have supported me from day one.

Thanks for being eternal difference makers.

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## PREFACE

When I began my studies I never would have expected to be at the place I am today. My experiences during the last five years have far surpassed any expectations I once had. At the beginning of the dissertation process I was planning to write about the issue of strategic planning in higher education. However, due to the challenge of my professors, I eventually found a topic that I was far more passionate about and that I knew needed to be examined in greater detail. Having spent thousands of hours with young people, I hope that the insights contained in this study will be a blessing to youth all over the world and that each of them will understand how much Jesus loves them and how much He wants to be part of their lives.

Without the encouragement of Dr. Timothy Jones and Dr. Michael Wilder, I never would have chosen to pursue this path. They are men of integrity who have helped me see how important the question of this research is to the kingdom.

Dr. Jones has continued to point me in the right direction as I have moved from rabbit to rabbit in the writing process. His insight and knowledge are surpassed only by his commitment to the message of Jesus.

Dr. Wilder has been an advocate and mentor since my first day at Southern Seminary. He was willing to believe in me at times when I did not even believe in myself. For that I will be eternally grateful.

I am also grateful to my cohort of students at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. From the onset, I have felt truly honored and privileged to study alongside each of them.

To my colleagues at Harding University and in the Mitchell Center for Leadership and Ministry, I say “thank you” for your support. I knew from the beginning

that working on a doctoral degree while still holding a full-time academic position would be difficult, but thanks to you it could be done.

Since the day that the decision was made for me to further my studies, my loving wife, Amy, has been a constant support to me. She has made sacrifices far greater than I will ever know to see this project through to the end. I would not be where I am today without her love and never-ending support.

To our children: Julianne, Maryella, and Isaac. Thanks for being you and for always loving your dad. I had a goal to see that this process was done before any of you made it to your teen years. That goal was made possible in large part because of your support.

Last, I want to say “thank you” to my mom and dad. Benny and Donna Baker have prayed over me since I was in my mother’s womb, and I have always felt and known those prayers to be sincere. I am grateful for the way they have shown me Jesus and continue to do so to this very day. Thanks for loving me and for showing me daily what it means to be Godly parents.

Andrew Sherman Baker

Searcy, Arkansas

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## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH CONCERN

The concern of this writing reaches far beyond its pages and into the complex world of what it means for young people to love and value each other like Jesus. It has been well researched in the United States and around the world that the issue of bullying behavior among young people continues to be ever-present (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094-95; Carey 2003, 16; Orpinas et al. 2003, 431-32; Berger 2006, 90-91; Vaillancourt 2008, 486-87).

Daily it seems that popular magazines, news stations, and newspapers are filled with stories of young people who have been the victims of some type of abuse from their peers. *The New York Post* reported, “The White House held a conference on bullying prevention, estimating that it affects 13 million students, or about a third of those attending school” (Staff Reporter 2012). When the White House holds a summit to deal specifically with the issue of bullying people take notice, but could it be, as Berger points out, that “many legislatures and school systems throughout the world have vowed to eliminate bullying, but few understand the complexity of the problem” (Berger 2006, 115). As one group of researchers pointed out, “Bullying is a universal phenomenon” (Eslea et al. 2003, 82). The concern here is to examine at what levels the complexities and phenomenon of bullying are happening in the church-based context, in a place that is called to a pattern and transformation much different from the world (Rom 12:2).

#### **Introduction to the Research Problem**

For the last twenty years, interest in the issue of adolescent aggression and bully behavior has heightened. While many have written on the subject and have provided numerous definitions (Berger 2006, 94; Batsche and Knoff, 1994, 165; Kumpulainen

2011, 121-22; Craig 1998, 123; Walton 2005, 94; Carey 2003, 16; Swearer and Doll 2001, 12), Dan Olweus, the researcher many believe to have first seriously studied the issue, provides a seminal definition of bullying: “A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons” (Olweus 1993, 9).

Researchers agree there is an issue of bullying today, but they disagree widely as to the level of bullying that is present. One end of the research says that roughly 10 percent of young people are involved at some level in bully behavior (Beaty and Alexeyer 2008, 1). Others say the number of students who are affected is 15 to 20 percent (Batsche and Knoff 1994, 165), and others say 30 percent (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094). At the other extreme some researchers have said that as many as 75 percent of school-aged children have been bullied (Swearer and Doll 2001, 8). Two main reasons account for the difference in numbers. First, not all research is done at a scientific level. Many reports are based not on scientific research, but simple anecdotal projects that lead to widespread misunderstanding (Berger 2007, 93). Second, when scientific research is done, researchers are not always asking questions in the same way. Some researchers provide respondents with a definition of bullying before questioning, while others avoid a definition and provide behavioral specific questions (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 1).

Even with the differences, it seems widely accepted that there is a prevalence of bullying behavior, which has become a major health problem both domestically and internationally (Nansel et al. 2004, 730-31). In 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Washington, DC, released “Measuring Bullying Victimization, Perpetration, and Bystander Experiences: A Compendium of Assessment Tools.” This publication looked closely at all the bully research, past and present, and concluded that “nearly 30 percent of American adolescents reported at least moderate bullying experiences” (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 1). The compendium number was largely based on the seminal work of Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, and Scheidt in the

*Journal of American Medical Association* that concluded,

A total of 29.9% of the sample reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying, as a bully (13.0%), one who was bullied (10.6%), or both (6.3%). Males were more likely than females to be both perpetrators and targets of bullying. The frequency of bullying was higher among 6th- through 8th-grade students than among 9th- and 10th-grade students. (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094)

This research used the numbers provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Nansel study as the basis.

The issue and challenges regarding bullies are not new (Milsom and Gallo 2006, 12-13). With today's instant access to news media and growing campaigns that champion tolerance, one would think the issue would not be as big as it is. However, research shows that bullying is "the most prevalent form of low-level violence in schools" (Whitted and Dupper 2005, 167) and in some extreme cases led to young people making the decision to end their life (Hacker et al. 2006, 154; Kim and Leventhal 2008, 133-34).

The researcher understands much has been said and done to deal with bully behavior in a school context. As one researcher points out, there was an explosion in research the last 25 years into bully behavior and actions (Berger 2006, 91). However, there appears to be no scientific research investigating bullying in a church context. As a youth minister, the researcher witnessed a parent in response to a bullying situation say, "It's no big deal. We have to simply let kids be kids."

This cannot be the answer for individuals in the church context. There must be serious attention given to the challenges that young people face every day and to the way in which they live out the call of Jesus in their daily lives, whether in the context of school, home, or church (Clark 2011, 23-24). The goal should be for young people to be less like the norms of the world and more like Jesus who gives "the realm of forgiveness, mercy, love and indestructible life" (Crouch 2008, 146).

### **The Foundational Problem**

The present concern is found in the day-to-day interactions of society and culture and at the core of how individuals created in the image of God treat each other

(Hoekema 1994, 102-04). Since birth, this researcher has been associated with the Christian community of faith, having grown up a preacher's son. In many ways, this has been a great blessing. However, it has also presented a fair share of challenges. One of the greatest challenges has been resolving the constant tension felt when people of faith act more like the world than as chosen children of God, as one popular writer states in response to cultural challenges, "Are we hiding our faith in our back pocket?" (Lyons 2012, 5).

Walking into almost any middle school or high school in the United States, at some point one will find a sign reading "No Bullying," followed with the steps students should take to report such behavior. From television shows to public-service campaigns to endless academic research projects, the issue of bullying has become a hot-button issue regarding young people today. One group of researchers went so far as to call it a "chronic stressor" in the lives of young people (Newman, Holden, and Delville 2005, 343).

While much has been written and discussed about bully behavior and the response in both the school and work contexts, nothing has been done to look at the issue within the community of faith. Having served for ten years as a youth minister and currently directing a summer camp for Christian teenagers, the researcher has witnessed first-hand bully behavior in the faith community.

The concern of this research was to investigate at what levels bully behavior had manifested itself in churches. Many have said that schools should be safe places of learning, but the presence of bullying has made that difficult (Orpinas and Horne 2006, 13-14; Whitted and Dupper 2005, 167-77). If schools should be safe places, then churches would be even safer places of learning and transformation, that prepare individuals to live out the attitude and actions of Jesus (Phil 2:3-4).

In his landmark work, *Soul Searching*, Christian Smith concluded that the "single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents" (Smith 2005, 261). One aim of this research was to determine the way in



which parents are connected to the issue of bullying. What are parents teaching their children about how to respond to unwanted and ungodly behavior? If Smith is right, and this researcher believes he is, then parents have a crucial role to play in helping young people respond to the bully issue in school, society, and the pew.

The foundational problem of bully behavior in daily lives of young people is one that must be taken seriously (Carey 2003, 16; Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewski 2003, 431-32). As Batsche and Knoff point out, “The presence of bullying in a school indicates that the level of prosocial behavior and respect for one another is lacking” (Batsche and Knoff 1994, 173). The foundational problem of bully behavior and the lack of respect among adolescence was a backdrop to the purpose of this research, measuring at what level bullying happens within a church-based context.

### **Research Purpose**

Based on the substantial relationships and interactions young people share at church, the purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate in what ways and to what levels adolescent bully behavior is present and responded to in a church-based context. Significant research has been completed on bully behavior in schools and places of employment (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094-95; Olweus and Limber 2010, 124-25; Orpinas and Horne 2006, 11-25; Goldman 2012, 111; Namie and Namie 2009, 289-312). Recent research acknowledges that there is still much to learn on the issue of bullying and adolescent aggression, because as Goldman points out, “Bullying is a multifaceted problem, and thus it requires a many-pronged solution” (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 1-2; Goldman 2012, 271-72).

A gap exists between the scientific view of bullying and what should be the view of those who declare their connection to the message and life of Jesus (Orpinas and Horne 2006, 30-32; Olweus 1993, 115-16). A follower of Jesus does not refrain from bullying simply because “scientific evaluation” says it is not right (Berger 2006, 115). Individuals of faith refrain from bullying because they seek to imitate the sacrificial and

ultimate example of love exemplified in the life of Jesus (Matt 20:25-28).

### **Delimitations of the Proposed Research**

There are a number of delimitations to this research. The research was limited to adolescents who attend Uplift Summer Camp 2012 on the campus of Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. Each summer, more than one thousand teenagers spend five days in June on the university's campus participating in a camp experience similar to a Bible camp. The results of this research are seen as generalizable only to Uplift campers, but transferable to a broader evangelical faith community.

For the last ten years, Uplift has surveyed campers each summer, and this survey served as the 2012 instrument. Ninety-seven percent of participants indicated affiliation with Churches of Christ, mainly from the non-instrumental Churches of Christ.

A final limitation of the study is that of diversity. While there was some diversity of race and economic status, the majority of campers were Caucasian young people. Due to the cost of camp, they may also come from upper-middle-class homes.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions directed the collection and analysis of data for this research study:

1. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships of those who have mentor relationships and those who do not?
2. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships and parental instructions related to aggressive behaviors?
3. What relationship exists, if any, between physical aggressive behavior and verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents in church-based relationships?
4. What relationship exists, if any, between aggressive behaviors and positive interactions in church-based relationships?
5. What relationship exists, if any, between receiving and displaying positive interactions in church-based relationships?
6. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behavior and each of the variables: community size, church size, and youth-group size?

7. What is the occurrence of student aggressive behavior in a church-based context as compared to aggressive behavior in society?

### **Terminology**

The terms below are defined as they are to be understood within this research.

*Adolescence.* The exact age of adolescence has been greatly debated since G. Stanley Hall's introduction of the idea in his two-volume set in early 1900s (Hall 1904, 291). It has been suggested that adolescence "ranges from ten years to twenty-five years" (Kelly 2009, 8). Others contend that adolescence starts as early as 9 years old and continues until one's late 20s to early 30s (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 168). Pearce and Denton expand on the idea of adolescence:

Adolescence is a Latin word derived from the verb *adolescere*, meaning "to grow into adulthood." Adolescence is typically used to refer to that period in life when individuals are moving from the immaturity of childhood into the maturity of adulthood, and this involves many dramatic biological and social changes. Adolescence involves puberty, interest in sex, autonomy from parents, increasing abilities to make independent and wise decisions, growing self-awareness and concern for the future. . . . The period of life stretching from about age 10 to 20, or the second decade of life. (Pearce and Denton 2011, 4-5)

For the purpose of this study the age of adolescence is determined by grades 6-12 or equivalent age of 11 to 17 (Meece and Daniels 2008, 417).

*Aggressive behavior or bullying.* Dan Olweus says that bullying occurs "when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another" (Olweus 1993, 9). Others have added to the definition to include physical or emotional pain, imbalance of power, and verbal aggression (Orpinas and Horne 2006, 14; Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 1). For this study, aggressive behavior and bullying are seen as one in the same. Based on the definitions, aggressive behavior and bullying is defined as the act of someone intentionally inflicting pain or discomfort, either physically, verbally, or emotionally on another individual over time (Swearer and Doll 2001, 10).

A key distinction in defining bullying is to understand the difference between bullying and violence. Violence is usually an action that is against the law. Bullying is not usually against the law until it moves into harassment or assault. Bullying at times

can lead to violence. Violence among teenagers is seen more as murders, aggravated assaults, robberies, and rapes. As one report showed, “Violent crime rate at school is less than half what it was in 1994” (Cornel 2011, 4).

*Bullied.* In looking at the issue of bullying, one must understand the three specific groups: bullies, bullied, and bystanders (Coloroso 2003, 3-10). For this study, the term bullied refers to any person who is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons (Olweus 1993, 9).

*Church.* A substantial definition of church would be “the spiritual family of God, the Christian fellowship created by the Holy Spirit through the testimony to the mighty acts of God in Christ Jesus” (Elwell 2001, 246). Because of the age and understanding of the participants in this study a basic definition of church is used: “It is a group . . . who regularly meet to worship God, pursue growth, and collaborate for ministerial work” (Broyles 2009, 9) that together practice the disciplines of communion, prayer and giving while viewing confession and baptism as foundational to salvation.

*Churches of Christ.* The description of Churches of Christ is taken from the *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*:

The largest of the three principal bodies in the American restoration movement, Churches of Christ are located throughout the nation but concentrated in the South and Southwest. Because this is not a denomination but a brotherhood with no central headquarters, activities such as record keeping are very difficult. Recent efforts show the membership to be about 1,250,000, in nearly 13,000 churches. (Meade and Hill 1985, 91)

*Mentor.* The history of the word *mentor* comes from Homer’s epic *The Odyssey*. In this epic, the father Odysseus leaves for battle and instructs his friend, Mentor, to teach his son Telemachus. Mentor is to teach Telemachus about all aspects of existence (Crow and Matthews 1998, 2). The word *mentoring* is never specifically used in Scripture. However, the idea of mentoring is found throughout its pages. The idea of mentoring is demonstrated in stories like Paul and Titus, Paul and Timothy, and Jesus and the disciples (Lanker 2010, 269-70).

Stanley and Clinton provide a definition of *mentoring*: “A relational process

between a mentor, who knows or has experienced something and transfers that something to a mentoree, at an appropriate time and manner, so that it facilitates development or empowerment” (Stanley and Clinton 1992, 40). Lanker and Issler say that mentoring “provides support and guidance as a result of a relationship developed” (Lanker and Issler 2010, 93).

Since each student was provided with a definition of mentoring as part of the survey, a simple and precise definition was needed. For this research, a mentor is “a person who acts as a guide, role model, or sponsor providing you knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel and support” (Hughes, Ginnet and Curphy 2002, 234).

### **Procedural Overview**

The purpose of this study was to investigate in what ways and to what levels adolescent bully behavior is present and responded to in the church-based context. This study used a quantitative survey format, originally developed and used by Pamela Opinas and Richard Frankowski (2001) in looking at aggressive bully behavior in schools, to examine the degree to which adolescent bully behavior was present in a church-based context.

This research was accomplished by studying 1,506 adolescents at Uplift 2012. Uplift is one of the four largest Church of Christ summer camps in the United States. It was began in 1984, and for the last twenty years has attracted 1,500 to 2,000 young people to the campus of Harding University for five days of classes, worship, entertainment, and enjoyment. The overarching goal of Uplift is that all campers, sponsors, and adults are closer to God when they leave campus than when they arrived. This study was conducted with campers who participated in Uplift 2012 summer camp at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. Before beginning the study, the researcher gained approval from the Uplift board, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Ethics Board, and the Harding University Institutional Review Board.

For the last ten years, participants in Uplift have been asked on the first day of

camp to take a survey on a wide range of topics and issues. The researcher was a part of each of those projects with two colleagues, Daniel Stockstill and Jerry Bowling. The ten years of previous research has shown the representative nature of the sample in relation to Church of Christ adolescence. The four largest adherent states of the Churches of Christ in the United States are Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Arkansas (Royster 2012, 26-27). Those were also the four largest states represented at Uplift 2012. Another advantage of the previous research is that the staff, sponsors, youth ministers, and campers were familiar with the research process and procedures.

The researcher gathered data from campers age 11 to 17 in nine different morning class sessions, each occurring before lunch on the first day of camp. The sample was taken with each of the three age groups connected with camp: those entering 6th to 8th grade, 9th to 10th grade, and 11th to 12th grade (Meece and Daniels 2008, 417).

The campers were instructed to respond to a survey asking general demographic information, question as to the presence of a mentor, the occurrences of aggressive behavior in the previous week and month, and the ways parents had trained them to respond. The camp staff helped pass out and collect the surveys from the participants and provide writing instruments to those who needed one. The researcher followed the instructions of ethics protocol as set forth by the Harding University Institutional Review Board and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The researcher instructed participants that their participation in the project was totally voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from participation at any time.

Once all surveys were complete, a trained team of Uplift staff members entered the data into a statistical computer program for tabulation. The researcher completed the statistical analysis with the assistance of Elite Research in Carrollton, Texas. It is the plan of the researcher, with the help of Elite Research, that this project will be an even year longitudinal survey given at Uplift in the summers of 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020.

## **Research Assumptions**

This study functioned under a range of assumptions.

1. Participants understand church as “A group . . . who regularly meet to worship God, pursue growth, and collaborate for ministerial work” (Broyles 2009, 9).
2. Participants will understand the survey terms used and will answer accurately.
3. Participants understand the concept of bullying and have social abilities that allow them to respond to the questions in meaningful ways.
4. The survey approach to data collection and analysis is a valid method of social science research.
5. Aggressive Behavior/Bullying can be measured using quantitative research methods.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENT LITERATURE

This chapter examines existing literature that addresses the concepts of bullying, the influence of bullying on identity formation, mechanisms used to prevent bullying, and the biblical and theological ideas of wisdom and the pursuit of it. The first section will examine the literature in regards to existing studies on bullying. The next section will explore the influence of bullying on identity formation, especially in a church-based context, developmental issues associated with bullying, comparison of bullying behaviors between males and females, and adolescent needs and concerns with regard to this topic. Next, prevention mechanisms will be addressed: in schools, by teachers, and by parents. The final section will evaluate the use of biblical wisdom to respond to the complexity of bully behavior. This section presents the argument that the understanding of wisdom from a scriptural perspective helps change one's attitude and actions towards others.

#### **The Bully Issue**

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, students in the United States report bullying to be a more significant issue than drugs, alcohol, pressure to have sex, or other forms of violence (Kaiser Family Foundation 2001, 1). Research has shown that bullying has now become a public health problem both domestically and internationally (Nansel et al. 2004, 730). Some researchers have gone so far as to say bullying is an international phenomenon (Esela et al. 2003, 82). The study of bully behavior during the last twenty years has specified three foundational elements of bullying from the research perspective: (1) it demonstrates aggressive behavior, (2) it is repeated over time, and (3) it involves a real or perceived imbalance of power or strength (Hamburger, Basile, and



Vivolo 2011, 4; Berger 2006, 90). Walton affirms point three when he says, “bullying is more than merely an empirical matter—it is a social and political construction, rooted in ideological relations of power” (Walton 2005, 113).

It has been noted that the perspective of researchers does not necessarily match that of young people: “Students tended to focus primarily on negative actions and rarely mention these three definitional criteria” (Vaillancourt et al. 2008, 493-94). For many young people, bullying is consistent across demographic groups and identified by negative actions and behavior (Eisenber, Neumark-Sztainer, and Perry 2003, 34). While researchers should be able to examine this issue in a deeper way than a young person, they should be careful to not overcomplicate the issue or overlook key influences such as parents (Orpinas, Murray, and Kelder 1999, 774-75).

Research shows that bullying, more than any other single behavior, predicts future problems (Kumpulainen 2008, 121) and creates unique developmental and social challenges for young people (Olweus 1993, 7-8; Baldry and Farrington 2000, 17); however, the challenge of dealing with aggressive and unwanted actions has been present since the beginning of creation. One has to look no further than Genesis 4 and the story of Cain and Abel to see that hostility and aggressive behavior are part of the human condition. It is important to remember, as Berger points out, that “not all aggression is bullying, but bullying is always aggression” (Berger 2006, 94).

The challenge is for adults to work together to help young people balance their human nature with the transformational and redeeming promises of Scripture (Clark 2011, 199-200). Paul says in Romans 12:1-2,

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Similar to many areas of life, bullying starts early in life and is emphasized by an imbalance of physical and psychological power (Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster 2003,

1234; Menesisni, Melan, and Pignaiti 2000, 261; Arsenelult 2006, 137). Oftentimes, the bully behavior creates a tension that young people, who are already living in an awkward and rebellious time of life, are unprepared to deal with (Blaswich, King, and Reimer 2005, 166-67). They find themselves stuck in a relationally and socially aggressive climate that leaves them feeling ostracized from those around them (Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster 2003, 1235).

In some situations this tension leads young people to give up and tragically take their own lives or in several extreme cases the lives of others (Kim and Leventhal 2008, 133; Chalmers 2009, 87; Hinduja and Patchin 2009, 14). One research group found that “adolescent perpetrators of violent death of peers are more likely than their victims to have been bullied by their peers” (Anderson et al. 2001, 2702). Even when the extreme of death does not occur, researchers have found that the experience of being bullied leaves scars that last well into adulthood (Aluede et al. 2008, 157; Kumpulainen 2008, 127).

Orpinas and Horne point out, “There is a lot of discussion about the problem of bullying, but there has been surprisingly little action” (Orpinas and Horne 2006, 11), even though in previous research they made a concerted attempt to provide literature that would move the conversation on bullying from research to practice (Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewski 2003, 441). In their book, they attempt to give some specific ideas for responding to bullies and their actions, but they approach it exclusively from a humanistic perspective, which seems to be the foundational perspective of most bully research and programs (Goldman 2012, 293-99). It is the belief of this researcher that without God transforming and renewing individuals’ hearts and minds, the human response will always be an inadequate solution to the issue of bullying.

### **Bullying Studies**

The issue of aggressive behavior in schools has been the key area of bully research since systematic studies of bullying began in the early 1970s (Olweus 1993, 1). While the research has been significant, Berger points out, “school systems throughout

the world have vowed to eliminate bullying, but few understand the complexity of the problem” (Berger 2006, 115). This section will look closely at the complexity of the problem and also at the influence of cyber-bullying, bullying due to sexual orientation and ethnicity, and bullying in the workplace. The complexity of bullying is reflected in the numerous approaches taken in researching the subject. The way that bullying is measured varies significantly due to the lack of standard definitions, protocols, and practices (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 1), which makes cross-study comparisons sometimes difficult (Orpinas and Horne 2006, 26). Self-reporting, which will be the reporting method utilized in this project, is the most commonly used method of measuring the extent and nature of bullying (Bond et al. 2007, 76).

Despite the difficulties, research has shown that “bullying experiences are associated with a number of behavioral, emotional and physical adjustment problems” (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 1) and that “the prevalence of bullying among US youth is substantial” (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094). Although it is clear that the researcher must address numerous difficulties to effectively study this problem, it is also clear that a bullying problem does persist today, and solutions are needed (Baldry and Farrington 2000, 17; Goldman 2012, 1-2; Newman et al. 2005, 352; Gini and Pozzoli 2009, 1063; Peterson and Ray 2006, 164; Berger 2006, 90).

Researchers agree that bullying involves not only physical aggression, but also verbal aggression (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 1). Studies have shown that boys are more likely to be involved in physical aggression, while girls are more verbally aggressive and sensitive to social pressures (Wang and Dishion 2012, 50). Many times the bully is simply coping with the daily challenges of his/her own life and is attempting to find ways to deal with personal anxiety (Craig 1998, 128). Research has also shown that a student’s actions at school may be coping responses to difficult situations at home (Orpinas, Murray, and Kelder 1999, 774-75).

Research is clear that bullying is a challenge faced by young people today and

many times can lead to psychosomatic problems (Gini and Possoli 2009, 1063). In recent years the literature in this area has focused not only on challenges and problems of bullying in schools but expanded to include cyber-bullying, bullying due to sexual orientation and ethnicity, and bullying in the workplace. The next few pages will deal directly with these three more recent areas of research into bullying.

### **Cyber-bullying**

In May 2011, Rebecca Black posted a self-made music video on-line. By June the video had been viewed 167 million times on YouTube and due to the negative bullying she received on-line and threats to her life she dropped out of high school that fall (Goldman 2012, 96). In a time when reports say that “ninety-three percent of teens are active users of the Internet and seventy-five percent own a cell phone” (Schneider 2012, 171), one should not be surprised that negative experiences, like that of Rebecca, happen today.

Cyber-bullying has been defined in terms similar to general bullying. Hinduja and Patchin in their landmark book on the subject say, “Cyber-bullying is willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja and Patchin 2009, 5). Another term used is “Internet harassment,” which is defined as “an overt, intentional act of aggression towards another person online” (Ybarra and Mitchell 2004, 1308). What makes cyber-bullying unique is the overt nature of the action. Where traditional bullying has a connection to the number of friends a person might have, cyber-bullying is not related to the number of friends and allows for more overt actions to happen, which is a very distinct difference from traditional bullying (Wang et al. 2009, 373).

In today’s technological culture, “relational and social aggression can occur from remote locations at all hours, making the feasibility of escaping the torment extremely difficult” (Field et al. 2009, 12). Not only does cyber-bullying force students to deal with aggression at school, but now they must also deal with it in the security of their own

bedroom at home (Twenge and Campbell 2009, 202).

In her groundbreaking research on cyber-bullying, Li found that “over half of the students knew someone who had been cyber-bullied. Further, over a quarter of the students in the study had the experience of being cyber-bullied, and one in six students had cyber-bullied others” (Li 2006, 9). Li’s results are similar to those found by Beran and Li a year earlier. Sixty-nine percent of subjects in their study knew someone who had been cyber-bullied and 21 percent had been cyber-bullied themselves (Beran and Li 2005, 265). In further research, Greenberg and Weber found that “one-third of teens say they have experienced bullying on-line, with teenage girls more likely to have experienced it than their male counterparts” (Greenberg and Weber 2008, 237). According to one study, “The victimization produced by cyber-bullying can be of varying degrees of severity but it is never innocent” (Ortega-Ruiz and Nunez 2012, 605). Part of the challenge of dealing with cyber-bullying is that it offers an anonymity that has not been provided in the history of man (Murray et al. 2012, 61). The Internet allows people to say and do things that they would never do in public or in face-to-face interactions.

While whole dissertations could be written on cyber-bullying, that is not the aim of this research. However, to understand the place of bullying in the lives of young people today, no matter the context, one must be aware of the challenges presented by the ever-changing world of technology. One must also understand the changing world of culture, especially in regards to sexual orientation and ethnicity.

### **Sexual Orientation and Ethnicity**

When this researcher first began this project he had an acquaintance who, on hearing the topic of the research “Bully in the Pew,” said, “Why would you study something so closely connected to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community?” It was his view that bullying was a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issue. It is the assessment of the researcher that the acquaintance had a very narrow view of the issue of bullying (Berger 2006, 94-98) and also failed to understand the level of bullying that

students in the sexual minority experience (Goodenow, Szalacha, and Westheimer 2006, 573). Even when a person selects a lifestyle counter to what someone else believes as right, there is a clear call from Scripture that all individuals are people of value and worth, who should be treated with respect and dignity. That is the example set by Jesus when filled with compassion in Mark 1, he reaches out and touches the outcast man with leprosy.

There is little question that sexual orientation has been a key aspect of bully research in the last few years and that research has shown that “sexual minority youths . . . report more emotional and behavioral difficulties than heterosexual adolescents” (Williams et al. 2005, 479). Research has also shown that homophobic content is prevalent in various forms of aggression (Poteat and Espelage 2005, 513) and there is a high level of health risk, suicide, and victimization among sexual minorities (Bontempo and D’Augelli 2002, 364; Russell and Joyner 2001, 1280).

Research also shows that, like sexual orientation, ethnicity plays a role in bully behavior (Sawyer, Bradshaw, and O’Brennan 2008, 106). As one researcher says, “Race matters” (Christerson, Edwards, and Flory 2010, 145). Like the example from Mark 1, Jesus shows the value of all groups of people and races throughout his public ministry. One of the clearest examples of Jesus’ view of ethnicity is found in the story of the woman at the well. She was a non-Jewish, Samaritan woman who, according to tradition, Jesus was not supposed to associate with, but He did and in the process gave her access to “living water” (John 4:10).

It is interesting that even with the challenges of ethnicity, researchers have found that negative family communication and negative peer relationships, which have a direct relationship to a young person’s level of aggression, are consistent across white, black, and Hispanic youth (Spiggs et al. 2007, 283). They also found in specific research of Chinese-American students that the worst situation was being bullied, not by the majority, but by other ethnic minority youth (Zhou et al. 2003, 71).

The complexities and challenges of bullying among sexual minority groups and

ethnic groups are ones that should be taken seriously (Pilkington and D'Augelli 1995, 55). The challenges of dealing with both groups are complex and at times difficult, mainly due to cultural and theological differences, but that should not permit individuals to treat people in non-caring and aggressive ways. Recent research on bullying has broadened to address not only the groups listed above, but to include bullying within the work context.

### **Workplace Bullying**

Previously this section has looked at the idea of cyber-bullying, bullying of sexual minorities, and bullying based on ethnicity. A final area of research in this topic includes workplace bullying. While the overall definition of bullying applies to the workplace as well, research has shown that “adult bullying at work presents the researcher with considerably more difficulties than that of children at school” (Rayner and Hoel 1997, 183). One of the main reasons is that like cyber-bullying, there is a covert nature to workplace bullying with 35 percent of Americans reporting being bullied at work in 2010; half of these instances reportedly happening in front of a witness (Goldman 2012, 111; Namie and Namie 2009, 5). These statistics indicate that 5 percent more adults are being bullied at work than students are being bullied in school (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094).

A key difference between school bullying and workplace bullying is that bullying at work moves beyond just power to full control, and that bullies put their personal agenda of controlling others above the organization (Namie and Namie 2009, 3). That idea is consistent with research which says that “physical bullying at work is rarely reported, with verbal and indirect bullying at higher levels of incidence” (Rayner and Hoel 1997, 183). Aggressors know that they will lose their job if they are physically abusive at work, but it seems they believe that they will move up the ranks if they can verbally control another individual. Research in Finland has shown that “not only the targets of bullying, but also the bystanders, suffer when someone is bullied in the workplace” and the research went further in showing “targets of bullying used sleep inducing drugs and sedatives more often than did the respondents who were not bullied” (Vartia 2001, 63).

As the research shows, bullying at work is a problem that must be taken seriously, especially as a new generation of young people move into the workforce (Twenge and Campbell 2009, 289). With the understanding of bullying and the specific areas of cyber-bullying, bullying of sexual minorities, bullying based on ethnicity, and bullying at work, the writer now moves to deal with the influence of bullying on identity formation.

### **Influence of Bullying on Identity Formation**

In Christian Smith's landmark study of the spiritual lives of American teenagers, he found that young people have many influences in their daily lives that are connected to issues of development, gender, interest, and concerns (Smith 2005, 263-64). The next section will look at the issues of development, gender, interest, and concerns as connected to both identity formation and behavior.

Not surprisingly, Smith's study found that peers have a dramatic effect on the lives of adolescents. What is more interesting, however, is "evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents" (Smith 2005, 261). After reading the book of Proverbs, one should not be surprised that adolescents both value and pursue the influence of their parents, and even secular research reveals that parents matter in the lives of young children and adolescents, and help provide a foundation for the formation of identity (Steinberg 2001, 16).

Much has been written about the negative influences of media and popular culture in the lives of today's young people (Clark 2011, 180-84). On the other hand, not much has been mentioned about positive influences that aid young people in the expansion of wisdom and knowledge. Clark sees the importance of being that voice of reason and encouragement for today's youth: "Every adult must attempt to add to the cumulative message of protection, nurture, warmth, affection. . . . The best way to help our young people is by being a chorus of support and a choir of commitment" (Clark 2011, 183).

Scripture speaks to the place of influence when the Proverb writer says, "Train



up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6). That training should influence young people to understand the importance of what they say and of how they behave. Paul says in Ephesians, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29).

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount provides insight into ways people respond to unwanted actions when He says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt 5:43–44). As many have argued, adults, and specifically parents today, must grasp the significance of the influence they have and use their influence to help young people understand the power of their words and the power of their actions (Clark 2011, 183-84, Smith 2005, 261).

### **Developmental Issues**

Research has shown that the risks of bullying are directly connected to the developmental changes of adolescence (Hacker et al. 2006, 162). It is understood that all individuals develop in different ways and at different levels over time; the problem is that many times the lack of development and social skills creates serious adjustment problems—such as delinquency and poor academic performance (Dill et al. 2004, 171; Lopez and Dubois 2003, 34; Bejerot, Edgar, and Humble 2011, 413). It has also been shown that the quality of an individual’s personal development has a direct connection to their perception of peers. When young people develop in healthy nurturing environments they are much more likely to have a healthy perception and connection to their peers (Salmivalli and Isaacs 2005, 1168).

Within the developmental process of life, research has shown that bullying starts very early—in some cases as early as preschool (Perren and Alsaker 2006, 45; Arsenelult 2006, 137). Part of the challenge for adults is understanding the developmental process occurring in young people and avoiding making the assumption that young

people always understand what is happening around them or to them personally (Meschke, Peter, and Bartholomae 2012, 93). Research has shown that a teenager's brain is still developing. No matter if a young person is bullied, a bully, or a bystander, their ability to respond is directly connected to the brain and their current developmental phase of life (Strauch 2003, 203).

An important aspect of adolescent development is the influence of peers and crowds. Meece and Daniels discuss three phases of crowds that young people experience: middle school, early high school, and later high school. Within each phase, as students get older, the crowds become more diverse, larger, and much more complicated (Meece and Daniels 2008, 417). When a connection is made between the groups' influence, and the developing brain of an adolescent, it becomes easier to see why adults must pay close attention to the groups' influence on the adolescent developing mind (Strauch 2003, 203-05).

While the research is insightful, there is little mention of the connection between adolescent development and the transformative nature of God (Roehlkepartain 2006, 43-44). Researchers have attempted to peer more deeply into the issue of adolescent development (Cillessen and Mayeux 2004, 158-61), most have failed to mention that all men are created in the image of God and the importance of first and foremost desiring a relationship with Him (Hoekema 1994, 11).

With the constant challenge of bullying that young people face, it is difficult to recognize how positive growth can take place amidst the chaos around them. However, positive growth does happen in the chaos, in large part because of the multiple influences in individuals' lives (Parks 2000, 204-06) and also the influence of a creator God. For many young people, the idea of God is difficult to understand. Pierre Babin divides the concept of faith in adolescence into two categories: one's concept of God and one's understanding of a relationship with God (Babin 1965, 116-19).

In Proverbs, one finds that the concept of God is learned in part by the

influence of wisdom and fear of the Lord, and shows the level at which God desires to have a relationship with his creation (Prov 1:7). The theme of young people growing in their understanding of how they are influenced by crowds and how they influence is found throughout Scripture, especially in Proverbs. When young people can begin to understand that their actions have a directly impact on others, they will begin to see the power they have in their personal ability to do good (Rom 12:21).

While the original readers of Proverbs did not have the privilege of seeing God's desire for relationship with His creation that was manifested in the sending of Jesus, today's readers can understand how important relationship is to God (Foster 1998, 2). Relationship is so important to God that He was willing to send His Son so that man might know Him. Christ's death, burial, and resurrection prove God's desire to know His creation and His understanding of how His creation develops both male and female.

### **Male versus Female**

Since the beginning of creation, male and female have had unique differences (Gen 1:27). Over the years, key differences have been shown among males and females in bully research (Wang and Iannotti 2012, 3; Bae et al. 2005, 193; Pellegrini and Long 2002, 276; Naylor and Cowie 1999, 477). Most research shows that boys experience more physical and overt aggression with girls experiencing relational aggression (Crick and Grotpeter 1995, 721; Gottheil and Dubow 2001, 27).

Even though bullying is an issue for both males and females, research shows that boys are twice as likely as girls to be classified as bullies (Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster 2003, 1233). One must wonder if media has had any influence on the perception of male and female bullying when most violent movie stars are male (Blaswich, King and Reimer 2005, 166). Males are known for physical aggression, which are acts that are many times seen first hand by bystanders and lead many young men to be disliked (Cillessen et al. 1992, 902). It is interesting to note that the males' view of bullying becomes less negative with time (Pellegrini and Long 2002, 276), but just because a young person's

view becomes more positive it in no way makes the action right or justified.

Research has also shown that males are less confident than females and sometimes have a difficulty in forming close relationships (Giordano, Longmore, and Manning 2006, 282) and they are also less likely than females to intervene when they see others being bullied (O'Connell, Pepler, and Craig 1999, 437). It is not that males do not have the ability to care, it seems that they "do not choose to use their caring abilities" (Naylor and Cowie 1999, 477). Young men, even the bullies, must be taught to care, so that they can communicate care to those around them; however, society cannot expect people to be someone they have not been taught to be.

As for females, research is clear that the majority of their bullying is covert and relational in nature; including malicious gossiping and intentional ostracism (Gottheil and Dubow 2001, 27). Unlike the male's physical aggression that is observable, the female's relational aggression can be difficult to see (Cillessen and Mayeux 2004, 138). It is interesting that Shields and Cicchetti found that male and females who are maltreated as children are equally as likely to be aggressive and coercive towards peers (Shields and Cicchetti 2001, 359). Like young men, ladies also must learn to care and value the relationships with those around them.

While existing research points to differences in the ways that males and females perpetrate and experience bullying, both genders experience deep and long lasting distress as a result (Hawker and Boulton 2000, 453). One way to help understand the difference is to look at the interest, needs, and concerns of adolescents.

### **Interest, Need, and Concern**

The students studied in this research project are part of the Millennial Generation. This generation has been referenced with many labels: Millennials, Generation Y, Generation Next, Generation Now, and the Millennial Generation. Millennials are known for being optimistic, team players, accepting of authority, rule followers, and cutting edge (Howe and Strauss 2000, 6-12). While this group has many positive

characteristics, they also have the ability to create tremendous harm, thru behaviors such as bullying, due to the level of narcissism in their lives, often leading to a disregard for others (Twenge and Campbell 2009, 289).

Julie Coates says, “Generation Y is the most diverse generation in history” (Coates 2007, 113). Their diversity is not illustrated merely through economic class and racial makeup; it shines through their questions about family, faith, meaning, and significance (Parks 2011, 3). Howe and Strauss see the positive characteristics in the Millennial Generation; they view it as a group that is special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, and pressured (Howe and Strauss 2000, 43-44). No matter how one looks at the Millennial Generation, there is potential for influence in society today, an influence that could positively change the experience of bullying, especially considering it will be one of the largest generations in American history (Sandfort and Haworth 2007, 1).

Millennials have very specific interests, needs, and concerns driven by a desire to be happy (Twenge 2006, 17-20). While some might think that Millennials are just another generation similar to their predecessors in Generation X, research suggests that Millennials are quite different from Generation X and demonstrate characteristics of community and relationship similar to the Boomer or G.I. Generation (Coates 2007, 111-12).

Young people today have a real interest in success. They are driven by a need to achieve and make a contribution to society. George Barna says of this generation, “They are people of action and results, not people of reflection” (Barna 2001, 91). Many desire to make the world a better place and join a cause that is greater than they are. They have an appreciation and understanding of the world and are more globally aware than the generations before them (Greenberg and Weber 2008, 13). As a group, Millennials are more educated than their parents and expect to make more money (Carlson 2005, 3).

Along with their interest in success, this group of young adults desires

connection and to be a part of a team. They identify the importance of groups and of belonging to a group from early in their adolescence (Meece and Daniels 2008, 417). They look for people, messages, and ideas with which they can connect. This is a point at which the church should be providing them a point of connection and hope (Parks 2000, 205). While the previous Generation X was known as the “I” generation, today’s youth are known as the “we” generation. They demonstrate the idea of being the “we” generation in their friendships, desire for teamwork, and use of technology (Coates 2007, 113). However the “we” often leads to peer harassment groups who are aggressive and mean (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, and Perry 2003, 311-12). It is those harassment groups that give bullies high status and the ability to take unjustified aggression out on others in their community (Vaillencourt, Hymel, and McDougall 2003, 170).

Without question, today’s young people have been affected by the increased use of technology (Carlson 2005, 1). It is not the aim of this section to elaborate on technology, but when talking about interests today, technology must be mentioned. It is understood that technology is a key way young people stay connected. Instant messaging, text messaging, and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter allow young people constant access to those around them (Wang et al. 2009, 373), but as was mentioned previously, the use of technology and cyber-bullying offers anonymity for aggression and bullying to take place that has not been provided in the history of man (Murray et al. 2012, 61).

These technologies provide an opportunity for Millennials to share their interests and information with friends and perhaps people they do not even know. Because of the pervasiveness of technology, young people today can seek wisdom and knowledge from all corners of the world but they also can be corrupted (Collins and Halverson 2009, 1-2). Fifteen years ago, a young person would go to a parent, family member, teacher, or church leader when seeking guidance. Young people today can find answers and all forms of guidance with a simple click of the mouse (Freeman-Longo 2000, 77).

Like all people throughout history, the greatest need of this generation of young people is a relationship with God (Foster 1998, 2) and people who will help them to grow in that relationship (Parks 2000, 205). While most adolescents see themselves as spiritual, their faith in God lacks the depth that is shown throughout Scripture. They fail to understand the significance of church, many times rejecting it because they see established religion as irrelevant (Smith 2005, 260-62). There are many reasons for this, one possible reason is young people's lack of trust in people and establishments. Sandfort and Haworth discuss the Millennial generation's basic attitude toward faith:

Most saw their spirituality as not lesser to but different from the spirituality of their parents and grandparents. When asked what they believed had contributed to their generation's movement away from organized institutions, participants volunteered four reasons: the irrelevance of established practice to their lives, a continual feeling of being ignored by the church, the evolution of science, and the seeming rejection of organized religion among their baby boomer parents. (Sandfort and Haworth 2007, 7)

The above quote provides significant insight into a generation's attitude—an attitude that has been greatly influenced by parents. Smith says, “The evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents” (Smith 2005, 261).

To be relevant to young people, the process of growing in wisdom and growing relationally with God must be experiential, participatory, image-driven, and connective to others (Lanker 2010, 269). When that occurs, their needs will be met, they will no longer feel ignored, and they will have found a place where they can grow in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52).

In addition to their well-documented interests and needs, young people also carry real concerns, most of which are connected to their daily lives (Clark 2011, 200). Students today are concerned about whether they will be able to live up to the expectations of their parents. While they have the desire to succeed, they feel the pressure of being the “trophy kid” that their parents assumedly are expecting (Howe and Strauss 2000, 44). Trying to fulfill the expectation of parents leads some young people to be one way around

adults and another way around peers. That inconsistency of actions provides bullies the protective cover many times to do their harm (Vaileencourt, Hymel, and McSougall 2003, 170-71).

While other generations have concerns about technology and its influence, Millennials are concerned about being connected and creating their unique individual profile (Carlson 2005, 3). They have a growing desire to stay connected, even to their parents. In fact, Kathryn Tyler states, “Older generations that couldn’t wait to proclaim their independence can’t comprehend this generation’s need for parental guidance and influence” (Tyler 2007, 1). Young people today are concerned about what they will do without their parents because they rely on parents at such a deep level (Smith 2005, 261).

This section has discussed multiple influences surrounding young people today and why an understanding of those issues is significant to being able to study their behavior. Also imperative in studying young people is acknowledging their need for wisdom to respond to the challenges of life while maintaining their identity as God’s creation (Bland 1998, 223). Having gained an understanding of young people, the next section will look closely at existing research on mechanisms of bullying prevention: specifically schools, teachers, and parents and what the church can learn from these preventative measures.

### **Prevention Mechanisms**

There is a growing body of literature examining the prevention mechanisms currently being used to address bullying (Kennedy, Russom, and Kevorkian 2012, 1; Olweus 2005, 389-91; Rigby 2011, 280; Craig et al. 2000, 32-33; Barnes et al. 2012, 206). Rigby states that there are currently six major intervention methods being used to address bullying in schools: (1) traditional disciplinary approach, (2) strengthening the victim, (3) mediation, (4) restorative practices, (5) group method, and (6) method of shared concern (Rigby 2011, 280).

Research is clear that numerous prevention mechanisms have been used to deal



head on with bullying; their efficacy remains in question (Gattfredson et al. 2012, 26). One researcher examined the findings and concluded that “overall, anti-bullying interventions have been less effective: a review of whole-school interventions found that bullying was reduced on average twenty-three percent” (James 2010, 12). The level of success of these anti-bullying programs is largely determined by reported cases of victimization and can be difficult because of the divergent perceptions among witnesses (Smith et al. 2004, 558).

It seems, as research showed in one study, that dealing with bullying on a comprehensive level: from individuals, to classrooms, to teachers, to the whole school was found to be most effective (Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewski 2003, 441). The base for determining prevention success seems to be in many cases limited to reports of overt bullying, which does not take into account necessarily the level of covert bullying taking place (Barnes et al. 2012, 206).

Another group of researchers concluded, “School-based anti-bullying programs are often effective . . . bullying decreased 20-23 percent” (Farrington and Ttofi 2010, 69). In a third sample, researchers again found a 23 percent reduction in reported victimization (Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewshi 2003, 431). Each research group found roughly the same percent in level of bullying reduction as measured by reported victimization; it was there interpretation that determined if it was positive or negative. The above studies have shown research prevention programs to consistently reduce bullying a fourth of the time, which would still leave considerable room for improvement (Gattfredson 2012, 26).

While the research shows that programs are successful about 23 percent of the time, that statistic leaves significant room for improvement and serves as a call for increased adult awareness of the problem of bullying and involvement in the solution (Peterson 2000, 14). It is clear is that for any intervention to be successful it must be directed to the whole school and not just a few individuals (Salmivalli 1996, 13; Smith et al. 2004, 558). Farrington and Ttofi found that there are three main elements to successful

prevention programs: (1) parent training/meetings, (2) disciplinary methods, and (3) duration of the program (Farrington and Ttofi 2010, 69). Research found that length of time is an important aspect of successful prevention programs; however, 50 percent of programs last less than one year (Gottfredson et al. 2012, 26).

Stienberg believes that a part of the prevention challenge is a cultural unwillingness to provide the sort of clear-cut direction and commitment that is needed to be able to respond to bullying and other negative behaviors (Steinberg 2001, 13). Instead of direction to parents, many schools have moved to a zero tolerance policies which do little to deal with bullying and might hurt more than help. In many cases a zero tolerance policy punishes the victim for responding to the threats of the bully (Wiseman 2006, 188).

Parents and adults are key figures in the successful prevention of bullying because each of the three elements above are aspects determined and implemented by the adults in the situation; these are not decisions left to the students (Mishna 2003, 343) even though peer support is also important (Salmivalli 1999, 457). A key intervention appears not to happen in school but at home. Reduced rates of bullying behavior were present when parent and child communicate, parents meet children's friends, and parents encourage children academically (Shetgiri et al. 2012, 2280). At this point the researcher will focus first on the place of parents and then schools and teachers in bullying prevention.

## **Parents**

When the researcher began his study of bullying he was naïve to the quantity of existing literature that supports the direct relationship between bullying and parent/child relationships (Wiseman 2002, 4-5; Kenny et al. 2009, 224; Clark and Clark 2007, 143). As was mentioned previously, reduced rates of bullying behavior were present when parent and child communicate, parents meet children's friends, and parents encourage children academically (Shetgiri et al. 2012, 2280). Steiberg says, "I believe there is enough evidence to conclude that adolescents benefit from having parents who

are authoritative, warm, firm, and accepting of their needs” (Steiberg 2001, 13). Students benefit by having parents who care about them and realize the connection between their attitude and actions and the ways their children manage conflict and aggression (Orpinas, Murray, and Kelder 1999, 774).

Studies show that even though parental involvement in late adolescence diminishes, parents still have direct influence on how their child interacts with peers (Zacharatos, Barling, and Kelloway 2000, 222; Shields and Cicchetti 2001, 359; Chen, Dornbusch, and Liu 2007, 837). On the other side, low monitoring of behavior and low levels of parent involvement have been connected to adolescent delinquent behavior (Lansford et al. 2003, 161). Simons and colleagues sum up the importance of placing high value on the parent/child relationship:

The association between childhood defiance and adolescent delinquency is mediated by quality of parenting, such escalation might be prevented by helping parents to sustain effective parenting practices in the face of troublesome child behavior. . . . This finding underscores the importance of skilled parenting. (Simons et al. 2001, 77)

For many parents there does appear to be a disconnect from the world young people live in daily (Clark and Clark 2007, 21-24). One alarming statistic illustrates the disconnection between parent and child: only 18 percent of preteen parents make their child a Facebook friend (Strom and Strom 2012, 49). Young people need adults in their lives that will become students of their world (Clark and Clark 2007, 69). Parents must be willing to have the courage to be the parent and not be concerned about being their child’s friend (Wiseman 2006, 20). In his work on discipleship in Christian families, Jones found that for many parents it was not an issue of not wanting to disciple but one of not knowing how (Jones 2011, 110-12).

Like Jones found with discipleship, it might be that parents are going to have to be taught how to parent—how to cultivate these relationships with their children to prevent the bullying. It is the view of this researcher that a key foundation to that teaching must come from Scripture and be done in a supportive environment that values wisdom and its role in development (Bland 2001, 3). Research strongly suggests, what the

wisdom of Proverbs has shown for centuries (Bland 1998, 223), that the familial relationships are central to life and in the case of this research to preventing bullying, but existing literature also suggests that parents do not inherently know how to parent—explicit instruction is often needed (Kenny et al. 2009, 224). Like parents, schools and teachers play an important role in responding to bully behavior, and to that position the researcher now moves (Whitted and Dupper 2005, 167-75).

### **Schools and Teachers**

Studies have shown that the interactions and experiences students have at school have an enduring influence on their lives and are key elements in the prevention of bully behavior (Wang and Dishion 2011, 51; Whitted and Dupper 2005, 167). Naturally, it is important that administrators and teachers are actively working together to make schools a positive environment for the students that occupy the hallways and classrooms. Some have found there to be a tension between administrators and teachers when it comes to the issue of dealing with bullies in the school setting. Teachers felt that educators played a key role in prevention while administrators seemed to believe that it was more of an issue for parents (Kennedy, Russom, and Kevorkian 2012, 1). Further examination demonstrates that efforts to deal with bullying are unsuccessful unless the school board and administrators are involved (Vail 1999, 40). Roberts states this point clearly: “We are all in this together. We will stand to gain or lose by virtue of our actions” (Roberts 2006, 165). This should not be an issue that is left to someone else to deal with, but should be something all parties (administrators, parents, and teachers) deal with for the betterment of the whole (Bergeron and Schneider 2005, 116).

The body of literature on this subject has also demonstrated the importance of teachers communicating their care and concern for students’ well-being and development (Wallace et al. 2012, 31). Conversely, studies have suggested that students who are not cared for and disempowered by teachers are more likely to become both a bully and a victim (Nation et al. 2008, 211). The fact that research has shown how important care and

concern is for student-teacher relationship, should speak directly to church leaders and their concern for students as well as the concern parents have for their children.

This section has discussed prevention that surrounds young people today and why an understanding of those preventions, specially connected to schools and parents, is significant to being able to help them respond to the issues of bullying. Also imperative in studying young people is acknowledging their need for wisdom to respond to the challenges of life (Bland 1998, 233). Having gained an understanding above of bullying, the influence of formation, and the place of schools and parents in prevention, the next section will look closely at biblical wisdom and the ways wisdom can help guide adolescents in their daily life interactions.

### **Biblical and Theological Foundations of Wisdom**

It would seem that the answer to the bully issue today is found in Jesus words in Matthew 22. When asked by the Pharisees what was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. (Matt 22:37-40)

The objective of this research will be to see if young people in the church context are loving their neighbor as their selves and if that is what they are being taught by their parents, or if they responding to their neighbor like the world has been shown to respond (Nansel et al. 2004, 730). It is the view of the researcher that for young people today to live out the instruction of Jesus to “love your neighbor” they must have the wisdom and knowledge of Scripture, and support of family to do so. Without this they will be unable to love their neighbor as Jesus calls them to do.

The aim of this section is to examine the type of wisdom referred to above from a Biblical and theological perspective, arguing that this perspective is important to the lives of adolescents. Young people today need individuals in their lives who will

affirm their ability to positively influence the world around them (Lanker and Issler 2010, 93-95). Young people need daily contact with individuals who are working to live out principles of biblical wisdom and faithfully model an identity rooted in Jesus (Lanker 2010, 277).

### **Proverbs: Biblical Wisdom**

In Proverbs, one finds “a collection of sayings, experiences and insights written primarily to equip youth to contribute to the well-being of the community” (Bland 1998, 228). Melchert says it is “intended to help one know how to go on with living life” (Melchert 1998, 73). Fox makes the strongest statement about Proverbial wisdom when he says, “It is a power . . . the inner light that guides a person through life” (Fox 1997, 619). It is this type of light that must shine bright to help young people today navigate the complexities of bullying.

Hodgson points out, “Wisdom is not simply a human potency, but a divine gift, empowerment, presence—a divine ‘teaching’ that affects a paideutic transformation of human beings” (Hodgson 1999, 7-8). In a time when the well-being of young people is challenged daily by bullying actions of others (Smith, Schneider, Smith, and Ananiadou 2004, 548), it seems there is not a more appropriate text for equipping young people to respond if they are bullies, to stop others from bullying, or to help those who are being bullied.

Crenshaw also provides a clear definition of wisdom:

The reasoned search for specific ways to ensure personal well being in everyday life, to make sense of extreme adversity and vexing anomalies, and to transmit this hard-earned knowledge so that successive generations will embody it—wisdom—is universal. (Crenshaw 2010, 4)

What is assumed in Crenshaw’s definition is an understanding that wisdom, as outlined in Proverbs, is about God: fearing Him and keeping His commands (Prov 1:7). In the conversation about wisdom, two sources of wisdom must be differentiated: wisdom that refers to human knowledge leading to grief and frustration, and divine wisdom that is

given by God and is based on a fear of God (Elwell 2001, 1278). Today, young people need to know the importance of seeking divine wisdom and understanding, especially as they try to respond to the puzzle and mysteries of bullying and other questions of life (Melchert 1998, 3).

To understand the place and importance of wisdom literature today, one must understand the place from which it came. Hebrew wisdom literature went through at least four stages of growth. The first is the period of pre-exilic folk wisdom. The second was the monarchic period in which wisdom was incorporated into the courts. The third stage was the literature following the exile. The final stage was the post-exilic period, which has been called “the most productive time for wisdom literature in Israel” (Bland 1998, 222).

While no one will ever be able to understand everything about God or nature, Kugel points out that throughout their growth, wisdom writings showed how “the divine plan has been grasped by sages past, and they have formulated their insights and sent them down for later generations” (Kugel 1997, 18). In understanding the growth of wisdom literature, Purdue makes an important point: “The proper understanding of wisdom literature requires one to move out of the realm of philosophical idealism and into the realistic dimensions of history and social construction” (Purdue 2008, 3).

A key to fully integrating the teaching of Proverbs into daily decision making is realizing how specifically this portion of Scripture deals with training of a person to what life is really like and how to deal with it (Murphy 2002, 15). It is in the wisdom writings that one more fully understands aspects of everyday life and the issues that have ultimate meaning (Melchert 1992, 132). Even though Proverbs deals with everyday life, one must take into account that “the word ‘wisdom’ does not generally designate in the Bible a person’s capacity for understanding or insight, though it can sometimes be used in that sense. Principally, however, ‘wisdom’ designates a body of knowledge” (Kugel 1997, 9).

One essential aspect that Melchert points out is that in all of Proverbs, “there is

not one mention of the patriarchs, the covenant, Exodus, Moses, Sinai, David or any of the so-called ‘mighty acts of God’” (Melchert 1992, 131). Proverbs contains an “absence of what one normally considers as typically Israelite and Jewish,” instead it provides insight for daily living (Murphy 2002, 1). Melchert more specifically points out that instead of being limited to Jewish tradition, Proverbs seems to present an idea of wisdom reaching far beyond the culture and practices of the day, to an idea that is not limited by place or time and pays no attention to rich and poor, religious and nonreligious, or those who are bullies or bullied (Melchert 1998, 3).

The Proverb writer provides key insight that speaks directly to the challenges young people have daily, especially the issue of personal discipline and self-control (Youngblood 2009, 139). It is not a book limited to the Jewish people, it instructs all youth in how to respond to fools (bullies) and how to respond to the temptations of the world (Prov 2:16-22). The wisdom of Proverbs provides a foundation from which to begin to teach young people how to handle the complexities of bullying.

### **Literary Context: Family**

Bland points out that “the literary or formal context of Proverbs is the family” (Bland 1998, 222). With that in mind, one must remember that in its original form “almost all the wisdom texts consist largely, if not totally, of oral form of composition” (Melchert 1992, 135). The foundation of Proverbs is one of an oral tradition: telling of the relationships within a family and of a growing knowledge of God. What is interesting about many of the wisdom texts of Scripture is how they borrowed from other cultures of the Middle East (Melchert 1998, 11).

There are those who wonder why wisdom literature would have to take from other writings of the day; however, if one understands that Proverbs, like other biblical wisdom literature, seeks to understand how things work, what the world is like, and how to live happily and effectively, it makes sense that the book of Proverbs would include a compilation of how life works (Melchert 1992, 131). It is evident that in its original form,



Proverbs would have benefited from the insights of other cultures: “Wisdom writers tell how wisdom is found in all created things” (Thomas 2002, 120).

Unlike other wisdom writings of the day, Proverbs was “founded on the fear of Yahweh, an attitude compounded of knowledge, love, humility and appropriate trepidation—in brief, piety” (Fox 2007, 81). It is that same attitude that is important for young people to learn in responding to all of life’s challenges, and specifically in this research to bullying.

### **Role of Family**

In Israeli society, family occupied a place of great importance. “Proverbs describes many concrete values and practices related to various settings, especially the family” (Thomas 2002, 125). In places like Proverbs 4, 7, and 31, one can see how significant the family was to everyday life. Today, the general truths about family found in Proverbs provide valuable insights into methods of supporting young people in their responses to life’s difficulties. The challenge is being patient enough to allow young people to see that God’s purpose is to use families and the body of Christ to help them know their divine purpose (Mueller 2006, 24).

The idea of the importance of family has been affirmed in research demonstrating the salient role that parents play in the development of their children (Schofield 2012, 273). It is not a role that is characterized by domination or subordination but by genuine love and respect among family members (O’Conner 1996, 14). Young people need to learn and have modeled for them this type of love and respect so they are able to show it to the world around them. A base of love and respect allow them to subvert the unjust control of bullying and instead show a loving heart and respect for their neighbor (McKenzie 2004, 82).

### **Inoculation versus Education**

It has been said, “Biblical wisdom is not so much out to educate as to inoculate”

(Kugel 1997, 19). From the reading of Proverbs, there appears to be a strong intention of building immunity in young people so that they are able to respond to the circumstances of the world. The building of this immunity empowers young people to be advocates for justice and truth in the face of aggression and torment. According to Melchert, however, this is done more so by “evoking than command” (Melchert 1998, 13), meaning that teaching and modeling must be shown so young people are able to find immunity and sustain the aggression they will be shown for striving to foster justice (McKenzie 2004, 82).

The call to wisdom is not a passive call, but an experiential one. It is a call of “exposing youth to experiences they can observe in others as a form of inoculation, a powerful means of ‘receiving instruction’” (Bland 1998, 234). The process of inoculation requires participation by those involved: “Obedience to the teacher is expected, but so is learner participation; and the tone is authoritative without being authoritarian” (Melchert 1992, 137). In a time where research has shown there is a lack of students’ sense of individual obligation to intercede to stop victimization (Jeffrey, Miller, and Linn 2001, 154), and many bully incidents happen in the presence of peers, an individual of faith cannot simply go with the crowd, they must participate by opposing the unjust action (Smith, Schneider et al. 2004, 548).

A challenge in the process of inoculation is one of balance. Proverbs masterfully demonstrates both negative and positive experiences of life to the adolescent reader. Proverbs illuminates the dangers of crooked speech (2:12-15), violent behavior (1:8-19), and the destruction of alcohol (23:29-35), but it also extols the virtues of the strong family (31:10-31), self-discipline (6:6-8) and the ways of a sensible child (2:1-8). It seems that in Proverbs there is an inoculation to both what is good and bad in the world. It is in the inoculation that one begins to see a place for the formation of character to happen.

### **Formation of Character**

Through the formation of character as shown in Proverbs 2:1–8, one sees how

both Yahweh and parents are involved in the development of moral character:

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. (Prov 2:1-8)

As displayed in the above passage, parents begin the process of teaching responsibility, but Yahweh through creation, as part of His nature and character, provides wisdom in the end (Bland 1998, 226). Through this process, one understands how “wisdom has an attitudinal or emotional as well as an intellectual component. Wisdom is a configuration of soul; it is moral character” (Fox 1997, 620). God’s wisdom is not just a strong moral character, but a “victory for the upright” (Prov 2:7) and the central aspect of character formation (McMinn and Phillips 2001, 265). It is that formation and strong moral base that provides young people a foundation of wisdom in how to respond to all aspects of bullying.

When it comes to the development of character, Waltke points out, “According to Proverbs, this socially acceptable behavior of doing what is right in social relationships as defined in the Bible’s teachings entails depriving self to benefit others” (Waltke 2008, 235-36). Thomas goes on to say that “Proverbs and other wisdom sources tell us laziness, impulsiveness and disrespect are inconsistent with wisdom” (Thomas 2002, 127). Through the formation of character, the righteous are able to leave a legacy of character (Prov 11:10), and through the development of character “the anthropocentric focus and the theocentric foundation unite to accomplish a common goal: instruction in the formation of moral character” (Bland 1998, 228). No matter if a person is a bully, victim, or bystander, they need a base of moral character to guide them in responding to situations of aggression and to respond to overall questions of life.

McKenzie points out that a key aim of Proverbs is “the moral formation of individuals for the sake of maintaining order in society and the larger community”

(McKenzie 2002, 105). This point confirms the idea that moral character is key to helping young people respond to the complexity of bullying and aggressive behavior, and other daily challenges of being a teenager. It is important to remember, as Lanker points out, that today one way this type of formation comes is “in community that faithfully models what an identity in Christ looks like” (Lanker 2010, 277).

Moral character found in wisdom is key to combating the problem of bullying whether in schools, churches, or playgrounds. Proverbs is foundational in developing character; family’s role in interpreting Proverbial wisdom and showing how to use wisdom to respond to daily life situations is profoundly influential (Bland 1998, 233).

### **Finding Wisdom**

Exploring Proverbs introduces an underlying goal of the text, which is that the reader will find wisdom and see it as an attainable quality (Prov 23:23). Hodgson points out that wisdom is not just a good quality but that it is a divine gift (Hodgson 1999, 7). Perdue, in a similar way, calls wisdom “the child of the divine parent who rejoices over the inhabited world and its human population” (Perdue 2008, 113). It is crucial for young people to understand the divine importance of wisdom.

Bland makes an important point of engagement with the divine gift of wisdom when he says, “The sages, however, are not interested just in having youth memorize oral instruction. They are quite concerned that youth learn to engage the mind” (Bland 1998, 232). It is the view of the researcher that an essential idea in responding to bullying is the engagement of the mind. People at all levels of the problem need to be challenged to think about their individual and collective actions and how those actions naturally influence others (Lanker and Issler 2010, 106).

In this engagement of the mind, one must remember that “wisdom comes from God, acts with God in creation and continues to act through providence and instruction” (Webster 1998, 78). Likewise, wisdom must be sought after and desired. Desiring, however, must be balanced with the fact that there are limits to what humans can know

and understand about God. Kugel agrees, “Wisdom had a divine character. . . . The totality of wisdom, of the divine plan, was somehow beyond the grasp of any human being” (Kugel 1997, 10). Because humanity is unable to have all wisdom and lives in a fallen state, there is a need for reproof and discipline that shapes moral character and decisions (Rasmussen 1995, 183). It is the ideas of reproof and discipline, discernment, and the observation of life that this paper will now address.

### **Reproof and Discipline**

Popular television shows like *Nanny 911* illustrate the struggle many parents face in disciplining their children. Regardless of the child’s age, it has been suggested that an epidemic exists in the United States of children behaving badly in part because of culture’s unwillingness to provide direction to parents (Steinberg 2001, 13). Proverbs 29:15 states, “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by a neglected child.” The noun “reproof” appears in Proverbs more than any other book in the Hebrew Scriptures.

What is “reproof?” Bland says, “Reproof is a skill learned through experience and through applying wisdom . . . and has as its goal the instruction of youth in the ways of righteousness, justice and equity” (Bland 1998, 230). Reproof is a response to one’s actions in life that leads one in the ways of righteousness. There is a close relationship in Proverbs between reproof and discipline. Both are seen as effective instruments in the correction of youth resulting in an understanding of God and nurturing of a relationship with Him. The challenge with reproof is that most people generally do not respond positively to it (Steinberg 2001, 1-19).

Reproof is, however, one way in which wisdom is given and justice is known. Out of reproof comes the ability for discernment that leads to another level of understanding as to how one orders their own life with self-discipline and self-control (Youngblood 2009, 139). The idea of self-control becomes central to helping young people respond to bullying. Since Olweus early work on bullying in the early 1970s,

students practicing personal self-control has been a key aspect in prevention (Olweus 2010, 124-25).

### **Discernment**

Regardless of one's age or placement in history, practicing discernment has been and will continue to be difficult but necessary. Von Rad argues that Proverbs may have been more important in daily decision-making and discernment of the people of Israel than the Ten Commandments (Von Rad 1972, 26). Either way, both texts are important to daily living and it is the view of the researcher that wisdom plays a role in a person's ability to wrestle with and discern appropriate Christ-like responses to the day-to-day challenges of life. Powlison states, "Wisdom that learns how to grapple well can make the deepest difference imaginable" (Powlison 2005, 4). This "deepest difference" made as a result of wisdom is what is needed to instruct young people in their response to the challenges of aggression and conflict found in human nature and reflected in the behavior known as bullying.

Young people today need to learn the art of discernment to respond to life's complexities, but they will not be able to do that alone (Lanker 2010, 277). Discernment moves a person to a place where the disciplining of desires and development of self-control can be found (Youngblood 2009, 139). The role of parents, friends, and family in the learning process can never be taken for granted (Smith 2005, 261). The need for discernment is crucial to a young person's ability to respond to the diverse dynamics of adolescent behavior, especially if they are to be participants in any effort to reduce bullying (Carney and Merrell 2001, 380). The process of learning discernment is never an easy one, and goes beyond the issue of bullying to an issue of young people striving to live morally responsible lives and equipping and empowering those young people to be able to respond to any and all forms of aggression they experience no matter the context (Bland 1998, 236).

## **Observation of Life**

Wisdom allows one to see and understand as much of life as humanly possible when done in connection with the Creator and the message of Jesus. In the observation of life, the voices of wisdom and of the teacher/parent are not heard together, but in counterpoint (Fox 1997, 633). From this, a level of truthfulness can be found that will keep individuals from trouble (Estes 2005, 260) and to avoid foolish behavior (McKenzie 1996, 12). A part of the observation is knowing that life goes beyond wishing to do the right thing, to letting wisdom guide an individual to what is right (Fox 2007, 88) because they understand God's trustworthiness to His creation (Moreland and Issler 2008, 167).

The parent, in helping a person observe life, will offer wise and life-saving insight. However, biblical wisdom transcends all human knowledge and allows for a development of character that introduces God's kingdom to a fallen world (Bland 2001, 5) and presents a biblical hope that has "faith on one side and love on the other" (Plantinga 2012, 13). Youngblood says this observation strives for "right relationships to parents, society, cosmos, and God. All of which help to restrain the behavior of the wise" (Youngblood 2009, 17).

## **Summation**

The author's experience working with young people has, unfortunately, led him to witness an array of unwise decisions and acts of aggression by adolescents toward peers. What those actions showed was that young people might not know what it means to "love your neighbor" (Matt 22:39). Other instances, however, saw an unwise act or behavior providing a platform for growth and transformation. No matter the situation, one must keep in mind that "a teen's motives can be illuminated by wise counseling, both appealed to and challenged" (Powlison 2005, 6), and that "the rewards of wisdom are not only a long and prosperous life, but an intensely enjoyable one" (Thomas 2002, 131).

As stated previously, it would seem that the answer to the bully issue today is found in Jesus' words in Matthew 22. In order for those words to be lived out, young

people need to be encouraged to see wisdom in Scripture as more than a good idea in a book. They need to see it as foundational to life, and see God as the author of wisdom who invites His creation to trust Him (Moreland and Issler 2008, 167).

Adolescents today, like the original readers of Proverbs, must know that wisdom leads to a passionate quest for truth and for what is right (Gordis 1968, 117). Wisdom provides insight in how others should and need to be treated and valued. It is God who gives wisdom, and with that wisdom comes protection from a damaging existence (Prov 2:7–8) and the guarantee of preserving the way of those who demonstrate uprightness (Prov 2:7–11). Ultimately wisdom is realized in love, sacrifice, and service, as shown in the life and teachings of Jesus (Phil 2: 4-8; John 15:13). Wisdom provides guidance and crucial insight into how one responds to any and all forms of bully behavior.

As Bland correctly observes, growing in wisdom is rigorous and, in many ways, an inconvenient process (Bland 1998, 234). Because of this fact, it is all the more important for the family of faith to dedicate itself to a process that helps young people grow in wisdom and in faithfulness (Lanker 2010, 271-72). It is the observation of this researcher that adults will need to be challenged to see the importance of today's adolescents to the life of the church. For some, this may involve a drastic change in attitude:

Some adult caregivers in the church will need a more balanced perspective of religious doubt, enabling them to respond to the doctrinal uncertainty, questions, and hesitations of religious youth as opportunities for discussion, exploration, and growth, not only as threats needing to be silenced. (Puffer et al. 2008, 279)

In the end, a growing understanding and application of the universal truth of biblical wisdom will allow all people, young and old, to see what it means to fear God, and see how “wisdom emphasizes community and kindness . . . qualities that are seen as beneficial for both individuals and society” (McKenzie 2002, 51).

Studies are clear that there is an ever-present issue of bullying today both in the United States and around the world (Nansel et al. 2004, 730). The aim of this literature review was to show the presence of bullying, the influences of bullying on



formation, the preventive measures, and the place of biblical wisdom as a response. If Crenshaw is right and wisdom is universal, then wisdom should “ensure personal well-being in everyday life, to make sense of extreme adversity and vexing anomalies” (Crenshaw 2010, 4). Not only should people of faith grow in wisdom for their own well-being, they should grow in wisdom as a service to others, understanding that the mission in response to bullying is to be active in loving of one’s neighbor (Roberts 2006, 165).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The literature review points to a dearth in the literature base regarding the issue of adolescent aggressive behavior in a church-based context. This chapter will outline the means used in this study to analyze and compare the levels of aggressive behavior occurring between adolescents in a church-based context. The researcher will share the research design overview, research population, samples and delimitations, limitations of generalization, research instrument, procedures for the research, and significance of the study.

#### **Synopsis of Research Questions**

The following questions directed the collection and analysis of data for this research study:

1. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships of those who have mentor relationships and those who do not?
2. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships and parental instructions related to aggressive behaviors?
3. What relationship exists, if any, between physical aggressive behavior and verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents in church-based relationships?
4. What relationship exists, if any, between aggressive behaviors and positive interactions in church-based relationships?
5. What relationship exists, if any, between receiving and displaying positive interactions in church-based relationships?
6. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behavior and each of the variables: community size, church size, and youth group size?
7. What is the occurrence of student aggressive behavior in a church-based context as compared to aggressive behavior in society?

## Research Design Overview

This study used a quantitative format with adolescent campers at Uplift summer camper in June of 2012. It was determined in initial conversations about this project that due to the amount of valid instruments already created in the area of bully research, the researcher would not need to develop his own, but find an already established statically-reliable instrument that met the following criteria: (1) instrument must show a reliability of at least .7 in previous research (Carlson and Winqvist 2011, 5), (2) aspects of the instrument must be recognized as an instrument on an academic and popular level due to the longitudinal aim of the overall project, (3) could be applied to a church context, without major changes to the instrument, (4) must be applicable to both middle school and high school students, (5) must in some way ask questions specific to parental involvement, (6) have been given in more than one context, and (7) the research must be able to communicate with the author of the instrument to receive permission.

The researcher began to filter possible instruments by first looking at the instruments from “Measuring Bullying Victimization, Perpetration, and Bystander Experiences: A Compendium of Assessment Tools.” This compendium, done by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, highlighted thirty-three different scales, and according to the authors,

Represents a starting point from which researchers can consider a set of psychometrically sound measures for assessing self-reported incidence and prevalence of a variety of bullying experiences. . . . This compendium contains 33 measures, which were selected using specific procedures. Bullying search terms were drawn from a review of the most salient literature on bullying victimization and perpetration as well as bystander experiences among adolescents and young adults. These terms were used to conduct searches of multiple electronic databases, which yielded a variety of different measures and scales. (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 2)

We used the following inclusion criteria:

To maximize inclusiveness of our review of measures, we included a measure if the article in which it was published referred to the construct “bullying,” even if the authors did not assess the power differential and chronicity of the target behavior or did not label the behavior as bullying for the research participants. The measure had to assess constructs related to bullying, such as physical aggression, relational aggression, sexualized and homophobic bullying, and bystander experiences. The measure had to have been administered to respondents between 12 and 20 years of age. Since the bulk of work on bullying began in the 1990s, the measures had to be

developed or revised between 1990 and 2007 (when the review of literature was concluded). Measures had to be self-administered in English. The measure had to be published in a peer-reviewed journal or book, including psychometric information about the measure, when available. (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011, 3)

In studying the instruments in the compendium, it became clear to the researcher that the instruments created by Pamela Orpinas and colleagues would be the right option for this research for six main reasons: (1) it met the reliability expectation of at least .7 on each measure, (2) it met the criteria of academic and popular recognition, (3) unlike other instruments from the Compendium that would require serious wording changes, Orpinas' instrument required a simple change of the word "school" to "church," (4) since Orpinas' instrument was designed for middle school students, and since participants in this study are middle school and high school, the questions were on a level that both groups could understand, (5) the instruments had been given in more than one context, and (6) the instruments final section deals directly with the issue of parents.

The final condition was the researcher being able to communicate directly with the instruments' creator, which was accomplished when the researcher received permission from Orpinas to use her instruments for this specific research project. That initial permission was followed up with a personal meeting at the University of Georgia, at which time the researcher learned more about the creation of the instrument and Orpinas shared numerous key resources with the researcher.

With approval of Orpinas, the original instrument was used with one minor exception. Where the word "school" appeared in any question, it was changed to read "church." The researcher sent the survey instrument to the Research Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and to the Harding University Institutional Review Board agreeing to follow all research protocols given by both organizations, particularly in regards to the surveying of minors.

Data from campers attending Uplift was gathered and analyzed to determine the relationship that exists between levels of aggressive behavior in a church-based context and multiple variables. A survey was given to each camper using a paper survey

administered the morning of the first day of camp. With the assistance of Elite Research, LLC, statistical analysis was completed in order to evaluate and determine the degree to which adolescent aggression is present and responded to in a church-based context.

The campers were asked to respond to a survey asking general demographic information, questions as to the presence of a mentor, the occurrences of aggressive behavior in the previous week and month, questions as to positive behavior, and the ways parents had trained them to respond to aggressive behavior. The camp staff helped to distribute and collect the surveys from the participants. The researcher instructed participants that their involvement was totally voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from participation at any time.

Once all surveys were completed, a trained team of Uplift staff members entered the data into a statistical computer program for tabulation. The researcher has a desire to see this research as a first step in a larger longitudinal study, thus the tabulation was done by the researcher with the assistance of Elite Research, LLC, in Carrollton, Texas.

### **Population**

The population for this research was adolescents in the Churches of Christ.

The largest of the three principal bodies in the American restoration movement, Churches of Christ are located throughout the nation but concentrated in the South and Southwest. Because this is not a denomination but a brotherhood with no central headquarters, activities such as record keeping are very difficult. Recent efforts show the membership to be about 1,250,000, in nearly 13,000 churches. (Meade and Hill, 1985, 91)Research Sample

The research sample was a census of campers between the ages of 11 to 17 at Uplift 2012 on the campus of Harding University, a Church of Christ affiliated school, in Searcy, Arkansas. The minimum research sample that was proposed for the project was 1,200, the total number was 1,319. Uplift is one of the four largest Church of Christ summer camps in the United States. It began in 1984, and for the last twenty years has attracted 1,500 to 2,000 young people to the campus of Harding University for five days of classes, worship, entertainment, and enjoyment. This study was conducted with campers

who participated in Uplift 2012 summer camp at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. The traditional demographics of camp are very similar to those of the overall Church of Christ fellowship. The four largest adherent states of the Churches of Christ in the United States are Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, and Arkansas, which are the four largest states represented at Uplift (Royster 2012, 26-27). The researcher used all willing campers between 11 to 17 years of age as part of the research sample. Sampling estimations based on a 5 percent error rate, 95 percent confidence, and the 1,200 expected campers revealed a minimum sample size of 291 to be representative. Calculating based on the 95,000 teens between ages 11 to 17 in the Churches of Christ revealed a minimum sample size of 383 to be representative (Yeakley 2013). The present study obtained 1,319 participants which well surpassed the 383 needed to account for missing data, etc.

### **Delimitations and Limitations of Generalization**

There are a number of delimitations of the research. The focus of the research was limited to Uplift Summer Camp 2012 attendees on the campus of Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. Each summer, more than twelve hundred teenagers spend five days in June on the university's campus participating in a camp experience similar to a traditional Bible camp.

For the last ten years, Uplift has surveyed campers each summer, and this survey served as the 2012 instrument. Ninety-seven percent of participants were from the fellowship of Churches of Christ, mainly from the acapella Churches of Christ. Thus, the results of the study are generalizable only to Uplift campers, but are transferable on a large scale to Church of Christ adolescents and on a smaller scale the evangelical faith community.

Another limitation of the study is that it only focused on students. While adults, sponsors, and youth leaders had the ability to see and review the instrument given, their responses were not part of the study in any way.

A final limitation of the study was the lack of diversity. While there was some diversity of race and economic status, the majority of campers were Caucasian young people. Due to the cost of camp, they also came from upper middle class homes.

### **Research Instrumentation**

The researcher analyzed and compared the frequency and degree of aggressive behavior occurring among adolescents in church-based context by using an instrument designed by Pamela Orpinas (Orpinas 2009) and described in the Center for Disease Control's widely utilized compendium of measures of violence-related attitudes and behaviors (Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo 2011). The instrument was made up of five scales: Aggressive Scale for Middle School Children (Orpinas and Frankowski 2001), Victimization Scale for Middle School Children (Dahlberg et al. 2005; Orpinas and Frankowski 2001), Reduced Aggression and Victimization Scales (Orpinas and Horne 2006), Positive Behavior Scales (Orpinas 2009), and Parental Support for Fighting (Orpinas et al. 2000; Kelder et al. 1996; Miller-Johnson et al. 2004; Orpinas, Murray, and Kelder 1999), which collectively make up the *Measurement Manual: Aggression, Victimization, and Social Skills Scales* that was used for this research (Orpinas 2009).

#### **Aggressive Scale for Middle School Children**

The Aggressive Scale for Middle School Children is based on data collected from two independent samples of young adolescents determining the occurrence of self-reported aggressive behavior during the week prior to the survey (Orpinas 2009). Eleven items are measured on a 7-point scale (0 times to 6 or more times). An overall score is created as the sum of the 11 items for each participant. The internal consistency of the scores, as determined by Cronbach's alpha, was .87 and .88. The internal consistency scores did not vary by gender or race (Orpinas and Frankowski 2001, 50). Cronbach's alpha is an internal consistency estimate of the reliability of scores, with 0 indicating only an error component, and 1 indicating that all items measure only the true score and there

is no error component. A cut-off value of 0.7 usually ensures adequate reliability (Carmines and Zeller 1979, 44).

### **Victimization Scale**

“The Victimization Scale measures the self-reported frequency of being the victim of aggressive acts during the week prior to the survey” (Orpinas 2009, 6). It was established based on the Aggressive Scale (Orpinas and Frankowski 2001). Ten items are measured on a 7-point scale (0 times to 6 or more times). An overall score is created as the sum of the 10 items for each participant. The scale is constructed on figures from a sample of 9,115 students in Texas. The internal consistency of the scores, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha, was .85. According to Orpinas, “Pearson correlation between the Aggression Scale and the Victimization Scale was .50” (Orpinas 2009, 6). Pearson’s correlation is a parametric measure of linear association between two continuous, normally distributed variables, with 0 indicating no relationship, and 1 (or -1) indicating a perfect positive (or negative) relationship (Ha and Ha 2012, 255).

### **Reduced Aggression and Victimization Scales**

“The Reduced Aggression and Victimization Scales measure the frequency of being victimized or of reporting aggressive behaviors during the previous week” (Orpinas 2009, 10-11). In a sample of middle school students the Cronbach’s alpha for aggression was .89 and for victimization .87 (Orpinas and Frankowski 2001, 51-68). Twelve items are measured on a 7-point scale (0 times to 6 or more times). Two scores (self and others) are each created as the sum of 6 of the 12 items for each participant.

### **Positive Behavior Scales**

“The Positive Behavior Scales were designed to measure the self-reported frequency of exerting or receiving positive behaviors during the 30 days prior to the survey” (Orpinas 2009, 13). In a sample, the Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for being the



recipient and .91 for self-reported behaviors (Orpinas 2009, 13-14). Twenty items are measured on a 4-point scale (0 = Never to 3 = Several times a week). Two scores (self and others) are each created as the sum of 10 of the 20 items for each participant.

### **Parental Support for Fighting Scale**

The Parental Support for Fighting Scale was designed to measure students' thought of parental support for aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors. There are 10 items that students respond to as "yes" or "no" based on what parents tell them about fighting (Orpinas 2009, 16). In one research project led by Orpinas, the Cronbach's alpha from the scale was .81 (Orpinas, Murray and Kelder 1999, 774-87). Items that support aggressive solutions are reverse coded (no = 2, yes = 1); then all items are added. High scores indicate a stronger perception of parental support for non-aggressive solutions.

The researcher made one minor change to Orpinas' instrument in substituting the word "church" in place of "school." This change was done so that the instrument would fit the research questions and research design. The researcher sent the survey instrument to the Research Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and to the Harding University Institutional Review Board for approval.

### **Demographics**

A demographic questionnaire was given to each camper to begin the survey. The requested data was grade, age, gender, church affiliation, church size, youth group size, hometown size, parents' marital status, and whether the participant has a mentor (see Appendix 2). Each of the selected demographic questions were an important element in assessing the relationship level of aggressive behavior occurring among adolescents in a church-based context.

### **Research Procedures**

Prior to the collection of the data for this study, the researcher received approval to conduct the research from the Institutional Review Board at Harding

University. Once approval was given, the researcher received approval to conduct the research from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Dissertation Committee and Research Ethics committee.

In order to participate in Uplift, each camper submitted a camp registration form with a parental or guardian signature giving permission for the camper to participate in all camp activities approved by the University. Upon arrival, at camp, each youth leader signed a form giving permission for those under their supervision to participate in the study (see Appendix 3). Individual campers' parent or guardian signed the same form given to youth leaders during registration. As a part of sponsor orientation, on the first night of camp the researcher explained verbally what would happen the next day in regards to the survey. This was the eleventh year in which a research instrument was given to campers as a part of their Uplift experience.

Both verbally and in print at the top of the demographic questionnaire, students were instructed that their participation was completely voluntary and they could decide to not participate. They were also told that their answers were anonymous and instructed to not write their name on the instrument at any point. After the completion of this research, a presentation will be made at Uplift 2014 thanking campers for their involvement and identifying conclusions taken from the research findings.

### **Data Preparation and Analysis Plan**

Once the researcher received the surveys back from the participants, data was be entered into an excel file and imported into SPSS v. 21.0 for analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables, comprising means, standard deviations, medians, minima and maxima for continuous variables, while frequencies and percentages were calculated for all categorical demographic variables. Distributions of the continuous variables were examined to determine if normality assumptions were met and parametric testing was appropriate, or whether transformed data or non-parametric tests should be used. Extreme outliers were investigated for technical or clerical errors. If the size of the

measurement could not be attributed to such an error, it was included in the analysis and the effect of deleting the observation was reported. Alpha of .05 was used to determine significance levels.

Statistical analysis was conducted in order to analyze and compare the levels of aggressive behavior occurring among adolescents in a church-based context. Analysis was completed using cross tabulations with Pearson's chi square and Cramer's *V*, Mann-Whitney *U* tests, Kruskal-Wallis tests, and Spearman's correlation coefficients, (Ha and Ha 2012, 255-323).

Cross tabulations with Pearson's chi square was used to test for independence of two categorical variables. Cramer's *V* provided a measure of the strength of this relationship, with values closer to 1 indicating a stronger relationship and values closer to 0 indicating a weaker relationship. The Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to assess whether two measures from independent and equally sized samples were statistically different. The Kruskal-Wallis test is based on mean ranks and was used to test for differences among multiple, independent samples. Spearman's correlation coefficient measures the strength of association between two ranked variables, with 0 indicating no association, and 1 (or -1) indicating a perfect positive (or negative) association of ranks (Ha and Ha 2012, 290-323). These non-parametric tests were used to test the relationships among variables due to the non-normal distribution of each of the continuous variables. Due to the large sample size, effect sizes were tested along with the statistical significance of all findings.

Specifically, the research questions were analyzed using the following techniques. These selected techniques were not only selected for use in this study but will be part of a larger longitudinal study of adolescent aggression:

1. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships of those who have mentor relationships and those who do not? Nonparametric Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney U tests were conducted to test for differences in adolescent aggressive behavior scores between those who have mentor relationships and those who do not, as well as mentor types.
2. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships and parental instructions related to aggressive behaviors?

Spearman correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between both adolescent aggression and aggression in church and each of the three dependent measures for aggression: parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting.

3. What relationship exists, if any, between physical aggressive behavior and verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents in church-based relationships? Spearman correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between physical aggressive behavior and verbal aggressive behavior scores.
4. What relationship exists, if any, between aggressive behaviors and positive interactions in church-based relationships? Spearman correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between aggressive behavior scores and positive interaction scores.
5. What relationship exists, if any, between receiving and displaying positive interactions in church-based relationships? Spearman correlations were conducted to assess the relationship between receiving and displaying positive interaction scores.
6. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behavior and each of the variables: community size, church size, and youth group size? Several Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to test for differences among levels of community size, church size, and youth group size on aggressive behavior scores. Multiple logistic regressions were conducted to assess relationship between the variables and aggressive behavior in combination.
7. What is the occurrence of student aggressive behavior in a church-based context as compared to aggressive behavior in society? Cross tabulations were conducted to determine the level of aggressive behavior in church-based context as compared to already established research on aggressive behavior in culture.

A priori power analysis was conducted using G\*Power version 3.1.6 to determine the minimum sample size required to find significance with a desired level of power set at .95, an  $\alpha$ -level at .05, and moderate effect sizes. Based on the analysis, it was determined that minimums of 221 participants were required to ensure adequate power for the logistic regression model. Preliminary analysis, including cross tabulation tests, needed minimum sample sizes within the 221 needed for the primary analysis (Cohen 1988, 252-71; Erdfelder, Faul, and Buchner 1996, 3-8).

### **Significance of the Study**

As mentioned earlier, there is a void of research on adolescent aggressive behavior in a church-related context. A context, by design, that should be different from the world in so many different ways. It would seem that the answer to the bully issue today is found in Jesus saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39).

The objective of this research was to see if young people in the church context are loving their neighbor as themselves and if that is what they are being taught by their parents, or if they responding to their neighbor like the world has been shown to respond (Nansel et al. 2004, 730). One key way young people should show their love of neighbor is in how people are treated. There is a need today to help adolescents know the importance of Paul's words in Romans 12:1-2:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

This study attempts to analyze and compare the level of aggressive behavior occurring between adolescents in a church-based context in an attempt to help shape a better understanding of what transformed attitude and actions can and should look like. By examining the thoughts and actions of adolescents in connection to church-based relationships, this study hopefully lays a foundation to help young people better understand what it means to "love their neighbor" and connect with friends, family, church and most importantly, the God who created them.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This research study sought to analyze and compare the level of aggressive behavior occurring among adolescents in a church-based context. To study this objective properly, the researcher examined aggression and victimization in youth, both in general and specifically, in the church-related environment among campers at Uplift in the summer of 2012. The findings and statistical data are evaluated and reviewed in this chapter in a concise and impartial manner.

#### **Compilation Protocols**

The main aim of this project was to analyze and compare the level of aggressive behavior occurring among adolescents in church-based context. In an attempt to reach this goal, the researcher gave a written survey instrument to each camper at Uplift 2012. It was expected, based on previous year's attendance, that there would be 1,300 to 1,500 participants in the study. Participants were removed if they did not report their age, missed subscale information, under 11 or were 18 or older.

After the completion of data entry, by Uplift staff members, a crosstab analysis was completed using Person's chi square and Cramer's V, Mann-Whitney U tests, Kruskal-Wallis tests, and Spearman's correlation coefficients. These non-parametric tests were used to test the relationships among variables due to the non-normal distribution of each of the continuous variables. The results of the statistical analysis will be offered in this chapter through numerous figures and tables.

#### **Demographic and Sample Data**

The research population for the quantitative portion of the research were

campers between the ages of 11 to 17 years at Uplift 2012 on the campus of Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. Demographic data was requested from each participant on the first page of the survey (see Appendix 2). Initially there were 1,506 participants in the current study. Two participants were removed because they did not report their age; 87 participants were removed for missing subscale information; and 185 participants were removed because they were 18 or older. Thus, 1,319 participants were examined in the final sample. Of those 1,319 participants, as shown in Table 1, the mean age was 14.77 (*Mdn* = 15, *SD* = 1.53) with a range of 11 to 17 years and the mean grade was 9.80 (*Mdn* = 10, *SD* = 1.52) with a range of 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Table 1. Means, medians, and standard deviations for age and grade

	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Median	Min	Max
Grade	1,319	9.80	1.52	10	6	12
Age	1,319	14.77	1.53	15	11	17

As shown in Table 2, there were 706 females (53.9%) and 604 males (46.1%). The majority reported that their biological parents were married (*N* = 1,001, 76.4%) and 309 (23.6%) reported that their biological parents were divorced. The majority (*N* = 989, 75.1%) reported having a mentor. For mentor type, 476 (36.3%) reported that the mentor was a member of the family, 385 (29.4%) reported that the mentor was an unrelated adult, and 121 (9.2%) reported that the mentor was someone close to their age, but not related to them. In terms of the size of their youth groups, 77 (5.9%) reported that their youth group was less than 10 youth, 594 (45.3%) reported that their youth group was 11 to 40 youth, 370 (28.2%) reported that their group was 41 to 70 youth, 170 (13%) reported that their youth group was 71 to 100 youth, and 100 (7.6%) reported that their youth group was more than 100 youth.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages for gender, divorced parents, mentor, mentor type, youth group size, church size, hometown size and religious affiliation

	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	706	53.9
Male	604	46.1
<b>Divorced Biological Parents</b>		
No	1001	76.4
Yes	309	23.6
<b>Have a Mentor</b>		
No	328	24.9
Yes	989	75.1
<b>Mentor Type</b>		
Member of Your Family	476	36.3
Adult Not Related to You	385	29.4
No Mentor	328	25.0
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	121	9.2
<b>Youth Group Size</b>		
Less Than 10 Youth	77	5.9
11 - 40 Youth	594	45.3
41 - 70 Youth	370	28.2
71 - 100 Youth	170	13.0
More Than 100 Youth	100	7.6
<b>Church Size</b>		
Less Than 50 Members	10	.8
51 - 100 Members	81	6.2
101 - 250 Members	229	17.4
250 - 500 Members	449	34.2
More Than 500 Members	544	41.4
<b>Hometown Size</b>		
Less Than 10,000 People	210	16.2
10,001 - 50,000 People	392	30.2
50,001 - 100,000 People	256	19.7
100,001 - 200,000 People	129	9.9
More Than 200,000 People	312	24.0
<b>Church Affiliation</b>		
Church of Christ	1264	97.0
Other	39	3.0

Note: Frequencies not summing 1,319 reflect missing data



In terms of church size, Table 2 shows that 10 (8%) reported that their church has less than 50 members, 81 (6.2%) reported that their church had 51 to 100 members, 229 (17.4%) reported that their church had 101 to 205 members, 449 (34.2%) reported that their church had 250 to 500 members, and 544 (41.4%) reported that their church had more than 500 members. For hometown size, 210 (16.2%) reported a hometown size of less than 10,000 people, 392 (30.2%) reported a hometown size of 10,001 to 50,000 people, 256 (19.7%) reported a hometown size of 50,001 to 100,000 people, 129 (9.9%) reported a hometown size of 100,001 to 200,000 people, and 312 (24.0%) reported a hometown size of more than 200,000 people. Finally, a majority ( $N = 1,264$ , 97.0%) indicated affiliation with the Church of Christ.

### **Findings and Display**

The purpose of this quantitative research was to examine aggression and victimization in youth both in general and specifically in the church environment. Information on positive behaviors given and received by the youth and parental support for aggressive and non-aggressive solutions was also gathered from the participants. The results chapter is organized such that the relationships among the variables (both demographics and outcomes) are presented in the preliminary analyses using cross tabulations with Pearson's chi square and Cramer's V, Mann-Whitney U tests, Kruskal-Wallis tests, and Spearman's correlation coefficients. These non-parametric tests were used to test the relationships among variables due to the non-normal distribution of each of the continuous variables. The results of the reliability testing of the outcomes are also presented in the preliminary analyses.

Due to the large sample size ( $N = 1,319$ ), effect sizes were tested along with the statistical significance of all findings. Only findings with at least a weak effect size are discussed in the results. Findings that were shown to be statistically significant but where the effect size showed no meaningful relationship are denoted in the tables with a symbol (†) but are not discussed.

## Cross Tabulations

Crosstab analysis using Person's chi-square and Cramer's  $V$  tests were conducted to examine the relationships between the categorical variables. The research begins with the relationship between gender and the variables divorced biological parents, have a mentor, and mentor type. As shown in Table 3, the relationship between gender and having a mentor was significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 20.39, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .13$ . A greater proportion of females had a mentor (80.0%) compared to males (69.2%). Finally, the relationship between gender and mentor type was significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 22.54, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .13$ . A greater proportion of males had no mentor (30.9%) compared to females (20.1%). A similar proportion of males and females had mentors who were members of their family (38.3% females, 33.9% males), an adult not related to them (30.6% females, 28.1% males), or someone close to their age, but not related to them (11.0% females, 7.1% males). The relationship between having divorced biological parents and gender was statistically significant but had a non-meaningful effect size (Cramer's  $V < .10$ ).

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages for divorced parents, mentor, mentor type by gender

		Female		Male			
		n	%	n	%	$\chi^2$	$p$
Divorced Biological Parents						8.17	.004
	No	513	73.3	481	80.0		
	Yes	187	26.7	120	20.0		
Have a Mentor						20.39	<.001
	No	141	20.0	186	30.8		
	Yes	564	80.0	417	69.2		
Mentor Type						22.54	<.001
	Member of Your Family	268	38.3	204	33.9		
	Adult Not Related to You	214	30.6	169	28.1		
	No Mentor	141	20.1	186	30.9		
	Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	77	11.0	43	7.1		

Note: † Indicates findings that are statistically significant but where there was no meaningful difference based on Cramer's  $V$  effect size  $< .10$

Turning to the relationship between having divorced biological parents and the variables gender, have a mentor, and mentor type, as shown in Table 4 (and previously mentioned), the relationship between having divorced biological parents and the variables having a mentor and mentor type were not significant, all p-values are non-significant.

Table 4. Frequencies and percentages for gender, mentor, mentor type by divorced parents

		No		Yes		$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
		n	%	n	%		
Gender						8.17	.004 <sup>†</sup>
	Female	513	51.6	187	60.9		
	Male	481	48.4	120	39.1		
Have a Mentor						.24	.624
	No	247	24.7	80	26.1		
	Yes	754	75.3	227	73.9		
Mentor Type						4.81	.186
	Member of Your Family	370	37.2	101	33.0		
	Adult Not Related to You	280	28.1	102	33.3		
	No Mentor	247	24.8	80	26.1		
	Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	98	9.8	23	7.5		

Note: <sup>†</sup> Indicates findings that are statistically significant but where there was no meaningful difference based on Cramer's *V* effect size < .10

Examination of the relationship between having a mentor and the variables gender and divorced biological parents is shown in Table 5. As previously stated, the relationship between gender and having a mentor was significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 20.39, p < .001$ , Cramer's *V* = .13. A greater proportion of those with mentors were females (57.5%) compared to those without mentors (43.1%). The relationship between having a mentor and divorced biological parents was not significant,  $p = .624$ .

Table 5 Frequencies and percentages for gender, divorced parents by mentor

		No		Yes			
		n	%	n	%	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
Gender						20.39	<.001
	Female	141	43.1	564	57.5		
	Male	186	56.9	417	42.5		
Divorced Biological Parents						.24	.624
	No	247	75.5	754	76.9		
	Yes	80	24.5	227	23.1		

The relationship between mentor type and the variables gender and divorced biological parents is shown in Table 6. As previously mentioned, the relationship between mentor type and gender was significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 22.54, p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .13$ . A greater proportion of those with mentors who were someone close to their age, but not related to them, were female (64.2%), compared to those with mentors who were members of their family (56.8%), those with mentors who were adults not related to them (55.9%) and those with no mentor (43.1%). In contrast, a smaller proportion of those with mentors who were someone close to their age, but not related to them were male (35.8%) compared to those with mentors who were adults not related to them (44.1%), those with mentors who were a member of their family (43.2%), and those with no mentor (56.9%). The relationship between mentor type and divorced biological parents was not significant,  $p = .186$ .

Table 6. Frequencies and percentages for gender, divorced parents by mentor type

		Member of Your Family		Adult Not Related to You		No Mentor		Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You			
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
Gender										22.54	<.001
	Female	268	56.8	214	55.9	141	43.1	77	64.2		
	Male	204	43.2	169	44.1	186	56.9	43	35.8		
Divorced Biological Parents										4.81	.186
	No	370	78.6	280	73.3	247	75.5	98	81.0		
	Yes	101	21.4	102	26.7	80	24.5	23	19.0		

## Difference in Demographic Variables

Non-parametric Mann-Whitney *U* tests were conducted to test for differences between continuous demographic variables (i.e., age, youth group size, church size, and hometown size) by each dichotomous categorical independent variable (i.e., gender, divorced parents, and mentor). Findings for age are shown in Table 7. There was a trend towards a significant difference in age for males and females,  $Z = 1.95$ ,  $p = .051$ . The mean ranks for males were greater (Mean Rank = 677.20,  $M = 14.87$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) than females (Mean Rank = 636.94,  $M = 14.69$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ). No difference was found between the genders for youth group size, church size, or hometown size, all *p*-values are non-significant.

Table 7. Means and standard deviations for age, youth group size, church size, hometown size by gender

	n	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean Rank	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Age					1.95	.051
Female	706	14.69	1.55	636.94		
Male	604	14.87	1.50	677.20		
Youth Group Size					.64	.520
Female	701	2.74	1.06	657.33		
Male	601	2.67	.97	644.70		
Church Size					.06	.951
Female	700	4.09	.95	651.94		
Male	604	4.10	.94	653.14		
Hometown Size					.83	.404
Female	692	2.98	1.40	653.33		
Male	598	2.93	1.43	636.44		

Findings for divorced parents are shown in Table 8. There was a significant difference in youth group size for those with and without divorced parents,  $Z = 2.17$ ,  $p = .030$ . The mean ranks for those without divorced parents were greater (Mean Rank = 663.30,  $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) than those with divorced parents (Mean Rank = 613.41,

$M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). There was also a significant difference between church size for those with and without divorced parents,  $Z = 3.91$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for those without divorced parents were greater (Mean Rank = 673.77,  $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) than those with divorced parents (Mean Rank = 583.44,  $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). No differences were found between those with and without divorced parents for age or hometown size, all p-values are non-significant.

Table 8. Means and standard deviations for age, youth group size, church size, hometown size by divorced parents

	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Z	p
Age					.76	.447
No	1001	14.79	1.52	659.84		
Yes	309	14.72	1.56	641.45		
Youth Group Size					2.17	.030
No	994	2.74	1.02	663.30		
Yes	308	2.61	1.01	613.41		
Church Size					3.91	<.001
No	997	4.15	.92	673.77		
Yes	307	3.91	1.00	583.44		
Hometown Size					.65	.515
No	985	2.95	1.43	641.85		
Yes	305	3.00	1.39	657.29		

Findings for mentor are shown in Table 9. There was a significant difference in age for those with and without a mentor,  $Z = 3.49$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for those with a mentor were greater (Mean Rank = 679.68,  $M = 14.58$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) than those without a mentor (Mean Rank = 596.65,  $M = 14.53$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ). No differences were found between those with and without a mentor for youth group size, church size, or hometown size, all p-values are non-significant.

Table 9. Means and standard deviations for age, youth group size, church size, hometowns size by mentor

	n	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean Rank	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Age					3.49	<.001
No	328	14.53	1.47	596.65		
Yes	989	14.85	1.55	679.68		
Youth Group Size					.38	.708
No	326	2.70	1.04	648.62		
Yes	983	2.72	1.01	657.12		
Church Size					.48	.631
No	325	4.06	.98	647.77		
Yes	986	4.11	.94	658.71		
Hometown Size					.41	.685
No	325	2.94	1.47	641.91		
Yes	972	2.96	1.40	651.37		

Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to examine potential differences between mentor types for age, youth group size, church size, and hometown size. As shown in Table 10, there was a significant difference in age for mentor type,  $\chi^2 = 16.09, p = .001$ . Follow-up Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed that those with no mentor (Mean Rank = 593.33, *M* = 14.53, *SD* = 1.47) were younger than those with any type of mentor. Those with a mentor who was a member of their family (Mean Rank = 660.83, *M* = 14.80, *SD* = 1.50) were significantly older than those with no mentor but significantly younger than those with a mentor who is someone close to their age but not related to them (Mean Rank = 735.13, *M* = 15.11, *SD* = 1.43). Those with a mentor who was an adult not related to them (Mean Rank = 676.85, *M* = 14.84, *SD* = 1.63) were not significantly older or younger than those with a mentor who was a member of their family or someone close to their age but not related to them. Beyond that, there were no additional differences between mentor types for youth group size, church size, or hometown size, all *p*-values are non-significant.

Table 10. Means and standard deviations for age, youth group size, church size, hometown size by mentor type

	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	p
Age					16.09	.001
Member of Your Family	476	14.80	1.50	660.83	b	
Adult Not Related to You	385	14.84	1.63	676.85	bd	
No Mentor	328	14.53	1.47	593.33	a	
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	121	15.11	1.43	735.13	cd	
Youth Group Size					.78	.855
Member of Your Family	473	2.70	.99	648.42		
Adult Not Related to You	383	2.72	1.03	652.89		
No Mentor	326	2.70	1.04	644.96		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	120	2.78	1.07	676.96		
Church Size					.62	.892
Member of Your Family	475	4.09	.93	647.32		
Adult Not Related to You	384	4.13	.92	663.06		
No Mentor	325	4.06	.98	645.20		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	120	4.08	1.04	658.97		
Hometown Size					2.80	.424
Member of Your Family	466	2.87	1.37	628.43		
Adult Not Related to You	378	3.04	1.40	668.75		
No Mentor	325	2.94	1.47	639.03		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	121	3.01	1.51	656.00		

Note: Mean ranks with different superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups

### Relationship of Age

Nonparametric Spearman's correlation coefficients were conducted to examine the relationship between the continuous demographic variables of age, youth group size, church size, and hometown size. As shown in Table 11, the results revealed significant positive correlations between all variables, all  $ps < .001$ , suggesting that as one variable increases the other variable also tends to increase. The Spearman's correlations between age and church size, youth group size, and hometown size ranged from  $\rho = .10$  to  $.17$  indicating relatively weak or no relationships between these variables.



Being older was weakly associated with being in a bigger youth group, larger church, and larger hometown. There was a weak correlation between hometown size and church size was  $\rho (1292) = .34$  and between hometown size and youth group size was  $\rho (1290) = .35$ , indicating that youth in larger towns tended to have bigger youth groups and bigger churches. The strongest correlation was found between youth group size and church size  $\rho (1305) = .65$ , indicating that youth with larger youth groups also tended to have larger churches (Salkind 2011, 88).

Table 11. Spearman's correlation coefficients for age, youth group size, church size, hometown size

	Age	Church Size	Youth Group Size
Church Size	.12**		
Youth Group Size	.17**	.65**	
Hometown Size	.10**	.34**	.35**

Note: \*\*  $p < .001$

### Positive Behavior Received and Given

Separate factor analyses were conducted on the ten positive behaviors received items and the ten positive behaviors given items. For the ten positive behaviors received items, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 59.41% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .716 to .823). For the ten positive behaviors given, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 60.67% of the total variance with individual eigenvalues ranging from .687 to .837. Eigenvalues are calculated and used in deciding how many factors to extract in the overall factor analysis (Brown 2001, 15). As shown in Table 12, the items for both the positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given scales demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's alphas = .92, .93, respectively). This indicated that all questions contributed adequately to each scale.

Table 12. Eigenvalues and Cronbach's alpha for positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given scales

	Eigenvalues	$\alpha$
Positive Received		.92
A kid said a compliment (praise, kind word) to me.	.823	
A kid offered to help me.	.806	
A kid said or did something that made me feel good.	.799	
A kid helped me.	.786	
A kid said or did something nice to me.	.779	
A kid showed interest in my ideas or activities.	.775	
A kid shared something with me.	.758	
A kid invited me to participate in a game, group conversation, or a class activity.	.736	
A kid acted friendly with me.	.722	
A kid said "thanks" or "you are welcome" to me.	.716	
Positive Given		.93
I said or did something that made a kid from my church feel good.	.837	
I offered to help a kid from my church.	.818	
I helped a kid from my church.	.817	
I said a compliment (praise, kind word) to a kid from my church.	.805	
I said or did something nice to a kid from my church.	.796	
I share something with a kid from my church.	.776	
I showed interest in ideas or activities from a kid from my church.	.757	
I acted friendly with a kid from my church.	.755	
I invited a kid from my church to participate in a game, group conversation, or a class activity.	.730	
I said "thanks" or "you are welcome" to a kid from my classroom.	.687	

A factor analysis was also conducted on the eleven items for the Aggression scale, which yielded one factor explaining 40.90% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .509 to .732). As shown in Table 13, the eleven items for the Aggression scale were also examined with factor analysis and demonstrated adequate reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .84).

Table 13. Eigenvalues and Cronbach's alpha for aggression scales

		Eigenvalues	$\alpha$
Aggression			.84
	I threatened to hurt or to hit someone.	.732	
	I pushed or shoved other students.	.706	
	I encourage other students to fight.	.676	
	I slapped or kicked someone.	.673	
	I called other students bad names.	.672	
	I got into a physical fight because I was angry.	.669	
	I fought back when someone hit me first.	.662	
	I teased students to make them angry.	.627	
	I was angry most of the day.	.548	
	I got angry very easily with someone.	.517	
	I said things about other kids to make other students laugh.	.509	

For the ten items of the Victimization scale, a factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 44.73% of the total variance with individual eigenvalues ranging from .366 to .758. Table 14 shows the ten items subjected to factor analysis for the Victimization scale, for which there was also adequate reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .86.)

Table 14. Eigenvalues and Cronbach's alpha for victimization scales

		Eigenvalues	$\alpha$
Victimization			.86
	A student threatened to hurt or to hit me.	.758	
	A student called me (or my family) bad names.	.728	
	A student pushed or shoved me.	.722	
	A student slapped or kicked me.	.717	
	A student teased me to make me angry.	.676	
	A student tried to hurt my feelings.	.672	
	Other students encouraged me to fight.	.671	
	A student asked me to fight.	.653	
	A student said things about me to make other students laugh (made fun of me).	.643	
	A student beat me up.	.366	

For the church-related victimization and aggression items, separate factor analyses were conducted on the six Church Victimization items and the six Church Aggression items. For the six Church Victimization items, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 48.38% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .575 to .798). For the six Church Aggression items, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 49.50% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .639 to .761). As shown in Table 15, items for both of the Church Victimization and Church Aggression scales demonstrated adequate reliability (Cronbach's alphas = .77, .78, respectively).

Table 15. Eigenvalues and Cronbach's alpha for aggression in church and victimization in church scales

	Eigenvalues	$\alpha$
<b>Church Victimization</b>		.77
How many times did a kid from your church call you a bad name?	.798	
How many times did kids from your church say that they were going to hit you?	.724	
How many times did a kid from your church tease you?	.719	
How many times did a kid from your church push, shove, or hit you?	.709	
How many times did a student in your church make up something about you to make other kids not like you anymore?	.624	
How many times did other kids in your church leave you out on purpose?	.575	
<b>Church Aggression</b>		.78
How many times did you say that you would hit a kid in your church?	.761	
How many times did you push, shove, or hit a kid from your church?	.753	
How many times did you call a kid from your church a bad name?	.740	
How many times did you tease a kid from your church?	.665	
How many times did you make up something about other students in your church to make other kids not like them anymore?	.653	
How many times did you leave out another classmate on purpose?	.639	

Lastly, separate factor analyses were conducted on the five items for Aggressive Solutions, the five items for Non-Aggressive Solutions, and the ten items for Total Parent Support for Aggression. For five items for Aggressive Solutions, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 48.13% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .491 to .785). For the five items for Non-Aggressive Solutions, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 44.23% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .540 to .735). Finally, for the ten items for Total Parent Support for Aggression, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 32.66% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .439 to .651). Table 16 shows that items for all three scales of Aggressive Solutions, Non-Aggressive Solutions, and Total Parent Support for Aggression demonstrated sufficient reliability (Cronbach's alphas = .65, .68, .74, respectively).

Table 16. Eigenvalues and Cronbach's alpha for parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting scales

	Eigenvalues	$\alpha$
<b>Aggressive Solutions</b>		<b>.65</b>
If someone calls you names, hit them.	.785	
If you can't solve the problem by talking, it is best to solve it through fighting.	.726	
If someone asks you to fight, hit them first.	.716	
If someone calls you names, call them names back.	.713	
If someone hits you, hit them back.	.491	
<b>Non-Aggressive Solutions</b>		<b>.68</b>
You should think the problem through, calm yourself, and then talk the problem out with your friend.	.735	
No matter what, fighting is not good; there are other ways to solve problems.	.698	
If another student asks you to fight, you should tell a teacher or someone older.	.694	
If someone asks you to fight, you should try to talk your way out of a fight.	.642	
If someone calls you names, ignore them.	.540	
<b>Parent Support for Fighting</b>		<b>.74</b>
If you can't solve the problem by talking, it is best to solve it through fighting.	.651	
If someone calls you names, hit them.	.647	
If someone calls you names, call them names back.	.637	
If someone asks you to fight, hit them first.	.617	
You should think the problem through, calm yourself, and then talk the problem out with your friend.	-.602	
No matter what, fighting is not good; there are other ways to solve problems.	-.580	
If another student asks you to fight, you should tell a teacher or someone older.	-.571	
If someone calls you names, ignore them.	-.477	
If someone hits you, hit them back.	.440	
If someone asks you to fight, you should try to talk your way out of a fight.	-.439	

### Description of Dependent Variables

Table 17 shows the mean, standard deviation, median, minimum, and maximum value for each of the outcome variables. None of the outcome variables had a distribution which could be considered a normal distribution; therefore nonparametric statistics were conducted with these variables.

Table 17. Means, medians, and standard deviations for adolescent positive behaviors received, positive behaviors given, aggression, victimization, aggression in church, victimization in church, parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting

	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Positive Received	1,304	22.05	6.88	23.00	0	30
Positive Given	1,264	22.32	6.56	24.00	0	30
Aggression	1,314	8.40	9.56	5.00	0	66
Victimization	1,297	5.36	8.33	2.00	0	60
Church Victimization	1,297	3.06	5.28	1.00	0	36
Church Aggression	1,305	2.35	4.67	.00	0	36
Aggressive Solutions	1,262	.60	.98	.00	0	5
Non-Aggressive Solutions	1,262	3.92	1.34	4.00	0	5
Total Parental Support for Aggression	1,263	1.68	1.96	1.00	0	10

Note: *N*'s not equal to 1,319 reflect missing data

### Youth Group, Church, and Hometown Size

Nonparametric Spearman's correlation coefficients were conducted to examine the relationship between the dependent variables (i.e., aggression, victimization, church victimization, church aggression, positive received, positive given, aggressive solutions, non-aggressive solutions, total parental support for aggression and continuous demographic variables (i.e., age, youth group size, church size, and hometown size.) The findings are presented in Table 18. As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, only meaningful differences are discussed in text. There was no significant relationship between age and the variables victimization, church victimization, or church aggression, all *p*-values are non-significant.

Turning to youth group size, there was a significant positive correlation between youth group size and the variables positive received (Spearman's  $\rho$  (1294) = .103,  $p < .001$ ) and positive given (Spearman's  $\rho$  (1254) = .095,  $ps = .001$ ), indicating larger youth group size was associated with increased positive received and positive given scores. There was no significant relationship between youth group size and the variables aggression,

victimization, church victimization, church aggression, non-aggressive solutions, and total parental support for aggression, *ps ns*.

For church size, there was a positive relationship between church size and the variables positive received (Spearman's  $\rho$  (1296) = .101,  $p < .001$ ) and positive given (Spearman's  $\rho$  (1256) = .096,  $p = .001$ ). This indicates that larger church size was associated with increased positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given. There was no significant relationship between church size and the variables aggression, victimization, church victimization, non-aggressive solutions, and total parental support for aggression, p-values are non-significant.

Finally, for hometown size, there was weak to no relationship between hometown size and the variables church aggression (Spearman's  $\rho$  (1283) = .097,  $p = .001$ ), positive received (Spearman's  $\rho$  (1282) = .100,  $p < .001$ ), and positive given (Spearman's  $\rho$  (1242) = .123,  $p < .001$ ) (Salkind 2011, 88). This indicates larger hometown size was associated with more church aggression, more positive received, and more positive given scores. There was no significant relationship between hometown size and the variable aggression, aggressive solutions, and total parental support for aggression, p-values are non-significant.



Table 18. Spearman's correlation coefficients for adolescent positive behaviors received, positive behaviors given, aggression, victimization, aggression in church, victimization in church, parent support of aggressive solutions, parent support of non-aggressive solutions, and positive parental support for non-aggressive solutions by age, youth group size, church size, hometown size

	Age		Youth Group Size		Church Size		Hometown Size	
Aggression	.07	†	-.04		.03		.05	
Victimization	-.02		-.04		.01		.06	†
Church Victimization	-.02		.03		.04		.07	†
Church Aggression	.03		.04		.06	†	.10	**
Positive Received	.08	†	.10	**	.10	**	.10	**
Positive Given	.09	†	.10	**	.10	**	.12	**
Aggressive Solutions	.06	†	-.07	†	-.06	†	.01	
Non-Aggressive Solutions	-.09	†	-.03		-.05		-.10	**
Total Parental Support for Aggression	.09	†	-.02		.02		.07	†

Note: \*\*  $p < .001$ ; † Indicates findings that are statistically significant but where there was no meaningful difference based on Spearman's correlation coefficient  $< .10$

### Male and Female

Non-parametric Mann-Whitney  $U$  tests were conducted to test for differences between continuous dependent variables (i.e., aggression, victimization, church victimization, church aggression, positive received, positive given, aggressive solutions, non-aggressive solutions, total parental support for aggression) by each dichotomous categorical demographic variable (i.e., gender, divorced parents, and mentor). Findings for gender are shown in Table 19.

There was a significant difference between the genders for aggression,  $Z = 6.08$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for males were greater (Mean Rank = 721.37,  $M = 10.52$ ,  $SD = 11.42$ ) than females (Mean Rank = 594.46,  $M = 6.62$ ,  $SD = 7.21$ ). There was a significant difference between the genders for victimization,  $Z = 6.19$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for males were greater (Mean Rank = 712.28,  $M = 6.79$ ,  $SD = 9.66$ ) than females (Mean Rank = 586.31,  $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 6.82$ ). There was a significant difference between the genders for church aggression,  $Z = 4.66$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for males were greater (Mean

Rank = 696.94,  $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 5.60$ ) than females (Mean Rank = 607.38,  $M = 1.74$ ,  $SD = 3.62$ ). There was a significant difference between the genders for positive received,  $Z = 2.90$ ,  $p = .004$ . The mean ranks for females were greater (Mean Rank = 675.63,  $M = 22.67$ ,  $SD = 6.43$ ) than males (Mean Rank = 615.29,  $M = 21.35$ ,  $SD = 7.29$ ). There was a significant difference between the genders for positive given,  $Z = 4.03$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for females were greater (Mean Rank = 665.50,  $M = 23.22$ ,  $SD = 5.66$ ) than males (Mean Rank = 582.94,  $M = 21.23$ ,  $SD = 7.38$ ). There was a significant difference between the genders for aggressive solutions,  $Z = 7.49$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for males were greater (Mean Rank = 699.70,  $M = .85$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) than females (Mean Rank = 566.33,  $M = .39$ ,  $SD = .69$ ). There was a significant difference between the genders for non-aggressive solutions,  $Z = 7.74$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for females were greater (Mean Rank = 694.88,  $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) than males (Mean Rank = 545.67,  $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ). There was a significant difference between the genders for total parental support,  $Z = 79.14$ ,  $p < .001$ . The mean ranks for males were greater (Mean Rank = 726.52,  $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) than females (Mean Rank = 544.72,  $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ). There was no significant difference between the genders for Church Victimization,  $p = .096$ . These results suggest that boys report more aggression, victimization, church aggression, and parental support for aggressive solutions than females. Females report more positive behaviors received, positive behaviors given, and parental support for non-aggressive solution than do boys.

Table 19. Means and standard deviations for adolescent positive behaviors received, positive behaviors given, aggression, victimization, aggression in church, victimization in church, parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting by gender

		n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Z	p
Aggression						6.08	<.001
	Female	703	6.62	7.21	594.46		
	Male	602	10.52	11.42	721.37		
Victimization						6.19	<.001
	Female	693	4.18	6.82	586.31		
	Male	595	6.79	9.66	712.28		
Church Victimization						1.67	.096
	Female	695	2.76	4.72	629.46		
	Male	593	3.46	5.88	662.13		
Church Aggression						4.66	<.001
	Female	701	1.74	3.62	607.38		
	Male	595	3.10	5.60	696.94		
Positive Received						2.90	.004
	Female	702	22.67	6.43	675.63		
	Male	593	21.35	7.29	615.29		
Positive Given						4.03	<.001
	Female	685	23.22	5.66	665.50		
	Male	570	21.23	7.38	582.94		
Aggressive Solutions						7.49	<.001
	Female	683	.39	.69	566.33		
	Male	570	.85	1.19	699.70		
Non-Aggressive Solutions						7.74	<.001
	Female	683	4.21	1.11	694.88		
	Male	570	3.58	1.51	545.67		
Total Parental Support for Aggression						9.14	<.001
	Female	683	1.17	1.45	544.72		
	Male	571	2.27	2.28	726.52		

For non-parametric differences between adolescents with divorced or non-divorced parents for each of the continuous variables, the findings are shown in Table 20. There was a significant difference between adolescents with divorced or non-divorced parents for positive behaviors received,  $Z = 2.18$ ,  $p = .029$ . The mean ranks for adolescents whose parents were not divorced were greater (Mean Rank = 660.59,  $M = 22.33$ ,  $SD = 6.64$ ) than adolescents whose parents were divorced (Mean Rank = 607.30,  $M = 21.13$ ,  $SD = 7.50$ ). There was also a significant difference between adolescents with parents who

were divorced or not divorced for parent support for aggressive solutions to conflict,  $Z = 2.77, p = .006$ . The mean ranks for adolescents whose parents were divorced were greater (Mean Rank = 671.69,  $M = 0.71, SD = 1.04$ ) than adolescents whose parents were not divorced (Mean Rank = 613.54,  $M = 0.56, SD = 0.96$ ). For total parent support for fighting, there was a significant difference between adolescents with divorced or non-divorced parents,  $Z = 2.06, p = .039$ . The mean ranks for adolescents whose parents were divorced were greater (Mean Rank = 664.62,  $M = 1.86, SD = 2.06$ ) than adolescents whose parents were not divorced (Mean Rank = 616.28,  $M = 1.62, SD = 1.92$ ). No significant differences were found between adolescents with divorced or non-divorced parents for aggression, victimization, church victimization, church aggressive, positive behaviors given, or parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict,  $ps = ns$ . Overall these findings suggest that youth with divorced parents report fewer positive behaviors received and more parental support for aggression than youth without divorced parents.

Table 20. Means and standard deviations for positive behaviors received, positive behaviors given, aggression, victimization, aggression in church, victimization in church, parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting by divorced parents

	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Z	p
Aggression					1.28	.202
No	998	8.23	9.47	645.63		
Yes	307	9.07	9.93	676.95		
Victimization					.04	.968
No	982	5.19	7.96	644.73		
Yes	306	5.96	9.47	643.78		
Church Victimization					1.43	.153
No	982	3.03	5.02	652.30		
Yes	306	3.20	6.10	619.48		
Church Aggression					.62	.538
No	990	2.31	4.42	651.77		
Yes	306	2.46	5.42	637.91		
Positive Received					2.18	.029
No	989	22.33	6.64	660.59		
Yes	306	21.13	7.50	607.30		
Positive Given					1.60	.110
No	965	22.52	6.36	636.92		
Yes	290	21.59	7.19	598.32		
Aggressive Solutions					2.77	.006
No	963	.56	.96	613.54		
Yes	290	.71	1.04	671.69		
Non-Aggressive Solutions					.78	.434
No	962	3.95	1.32	631.13		
Yes	291	3.85	1.42	613.33		
Total Parental Support for Aggression					2.06	.039
No	963	1.62	1.92	616.28		
Yes	291	1.86	2.06	664.62		

Mann-Whitney *U* tests were also conducted on each continuous variable by whether or not adolescents had a mentor (see Table 21). For positive behaviors received, there was a significant difference between adolescents who had a mentor and adolescents who did not have a mentor,  $Z = 2.98, p = .003$ . Adolescents who had a mentor reported greater mean ranks (Mean Rank = 669.39,  $M = 22.41, SD = 6.74$ ) than adolescents who did not have a mentor (Mean Rank = 597.94,  $M = 21.05, SD = 7.18$ ). For total parental support for fighting, there was a significant difference between adolescents with and

without a mentor,  $Z = 2.11$ ,  $p = .035$ . Adolescents without a mentor reported greater mean ranks (Mean Rank = 667.21,  $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ) than adolescents with a mentor (Mean Rank = 618.84,  $M = 1.59$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ). No significant differences were found between adolescents with and without a mentor for aggression, victimization, church victimization, church aggression, positive behaviors given, parent support of aggressive solutions, and parent support of non-aggressive solutions,  $ps = ns$ . These findings indicate that youth with a mentor report more positive behaviors received and less total parental support for aggression than youth without a mentor.

Table 21. Means and standard deviations for adolescent positive behaviors received, positive behaviors given, aggression, victimization, aggression in church, victimization in church, parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting by mentor

	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Z	p
Aggression					.64	.525
No	326	8.81	10.54	668.03		
Yes	986	8.26	9.22	652.69		
Victimization					.85	.397
No	322	4.83	7.28	633.03		
Yes	973	5.55	8.66	652.95		
Church Victimization					.23	.821
No	322	3.06	5.15	644.15		
Yes	973	3.07	5.33	649.28		
Church Aggression					.94	.349
No	326	2.54	4.85	667.56		
Yes	977	2.29	4.61	646.81		
Positive Received					2.98	.003
No	326	21.05	7.18	597.94		
Yes	976	22.41	6.74	669.39		
Positive Given					1.74	.082
No	317	21.67	6.99	600.80		
Yes	945	22.56	6.41	641.80		
Aggressive Solutions					1.19	.233
No	316	.68	1.10	648.82		
Yes	944	.57	.94	624.37		
Non-Aggressive Solutions					1.94	.052
No	316	3.77	1.47	598.21		
Yes	944	3.98	1.30	641.31		
Total Parental Support for Aggression					2.11	.035
No	317	1.93	2.17	667.21		
Yes	944	1.59	1.88	618.84		

Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to examine potential differences between mentor types for each of the outcome variables. As shown in Table 22, there was a significant difference in victimization for mentor type,  $\chi^2 = 13.98, p = .003$ . Follow-up Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed that those with a mentor who is an adult not related to them (Mean Rank = 685.00,  $M = 6.32, SD = 9.32$ ) or a mentor who is someone close to their age but not related to them (Mean Rank = 708.05,  $M = 6.70, SD = 9.38$ ) reported significantly more victimization than those whose mentor was a family member (Mean Rank = 606.09,  $M = 4.65, SD = 7.86$ ) or had no mentor (Mean Rank = 630.53,  $M = 4.83, SD = 7.28$ ).

There was also a significant difference in positive behaviors received for mentor type,  $\chi^2 = 11.36, p = .010$ . Follow-up Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed that those with no mentor (Mean Rank = 595.38,  $M = 21.05, SD = 7.18$ ) reported more positive behaviors received than those with any type of mentor (Mean Rank = 657.87 to 717.88,  $M = 22.20$  to 23.24).

There was also a significant difference in positive behaviors given for mentor type,  $\chi^2 = 12.61, p = .006$ . Follow-up Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed that those with a mentor close to their age but not related to them (Mean Rank = 734.22,  $M = 24.17, SD = 6.03$ ) had more positive behavior given than those with no mentor or another type of mentor (Mean Rank = 597.08 to 635.82,  $M = 21.67$  to 22.44).

There was a significant difference in aggressive solutions for mentor type,  $\chi^2 = 8.17, p = .043$ . Follow-up Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed that those with a mentor who was a member of their family (Mean Rank = 609.41,  $M = .53, SD = .87$ ) or a mentor who was an adult not related to them (Mean Rank = 613.68,  $M = .55, SD = .92$ ) reported that their parents supported aggressive solutions less than those who had a mentor close to their age but not related to them (Mean Rank = 694.43,  $M = .84, SD = 1.22$ ).

There was a significant difference in total parental support for aggression for mentor type,  $\chi^2 = 8.59, p = .035$ . Follow-up Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed that those with a mentor who was a member of their family (Mean Rank = 610.11,  $M = 1.51, SD =$

1.74) or an adult related to them (Mean Rank = 602.89,  $M = 1.57$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ) reported statistically lower levels of overall parental support of aggression than those with no mentor (Mean Rank = 663.46,  $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ) or a mentor who was close to their age but not related to them (Mean Rank = 678.21,  $M = 2.04$ ,  $SD = 2.28$ ).

There were no additional differences between mentor types for aggression, church victimization, church aggression, and parental support of non-aggressive solutions, all .

Table 22. Means and standard deviations for adolescent positive behaviors received, positive behaviors given, aggression, victimization, aggression in church, victimization in church, parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting by mentor type

	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	$p$
<b>Aggression</b>					3.18	.365
Member of Your Family	476	7.68	8.37	630.53		
Adult Not Related to You	383	8.58	9.56	660.46		
No Mentor	326	8.81	10.54	664.12		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	120	9.74	11.20	688.10		
<b>Victimization</b>					13.98	.003
Member of Your Family	472	4.65	7.86	606.09	a	
Adult Not Related to You	377	6.32	9.32	685.00	b	
No Mentor	322	4.83	7.28	630.30	a	
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	117	6.70	9.38	708.05	b	
<b>Church Victimization</b>					4.56	.207
Member of Your Family	470	2.73	5.02	621.52		
Adult Not Related to You	378	3.42	5.65	670.74		
No Mentor	322	3.06	5.15	640.01		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	118	3.44	5.54	664.22		
<b>Church Aggression</b>					5.18	.159
Member of Your Family	469	1.95	4.04	620.13		
Adult Not Related to You	382	2.66	5.27	667.77		
No Mentor	326	2.54	4.85	663.11		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	120	2.52	4.49	663.75		



Table 22 continued

Positive Received						11.36	.010
Member of Your Family	468	22.32	6.64	657.87	b		
Adult Not Related to You	381	22.20	6.94	658.89	b		
No Mentor	326	21.05	7.18	595.38	a		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	120	23.24	6.56	717.88	b		
Positive Given						12.61	.006
Member of Your Family	456	22.27	6.26	617.06	a		
Adult Not Related to You	370	22.44	6.66	635.82	a		
No Mentor	317	21.67	6.99	597.08	a		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	112	24.17	6.03	734.22	b		
Aggressive Solutions						8.17	.043
Member of Your Family	457	.53	.87	609.41	a		
Adult Not Related to You	369	.55	.92	613.68	a		
No Mentor	316	.68	1.10	644.31	ac		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	111	.84	1.22	694.43	bc		
Non-Aggressive Solutions						5.65	.130
Member of Your Family	457	4.02	1.23	639.36			
Adult Not Related to You	369	3.99	1.33	647.94			
No Mentor	316	3.77	1.47	594.38			
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	111	3.81	1.42	599.36			
Total Parental Support for Aggression						8.59	.035
Member of Your Family	457	1.51	1.74	610.11	a		
Adult Not Related to You	369	1.57	1.89	602.89	a		
No Mentor	317	1.93	2.17	663.46	b		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	111	2.04	2.28	678.21	b		

Note: Mean ranks with different superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups. For the post hoc comparisons for total parental support for aggression, a p-value of .065 was considered statistically different for the difference between adult not related and someone close to age due to close mean differences but different standard deviations.

## Primary Analyses

The primary analyses were conducted to test each of the research questions individually. In addition, for several of the questions, relationships between outcomes were also examined in the data split by the demographic variables of gender, parents divorced, and mentor type. As with the preliminary analyses, non-parametric tests were used to test for relationships between variables due to the non-normal distribution of the outcome variables.

### Research Question 1: Mentor Relationship

Research Question 1 asks what relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships of those who have mentor relationships and those who do not?

These relationships are shown in the preliminary analyses and will be restated in this section for consistency. No significant relationships were found between youth who have a mentor and youth who do not have a mentor for adolescent aggression, victimization, church aggression or church victimization, all p-values are non-significant. However, Kruskal-Wallis tests conducted to examine potential differences between mentor types, revealed that there was a significant difference in victimization for mentor type,  $\chi^2 = 13.98, p = .003$ . Follow-up Mann Whitney *U* tests revealed that those with a mentor who is an adult not related to them (Mean Rank = 685.00,  $M = 6.32, SD = 9.32$ ) or a mentor who is someone close to their age but not related to them (Mean Rank = 708.05,  $M = 6.70, SD = 9.38$ ) reported significantly more victimization than those whose mentor was a family member (Mean Rank = 606.09,  $M = 4.65, SD = 7.86$ ) or had no mentor (Mean Rank = 630.53,  $M = 4.83, SD = 7.28$ ).

Table 23. Means and standard deviations for adolescent aggression, victimization, aggression in church, and victimization in church by mentor

	n	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean Rank	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Aggression</b>						
No	326	8.81	10.54	668.03		
Yes	986	8.26	9.22	652.69		
					.64	.525
<b>Victimization</b>						
No	322	4.83	7.28	633.03		
Yes	973	5.55	8.66	652.95		
					.85	.397
<b>Church Victimization</b>						
No	322	3.06	5.15	644.15		
Yes	973	3.07	5.33	649.28		
					.23	.821
<b>Church Aggression</b>						
No	326	2.54	4.85	667.56		
Yes	977	2.29	4.61	646.81		
					.94	.349

Table 24. Means and standard deviations for adolescent aggression, victimization, aggression in church, and victimization in church by mentor type

	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	p
<b>Aggression</b>					3.18	.365
Member of Your Family	476	7.68	8.37	630.53		
Adult Not Related to You	383	8.58	9.56	660.46		
No Mentor	326	8.81	10.54	664.12		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	120	9.74	11.20	688.10		
<b>Victimization</b>					13.98	.003
Member of Your Family	472	4.65	7.86	606.09	a	
Adult Not Related to You	377	6.32	9.32	685.00	b	
No Mentor	322	4.83	7.28	630.30	a	
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	117	6.70	9.38	708.05	b	
<b>Church Victimization</b>					4.56	.207
Member of Your Family	470	2.73	5.02	621.52		
Adult Not Related to You	378	3.42	5.65	670.74		
No Mentor	322	3.06	5.15	640.01		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	118	3.44	5.54	664.22		
<b>Church Aggression</b>					5.18	.159
Member of Your Family	469	1.95	4.04	620.13		
Adult Not Related to You	382	2.66	5.27	667.77		
No Mentor	326	2.54	4.85	663.11		
Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	120	2.52	4.49	663.75		

Note: Mean ranks with different superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups

### Research Question 2: Parental Instructions

Research Question 2 asks what relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships and parental instructions related to aggressive behavior?

To test this, nonparametric Spearman's correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between both adolescent aggression and aggression in the church and each of the three dependent measures for aggression (i.e., parent support of

aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting. As shown in Table 25, there was a weak relationship adolescent aggression and parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, Spearman's  $\rho$  (1262) = .23,  $p < .001$ , and total parental support for aggression, Spearman's  $\rho$  (1263) = .24,  $p < .001$ .

These findings suggest that more adolescent aggression was associated with more parental support for aggressive solutions and total parent support for aggression. In contrast, there was weak or no relationship between adolescent aggression and parental support for non-aggressive solutions, Spearman's  $\rho$  (1262) = -.19,  $p < .001$ . For church aggression, the pattern of results was similar to that of adolescent aggression. There was weak or no relationship between church aggression and parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, Spearman's  $\rho$  (1257) = .18,  $p < .001$ , and total parental support for aggression, Spearman's  $\rho$  (1258) = .190,  $p < .001$  (Salkind 2011, 88). These results suggest that more church aggression was associated with more parent support for aggressive solutions, more overall parental support for aggression, and less non-aggressive solutions to conflict.

Table 25. Spearman's correlation coefficients for adolescent aggression and aggression in church by parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting

	Aggressive Solutions	Non-Aggressive Solutions	Total Parental Support for Aggression
Aggression	.23**	-.19**	.24**
Church Aggression	.18**	-.15**	.19**

Note. \*\*  $p < .001$

These correlations were further explored within each of the four demographic categories (i.e., gender, divorced parents, age, and mentor). As shown in Table 26, there is a pattern of weak to no relationship for each of the four demographic categories.

Table 26. Spearman's correlation coefficients for adolescent aggression and aggression in church by parent support of aggressive solutions to conflict, parent support of non-aggressive solutions to conflict, and total parent support of fighting split by gender, age, parent marital status, mentor, and mentor type

	Aggression by			Church Aggression by		
	Aggressive Solutions	Non-Aggressive Solutions	Total Parental Support for Aggression	Aggressive Solutions	Non-Aggressive Solutions	Total Parental Support for Aggression
Gender						
Female	.18**	-.16**	.20**	.12**	-.10**	.13**
Male	.23**	-.18**	.23**	.21**	-.16**	.22**
Divorced Biological Parents						
No	.25**	-.16**	.23**	.21**	-.13**	.19**
Yes	.16**	-.28**	.27**	.12*	-.19**	.20**
Age Category						
11-14 Years	.20**	-.18**	.21**	.17**	-.17**	.19**
15-17 Years	.24**	-.19**	.25**	.19**	-.12**	.19**
Have a Mentor						
No	.22**	-.16**	.23**	.14*	-.12*	.16**
Yes	.23**	-.20**	.24**	.20**	-.16**	.20**

Note: \*\*  $p < .001$

### Research Question 3: Physical Aggression Versus Verbal Aggression

Research Question 3 asks what relationship exists, if any, between physical aggressive behavior and verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents?

To examine this question, verbal and physical aggression scales were confirmed using two separate factor analyses on the four verbal aggressive items and the four physical aggressive items. For verbal aggression items, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 54.76% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .693 to .799). For the physical aggression items, the factor analysis yielded one factor explaining 57.81% of the total variance (individual eigenvalues ranged from .752 to .773). As shown in Table 27, items for the two verbal and physical aggression scales demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's alphas = .71, .74, respectively). Because all items contributed

adequately to each scale, two scores were created for verbal aggression ( $M = 0.96$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ) and Physical Aggression ( $M = 0.55$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ; see Table 28).

Table 27. Eigenvalues and Cronbach's alpha for verbal aggressive behaviors subscale and physical aggressive behaviors subscale

		Eigenvalues	$\alpha$
Verbal Aggressive Behaviors			.71
	I called other students bad names.	.80	
	I threatened to hurt or to hit someone.	.74	
	I teased students to make them angry.	.72	
	I said things about other kids to make other students laugh.	.69	
Physical Aggressive Behaviors			.74
	I slapped or kicked someone.	.77	
	I got into a physical fight because I was angry.	.76	
	I fought back when someone hit me first.	.76	
	I pushed or shoved other students.	.75	

Table 28. Means and standard deviations for verbal aggressive behaviors subscale and physical aggressive behaviors subscale

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Verbal Aggression	1313	.96	1.22	0	6
Physical Aggression	1314	.55	.97	0	6

A Spearman's correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between physical and verbal aggression among adolescents and found a weak relationship between physical aggression and verbal aggression, Spearman's  $\rho$  (1313) = .36,  $p < .001$  (see Table 29). More physical aggression among adolescents was associated with more verbal aggression among adolescents. Table 29 also displays the Spearman's correlation between physical and verbal aggression among each of the five categorical variables (i.e., gender, divorced parents, age, mentor, and mentor type). The pattern was similar among boys and girls, adolescents with divorced or non-divorced parents, younger and older adolescents, adolescents with or without a mentor, and adolescents having different

mentor types, suggesting that as physical aggression increases verbal aggression also increases among adolescents. One notable difference was found between boys and girls. Among female adolescents, the relationship between physical and verbal aggression was weaker in strength, Spearman's  $\rho$  (702) = .28,  $p < .001$ , than male adolescents, Spearman's  $\rho$  (602) = .40,  $p < .001$ .

Table 29. Spearman's correlation coefficients for verbal aggressive behaviors subscale by physical aggressive behaviors subscale split by gender, age, parent marital status, mentor, and mentor type

		Physical Aggression
Verbal Aggression		.36**
Verbal Aggression by		
Gender		
	Female	.28**
	Male	.40**
Divorced Biological Parents		
	No	.36**
	Yes	.39**
Age Category		
	11-14 Years	.37**
	15-17 Years	.37**
Have a Mentor		
	No	.36**
	Yes	.36**
Mentor Type		
	Member of Your Family	.36**
	Adult Not Related to You	.35**
	No Mentor	.36**
	Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	.45**

Note: \*\*  $p < .001$



#### Research Question 4: Aggressive Behavior and Positive Interaction

Research Question 4 asks what relationship exists, if any, between aggressive behaviors and positive interactions in church-based relationships?

To explore this question, Spearman’s correlations were conducted examining the relationship between both adolescent aggression and church aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given. As shown in Table 30, there was no significant relationship found between adolescent aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given,  $ps = ns$ . Similarly, there was no significant relationship found between church aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given,  $ps = ns$ .

Table 30. Spearman’s correlation coefficients for aggressive behaviors and aggressive behaviors in church by adolescent positive behaviors given and positive behaviors received

	Positive Received	Positive Given
Aggression	-.05	-.04
Church Aggression	-.01	<.01

Table 31 displays the Spearman’s correlation coefficients for adolescent aggression and church aggression by positive behaviors given and positive behaviors received for each of the five demographic categorical variables (i.e., gender, divorced parents, age, mentor, and mentor type). As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, only meaningful differences will be reviewed in text. There was no significant relationship found among adolescent boys for adolescent aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given,  $ps = ns$ . Among adolescent boys and girls there were no significant relationships found between church aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given,  $ps = ns$ .

Among children with divorced or non-divorced parents, no significant

differences were found between adolescent aggression and church aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given,  $ps = ns$ . For older adolescents, there were no significant differences found among younger adolescents,  $ps = ns$ . There were also no significant relationships found between church aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given among older and younger adolescents,  $ps = ns$ .

For adolescents without a mentor, Table 31 also displays a significant weak relationship between adolescent aggression and positive behaviors given, Spearman's  $\rho(317) = -.120, p < .05$ . More adolescent aggression was associated with less positive behaviors given decreases for adolescents without a mentor. No such relationship was found for adolescents without a mentor between adolescent aggression and positive behaviors received. Among adolescents with a mentor, no significant relationships were found between adolescent aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given. There were also no significant relationships among adolescents with or without a mentor between church aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given. Among adolescents who have a mentor, there were no significant differences among different mentor types (i.e., family member, unrelated adult, unrelated peer) between adolescent and church aggression and positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given,  $ps = ns$ .

Table 31. Spearman's correlation coefficients for aggressive behaviors and aggressive behaviors in church by adolescent positive behaviors given and positive behaviors received split by gender, age, parent marital status, mentor, and mentor type

		Aggression by		Church Aggression by	
		Positive Received	Positive Given	Positive Received	Positive Given
<b>Gender</b>					
	Female	-.09 <sup>†</sup>	-.08 <sup>†</sup>	-.06	-.03
	Male	.01	.02	.05	.06
<b>Divorced Biological Parents</b>					
	No	-.04	-.04	-.02	-.02
	Yes	-.08	-.02	.01	.05
<b>Age Category</b>					
	11-14 Years	-.02	.02	.04	.07
	15-17 Years	-.08 <sup>†</sup>	-.09 <sup>†</sup>	-.05	-.05
<b>Have a Mentor</b>					
	No	-.05	-.12*	-.04	-.07
	Yes	-.04	-.01	.01	.03
<b>Mentor Type</b>					
	Member of Your Family	-.04	.01	<.01	.01
	Adult Not Related to You	-.10	-.07	-.02	.02
	No Mentor	-.05	-.12*	-.04	-.07
	Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	.07	.10	.08	.04

Note: \*  $p < .01$ ; <sup>†</sup>Indicates findings that are statistically significant but where there was no meaningful difference based on Spearman's correlation coefficient  $< .10$

### Research Question 5: Receiving and Displaying Positive Interaction

Research Question 5 asked what relationship exists, if any, between receiving and displaying positive interactions in church-based relationships?

To explore this question, a Spearman's correlation was conducted examining the relationship between positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given and found a strong relationship, Spearman's  $\rho(1262) = .75, p < .001$  (see Table 32) (Salkind 2011, 88). This suggests that as adolescent positive behaviors received increase, so do adolescent positive behaviors given. This relationship was further examined among each

of the five demographic categorical variables (i.e., gender, divorced parents, age, mentor, and mentor type; see Table 32). The pattern of results was consistent across each of the five categorical variables. For example, among male and female adolescents, as positive behaviors received increases, so do positive behaviors given. This significant positive relationship was found among adolescents with divorced and non-divorced parents, older and younger adolescents, adolescents with and without a mentor, and adolescents of varying mentor types.

Table 32. Spearman’s correlation coefficients between adolescent positive behaviors received and positive behaviors given split by gender, age, parent marital status, mentor, and mentor type

		Positive Given
Positive Received		.75**
Positive Received by		
Gender		
	Female	.72**
	Male	.78**
Divorced Biological Parents		
	No	.76**
	Yes	.72**
Age Category		
	11-14 Years	.77**
	15-17 Years	.73**
Have a Mentor		
	No	.76**
	Yes	.75**
Mentor Type		
	Member of Your Family	.71**
	Adult Not Related to You	.79**
	No Mentor	.76**
	Someone Close to Your Age, but Not Related to You	.73**

Note: \*\*  $p < .001$

### **Research Question 6: Aggressive Behavior in Relationship to Community, Church, and Youth Group Size**

Research Question 6 asked what relationship exists, if any, between community size, church size and youth group size and adolescent aggressive behavior?

Multiple logistic regression analyses were used to investigate research question 6. The analyses were conducted to predict both general adolescent aggressive behavior and aggressive behaviors in church. Due to the non-normal distribution of the two aggression outcomes, both were split into the two levels of high aggression and low aggression. Analyses predicted the odds of high aggression and high aggression in church based on community size, church size, youth group size and other variables that were significantly related to aggression in the preliminary analysis. For both regressions, variables were entered in blocks such that block one contained only the three primary variables of interest as mentioned in research question 6 (community size, church size, and youth group size). In block 2, the other demographic variables of gender, parents divorced, and mentor types were added to the model. In block 3, parental supports for aggressive and non-aggressive solutions were added to the model.

For the adolescent aggression outcome, block 3 predicted the most amount of variance in adolescent aggression,  $\chi^2(18) = 86.99, p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .093$  (see Table 34). The significant predictors of adolescent aggression included youth group size, gender, parental support of aggressive solutions, and parental support of non-aggressive solutions. Specifically, being in a youth group with between 11-40 youth (*Odds Ratio* = 2.042,  $p = .009$ ) or 41-70 youth (*Odds Ratio* = 1.783,  $p = .025$ ) predicted greater odds of high aggression compared to those in a youth group with over 100 youth. Being female predicted lower odds (*Odds Ratio* = .666,  $p = .001$ ) of high aggressive behaviors as compared to males. Greater parental support of aggressive solutions predicted higher odds of high aggressive behavior (*Odds Ratio* = 1.357,  $p < .001$ ), and greater parental support of aggressive solutions predicted lower odds of high aggressive behaviors (*Odds Ratio* = .891,  $p = .025$ ). Block 1, although statistically significant, showed a non-meaningful

effect size (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .032$ ). The overall model for block 2 was significant,  $\chi^2 (16) = 56.43, p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .061$  although not as good a fit to the data as block 3.

Table 33. Logistic multiple regression predicting adolescent aggression from community size, church size, youth group size

	B	SE	Wald	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
Block 1 (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .032$ )							
Youth Group Size Below 10 <sup>a</sup>	.697	.40	3.10	.078	2.007	.92	4.36
Youth Group Size 11-40 <sup>a</sup>	.860	.27	10.47	.001	2.363	1.40	3.98
Youth Group Size 41-70 <sup>a</sup>	.724	.25	8.28	.004	2.062	1.26	3.38
Youth Group Size 71-100 <sup>a</sup>	.426	.27	2.45	.118	1.531	.90	2.61
Church Size Below 100 <sup>b</sup>	-.630	.31	4.23	.040	.533	.29	.97
Church Size Below 101-250 <sup>b</sup>	.162	.21	.59	.443	1.176	.78	1.78
Church Size Below 250-500 <sup>b</sup>	-.181	.16	1.36	.243	.835	.62	1.13
Town Size Below 10k <sup>c</sup>	-.460	.21	5.00	.025	.631	.42	.95
Town Size 10-50k <sup>c</sup>	-.052	.17	.09	.760	.950	.68	1.32
Town Size 50-100k <sup>c</sup>	-.162	.18	.81	.370	.851	.60	1.21
Town Size 100-200k <sup>c</sup>	.015	.22	.00	.947	1.015	.66	1.57
Block 2 (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .061$ )							
Youth Group Size Below 10a	.602	.40	2.25	.133	1.825	.83	4.00
Youth Group Size 11-40a	.769	.27	8.15	.004	2.157	1.27	3.66
Youth Group Size 41-70a	.634	.26	6.16	.013	1.885	1.14	3.11
Youth Group Size 71-100a	.342	.28	1.53	.216	1.408	.82	2.42
Church Size Below 100 <sup>b</sup>	-.635	.31	4.17	.041	.530	.29	.98
Church Size Below 101-250 <sup>b</sup>	.187	.21	.76	.384	1.205	.79	1.84
Church Size Below 250-500 <sup>b</sup>	-.153	.16	.95	.331	.858	.63	1.17
Town Size Below 10k <sup>c</sup>	-.487	.21	5.43	.020	.614	.41	.93
Town Size 10-50k <sup>c</sup>	-.035	.17	.04	.840	.966	.69	1.35
Town Size 50-100k <sup>c</sup>	-.112	.18	.38	.540	.894	.63	1.28
Town Size 100-200k <sup>c</sup>	-.026	.23	.01	.908	.974	.63	1.52
Female Compared to Male	-.591	.12	23.39	<.001	.553	.44	.70
Parent's Divorced <sup>d</sup>	.113	.14	.62	.430	1.119	.85	1.48
Mentor: Family Member <sup>e</sup>	-.118	.16	.58	.447	.888	.66	1.21
Mentor: Not Related Adult <sup>e</sup>	-.017	.16	.01	.918	.983	.72	1.35
Mentor: Not Related Peer <sup>e</sup>	.276	.24	1.37	.243	1.318	.83	2.10

Table 33 continued

Block 3 (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .093$ )							
Youth Group Size Below 10a	.441	.41	1.18	.278	1.554	.70	3.45
Youth Group Size 11-40a	.714	.27	6.87	.009	2.042	1.20	3.48
Youth Group Size 41-70a	.578	.26	5.03	.025	1.783	1.08	2.96
Youth Group Size 71-100a	.329	.28	1.39	.239	1.390	.80	2.40
Church Size Below 100 <sup>b</sup>	-.552	.32	3.07	.080	.576	.31	1.07
Church Size Below 101-250 <sup>b</sup>	.204	.22	.88	.348	1.227	.80	1.88
Church Size Below 250-500 <sup>b</sup>	-.139	.16	.76	.385	.871	.64	1.19
Town Size Below 10k <sup>c</sup>	-.404	.21	3.62	.057	.668	.44	1.01
Town Size 10-50k <sup>c</sup>	.037	.17	.05	.832	1.038	.74	1.46
Town Size 50-100k <sup>c</sup>	-.041	.19	.05	.824	.960	.67	1.38
Town Size 100-200k <sup>c</sup>	.042	.23	.03	.855	1.043	.67	1.63
Female Compared to Male	-.406	.13	10.15	.001	.666	.52	.86
Parent's Divorced <sup>d</sup>	.036	.15	.06	.807	1.036	.78	1.38
Mentor: Family Member <sup>e</sup>	-.088	.16	.31	.576	.916	.67	1.25
Mentor: Not Related Adult <sup>e</sup>	.020	.17	.01	.906	1.020	.74	1.41
Mentor: Not Related Peer <sup>e</sup>	.207	.24	.74	.390	1.229	.77	1.97
Aggressive Solutions	.305	.08	14.82	<.001	1.357	1.16	1.59
Non-Aggressive Solutions	-.116	.05	5.01	.025	.891	.81	.99

Note: <sup>a</sup>compared to more than 100; <sup>b</sup> compared to more than 500; <sup>c</sup> compared to more than 200k; <sup>d</sup> compared to not divorced; <sup>e</sup> compared to no mentor

For the church aggression outcome block 3 predicted the greatest amount of variance in adolescent aggression,  $\chi^2(18) = 79.462, p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .085$ . The significant predictors of church aggression included church size between 101 and 250, town size below 10,000, and aggression solutions. Specifically, being in a church size between 101 and 250 youth (*Odds Ratio* = 1.569,  $p = .035$ ) predicted greater odds of high church aggression compared to those in churches greater than 500. Similarly, having greater parental support of aggressive solutions (*Odds Ratio* = 1.317,  $p < .001$ ) predicted greater odds of high church aggression compared to those whose parents are less supportive of aggressive solutions. In contrast, being from a town smaller than 10,000 (*Odds Ratio* = .616,  $p = .024$ ) predicted lower odds of high church aggression compared to youth from a town larger than 200,000. Block 1, although statistically significant,

showed a non-meaningful effect size (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .039$ ). The overall model for block 2 was significant,  $\chi^2(16) = 54.48, p < .001$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .059$ , although not as good a fit to the data as block 3.

Table 34. Logistic multiple regression predicting adolescent aggression in church from community size, church size, youth group size

	B	SE	Wald	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
<b>Block 1</b>							
Youth Group Size Below 10 <sup>a</sup>	.014	.41	.00	.973	1.014	.46	2.26
Youth Group Size 11-40 <sup>a</sup>	.424	.27	2.53	.112	1.528	.91	2.58
Youth Group Size 41-70 <sup>a</sup>	.572	.25	5.12	.024	1.772	1.08	2.91
Youth Group Size 71-100 <sup>a</sup>	.401	.27	2.14	.144	1.493	.87	2.55
Church Size Below 100 <sup>b</sup>	-.547	.32	2.90	.089	.579	.31	1.09
Church Size Below 101-250 <sup>b</sup>	.349	.21	2.81	.094	1.418	.94	2.13
Church Size Below 250-500 <sup>b</sup>	-.003	.15	.00	.982	.997	.74	1.35
Town Size Below 10k <sup>c</sup>	-.537	.21	6.63	.010	.585	.39	.88
Town Size 10-50k <sup>c</sup>	-.244	.17	2.11	.146	.783	.56	1.09
Town Size 50-100k <sup>c</sup>	.058	.18	.10	.746	1.060	.75	1.50
Town Size 100-200k <sup>c</sup>	.093	.22	.18	.673	1.097	.71	1.69
<b>Block 2</b>							
Youth Group Size Below 10a	-.075	.41	.03	.855	.928	.41	2.08
Youth Group Size 11-40a	.355	.27	1.74	.187	1.427	.84	2.42
Youth Group Size 41-70a	.509	.26	3.97	.046	1.664	1.01	2.75
Youth Group Size 71-100a	.356	.28	1.65	.199	1.428	.83	2.46
Church Size Below 100 <sup>b</sup>	-.505	.32	2.43	.119	.603	.32	1.14
Church Size Below 101-250 <sup>b</sup>	.415	.21	3.87	.049	1.514	1.00	2.29
Church Size Below 250-500 <sup>b</sup>	.029	.16	.03	.853	1.029	.76	1.40
Town Size Below 10k <sup>c</sup>	-.554	.21	6.91	.009	.574	.38	.87
Town Size 10-50k <sup>c</sup>	-.240	.17	2.00	.157	.787	.56	1.10
Town Size 50-100k <sup>c</sup>	.106	.18	.34	.557	1.112	.78	1.59
Town Size 100-200k <sup>c</sup>	.096	.22	.19	.666	1.101	.71	1.70
Female Compared to Male	-.392	.12	10.41	.001	.676	.53	.86
Parent's Divorced <sup>d</sup>	-.202	.14	1.99	.158	.817	.62	1.08
Mentor: Family Member <sup>e</sup>	-.166	.16	1.14	.286	.847	.63	1.15
Mentor: Not Related Adult <sup>e</sup>	.116	.16	.52	.472	1.123	.82	1.54
Mentor: Not Related Peer <sup>e</sup>	.243	.23	1.09	.297	1.275	.81	2.01



Table 34 continued

Block 3							
Youth Group Size Below 10a	-.252	.42	.36	.547	.777	.34	1.76
Youth Group Size 11-40a	.285	.27	1.10	.295	1.329	.78	2.27
Youth Group Size 41-70a	.452	.26	3.08	.079	1.572	.95	2.61
Youth Group Size 71-100a	.337	.28	1.45	.228	1.401	.81	2.42
Church Size Below 100 <sup>b</sup>	-.417	.33	1.61	.205	.659	.35	1.26
Church Size Below 101-250 <sup>b</sup>	.450	.21	4.44	.035	1.569	1.03	2.39
Church Size Below 250-500 <sup>b</sup>	.053	.16	.11	.737	1.054	.77	1.44
Town Size Below 10k <sup>c</sup>	-.484	.21	5.13	.024	.616	.41	.94
Town Size 10-50k <sup>c</sup>	-.181	.17	1.11	.293	.834	.60	1.17
Town Size 50-100k <sup>c</sup>	.177	.18	.92	.336	1.193	.83	1.71
Town Size 100-200k <sup>c</sup>	.162	.22	.52	.471	1.176	.76	1.83
Female Compared to Male	-.225	.13	3.15	.076	.798	.62	1.02
Parent's Divorced <sup>d</sup>	-.283	.15	3.78	.052	.753	.57	1.00
Mentor: Family Member <sup>e</sup>	-.141	.16	.81	.369	.868	.64	1.18
Mentor: Not Related Adult <sup>e</sup>	.152	.16	.87	.350	1.165	.85	1.60
Mentor: Not Related Peer <sup>e</sup>	.174	.24	.54	.461	1.190	.75	1.89
Non-Aggressive Solutions	.275	.07	14.07	.000	1.317	1.14	1.52
Aggressive Solutions	-.082	.05	2.71	.100	.921	.83	1.02

Note: <sup>a</sup> compared to more than 100; <sup>b</sup> compared to more than 500; <sup>c</sup> compared to more than 200k; <sup>d</sup> compared to not divorced; <sup>e</sup> compared to no mentor.

### **Research Question 7: Aggressive Behavior in Church-Based Context**

Research Question 7 asked what is the occurrence of student aggressive behavior in a church-based context as compared to aggressive behavior in society?

To look at this question, two scales were created with a cross tabulation from both aggression and victimization scores of outside of church (Table 35) and in church responses of participants (Table 37). Table 36 and 38 show the percentages of each of the sixteen categories. There are four categories for the bully: not a bully, mild bully, moderate bully, and severe bully. There are also four categories for the victim: not bullied, mildly bullied, moderately bullied, and severely bullied. The scores were based on the responses that participants gave to each of the personal and church aggression and victimization questions.

Table 35. Numbers of outside of church aggression and victimization scale

Victimization Scale	Aggressive Scale			
	<1 Not a Bully	1 to <3 Mild Bully	3 to <5 Moderate Bully	5 to 6+ Severe Bully
<1 Not Bullied	N = 880	N = 179	N = 8	N = 2
1 to <3 Mildly Bullied	N = 79	N = 104	N = 18	N = 2
3 to <5 Moderately Bullied	N = 7	N = 14	N = 12	N = 2
5 to 6+ Severely Bullied	N = 1	N = 1	N = 3	N = 0

N=1312

Table 36. Percentages of outside of church aggression and victimization scale

Victimization Scale	Aggressive Scale			
	<1 Not a Bully	1 to <3 Mild Bully	3 to <5 Moderate Bully	5 to 6+ Severe Bully
<1 Not Bullied	67.1%	13.6%	.6%	.15%
1 to <3 Mildly Bullied	6%	7.9%	1.4%	.15%
3 to <5 Moderately Bullied	.5%	1.1%	.9%	.15%
5 to 6+ Severely Bullied	.1%	.1%	.3%	0%

Table 37. Number church aggression and victimization scale

Victimization Scale	Aggressive Scale				
		<1 Not a Bully	1 to <3 Mild Bully	3 to <5 Moderate Bully	5 to 6+ Severe Bully
	<1 Not Bullied	N = 994	N = 46	N = 1	N = 0
	1 to <3 Mildly Bullied	N = 116	N = 88	N = 5	N = 0
	3 to <5 Moderately Bullied	N = 7	N = 19	N = 9	N = 2
	5 to 6+ Severely Bullied	N = 0	N = 0	N = 0	N = 6

N=1293

Table 38. Percentage church aggression and victimization scale

Victimization Scale	Aggressive Scale				
		<1 Not a Bully	1 to <3 Mild Bully	3 to <5 Moderate Bully	5 to 6+ Severe Bully
	<1 Not Bullied	76.9% (1)	3.6% (2)	.1% (3)	0% (4)
	1 to <3 Mildly Bullied	9% (5)	6.8% (6)	.4% (7)	.0% (8)
	3 to <5 Moderately Bullied	55% (9)	1.1% (10)	.7% (11)	.2% (12)
	5 to 6+ Severely Bullied	0% (13)	0% (14)	0% (15)	.5% (16)

In both scales the highest percentages were in the not a bully/not bullied category, outside of church (67.1%) and church (76.9%). It is significant to note that there is 9.8% difference in no aggression or no victimization between an adolescent's personal life outside of church and what they do at church. It is also significant to note that there are five categories in the church scale that have 0%: not a bully/severely bullied, mild bully/severely bullied, moderate bully/severely bullied, severe bully/not bullied, and severe bully/mildly bullied.

To compare data Table 39 shows the percentage comparison to two major research projects (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094; Cook et al. 2010, 356). The numbers from this research for Table 39 came from Table 36 and 38 determined by the calculation of the percentage quadrants together in the following way: bully (2, 3, 4), victim (5, 9, 13), and bully/victim (6-8, 10-12, 14-16).

Table 39: Comparative research of bully, victim, and bully/victim

	<u>Bully</u>	<u>Victim</u>	<u>Bully/Victim</u>	<u>Total</u>
Nansel	13%	10.6%	6.3%	29.9%
Cook (International)	14.5%	17.9%	5.2%	37.6%
Cook (USA)	17.9%	21.5%	7.7%	47.1%
Outside Church	14.4%	6.6%	11.9%	32%
Church	3.7%	9.5%	10%	23.1%

The outside of church numbers come from the aggression and victimization responses from the first two scales of the survey (see Appendix 1) that asked questions of

personal behavior outside of church. The church numbers come from the third and fourth scales of the survey (see Appendix 1) that asked about behavior within the church context. Cook's research looked at 1,197 quantitative studies of bully and/or victimization between 1999 and mid-2006 to determine both the presence of bullying in the United States as well as internationally (Cook et al. 2011, 354-56). Nansel's work looked at 15,686 students in sixth through tenth grades in American public schools and has been foundational to bully research for years (Nansel et al. 2001, 2094). More detailed analysis and response to Table 39 will be given in Chapter 5.

The outside of church numbers come from the aggression and victimization responses from the first two scales (Appendix 1) that asked questions of personal behavior outside of church. The church numbers come from the third and fourth scales (Appendix 1) that asked about behavior within the church context.

### **Summary**

The results for each of the six research questions are presented in the results chapter along with the preliminary analysis needed to describe the variables and detail the significant relationships among variables. Effect sizes were also presented for the analyses due to the large sample size. Non-parametric testing was used throughout the results due to the non-normality of the outcome variables.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to analyze and compare the levels of aggressive behavior among adolescents in a church-based context. In this chapter, the researcher will review what the findings mean and the significance of these findings for parents, youth workers, and church leaders. After looking at the possible implications from the stated research questions, the researcher will discuss possible ideas for future research in the area of adolescent behavior in a church-based context.

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate in what ways and to what levels adolescent aggressive behavior is present and is responded to in a church-based context. Research shows “that more often than not, the church politely ignores the depths of the violence of bullying” (Cram 2003, 48). To be able to meet the stated purpose, the researcher surveyed campers at Uplift 2012 regarding their views of multiple variables in relationship to aggressive bully behavior.

#### **Research Questions**

The following questions directed the collection and analysis of data for the research study:

1. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships of those who have mentor relationships and those who do not?
2. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships and parental instruction related to aggressive behaviors?
3. What relationship exists, if any, between physical aggressive behavior and verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents in church-based relationships?

4. What relationship exists, if any, between aggressive behaviors and positive interactions in church-based relationships?
5. What relationship exists, if any, between receiving and displaying positive interactions in church-based relationships?
6. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behavior and each of the variables: community size, church size, and youth-group size?
7. What is the occurrence of student aggressive behavior in a church-based context as compared to aggressive behavior in society?

### **Research Implications**

There are numerous research implications from this suggested study in the area of adolescent aggression in a church-related context. This section of the dissertation will deal with each of the research questions and what was learned from the answers. As shown in the literature review, there is a considerable amount known about adolescent aggression in the school context, but little known about adolescent aggression in a church-related context. Additionally, this research looked at both the parent and mentor relationships in connection to the issue of adolescent aggression both in general and specifically in the church-related context.

### **General Demographic Information**

Demographic data revealed seven unique insights. (1) Only about one quarter (25%) of participants' biological parents were divorced, which agrees with similar numbers found by Yeakley of divorce rate in the Churches of Christ (Yeakley 2013), and stronger than the national average of divorce (35%) for those who have children born in the marriage (Tach and Edin 2013, 1790). (2) About three quarters (75%) of participants had a mentor of some type, which was significantly higher than the amount (52%) shown in other research (Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, and Notaro 2002, 221), with more females having mentors than males, a fact found in other research, especially among African American females (Hirsch, Mickus and Boerger 2002, 289). (3) Those with a mentor were older than those without. (4) Those with divorced parents were from smaller youth groups and smaller churches. (5) Participants with divorced parents showed a higher rate

of using aggressive solutions to settle conflict. (6) Similar to other studies, males were more physically aggressive than females and had more parental support for fighting, while females were more likely to find non-aggressive solutions (Cillessen et al. 1992, 902; Naylor and Cowie 1999, 477).

### **Research Question 1: Mentor Relationships**

Research Question 1 asks what relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships of those who have mentor relationships and those who do not. Research showed that aggression, victimization, church victimization, and church aggression were not significantly related to whether young people had a mentor. However, victimization was significantly related to what type of mentor a young person has. Those with an unrelated adult mentor reported more victimization than a mentor who was a member of the family. Those with a peer mentor reported more victimization than youth who had a mentor who was member of the family. Those with unrelated adult mentors reported more victimization than youth with no mentor. Youth with peer mentors reported more victimization than those with no mentor.

It is interesting that students without a mentor perceived themselves to be less victimized than those with a non-related adult mentor or peer mentor. If Lanker and Issler are correct that mentoring “provides support and guidance as a result of a relationship developed” (Lanker and Issler 2010, 93), then one must wonder if, in the development of a non-family mentor relationship, a person gains a better understanding of what is and is not appropriate behavior. Those with a mentor are possibly more aware of others behaviors and the presence of a mentor helps students better understand how they have been victimized and how to respond to aggressive behaviors.

### **Research Question 2: Parental Instruction**

Research Question 2 asks what relationship exists, if any, between adolescent



aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships and parental instruction related to aggressive behavior. Not surprisingly, higher scores for parental support of aggressive solutions were associated with higher scores for overall aggression, including aggression in church. Higher scores for parental support of non-aggressive solutions were associated with less overall aggression and less aggression in church. The pattern was the same for males and females; however, the relationship among variables was stronger for males compared to females. It should be remembered that research already shows that in both cases, both genders experience deep and long-lasting distress as a result of bullying or unwanted aggressive behavior (Hawker and Boulton 2000, 453).

The pattern and strength of relationships were similar for youth with and without divorced parents, older and younger youth, and with and without mentors. However, when looking at mentor type, the relationships between parental support of aggression and aggression itself were stronger for those with peer mentors compared to family mentors, non-related adult mentors, or no mentor.

### **Research Question 3: Physical Aggression and Verbal Aggression**

Research Question 3 asks what relationship exists, if any, between physical aggressive behavior and verbal aggressive behavior among adolescents. One unique insight from the research was that more verbal aggression was associated with more physical aggression. It seems that the two build on each other. The relationship between verbal and physical aggression was stronger in males than in females, which is different than most research that shows verbal aggression and gossiping to be stronger in females and physical aggression to be stronger in males (Gottheil and Dubow 2001, 27; Cillessen and Mayeux 2004, 138). One must wonder if society's view of women and the role they play and the church's view of women has any influence on why men in the church context are seen as more verbally aggressive.

Relationship between verbal and physical aggression was similar for those

with and without divorced parents, and was also similar for younger and older youth, and was similar for youth with and without a mentor. Similar to Question 2, the relationship between verbal and physical aggression was stronger for someone with a peer mentor than for member of family mentor, unrelated adult mentor, or no mentor. A fact that would be consistent with what previous research found in regards to the type of relationship formed between student and peers (Hurrelmann and Hamilton 1996, 177).

#### **Research Question 4: Aggressive Behavior and Positive Interaction**

Research Question 4 asks what relationship exists, if any, between aggressive behaviors and positive interactions in church-based relationships.

Aggression and church aggression were not related to positive received or positive given. This was also true in males and females, youth with divorced and not divorced parents, and older and younger youth. For those with no mentor, more aggression was associated with less positive given.

Whether youth group, church, or community, bigger size was associated with greater positive interactions received and given. This affirms the idea that smaller size is not always better when trying to create healthy and vibrant community (Gladwell 2013, 44).

#### **Research Question 5: Receiving and Displaying Positive Interaction**

Research Question 5 asks what relationship exists, if any, between receiving and displaying positive interactions in church-based relationships. The simple answer to Question 5 is “yes.” More positive interactions given were strongly related to more positive received. The more a young person gave positive interaction, the more positive interaction they received in response. When a young person gives positive interaction, no matter male or female, youth with divorced or not divorced parents, younger or older youth, or youth with each mentor type, they received more positive interaction in response.

When young people said something nice, said “you are welcome,” helped someone, complimented someone, shared, or were invited to participate they received similar positive interactions in response. While research has shown many different aspects of negative actions it is encouraging to see that when positive actions are given, positive interactions are received in response (Twenge and Campbell 2009, 289). In working with young people, the church should help to provide opportunities for positive interactions to happen and for young people to know the power of the “golden rule” (Matt 7:12).

**Research Question 6: Aggressive Behavior in Relationship to Community, Church, and Youth Group Size**

Research Question 6 asks what relationship exists, if any, between community size, church size and youth group size, and adolescent aggressive behavior. In the analysis, several other demographic type variables were included in order to control for their effect (gender, parent marital status, and mentor type). Several of the community and church variables were important in relation to aggressive behaviors, as were some of the demographic characteristics.

Specifically youth in smaller youth groups reported more aggressive behaviors than youth when the youth group had membership over 100. This is surprising because one would think in a smaller community more supervision and interaction with adults would occur, leading to less aggression being shown. However, it was shown that both the smaller group and larger groups showed higher levels of aggression. Both could be linked to a lack of interaction and supervision of adults.

Another characteristic related to more aggressive behaviors by youth was being in a large church (over 500 members) when compared to those in a medium size church (250-500 members). Perhaps some reasons why this might have been the case are more supervision in medium size churches with adequate number of youth leaders and the level of relationship and connection among families possibly being higher in medium churches as compared to larger churches.

Town size over 200,000 was related to more youth aggression compared to youth in smaller towns. This was surprising because of the fact that smaller youth groups had higher aggression than larger ones, while smaller towns had less aggression than larger ones. Also, as may be expected based on the available literature (Crick and Grotpeter 1995, 721; Gottheil and Dubow 2001, 27), being male was associated with more aggression compared to being female. Finally, when parental support for aggression was added to the model, the model became much stronger. As expected, parental support for non-aggressive solutions led to less aggression and parental support for aggressive solutions led to more aggression. Similar findings were shown in a large study of middle school children, which found that parental support for fighting was the strongest predictor of students' aggressive behavior (Orpinas, Murray, and Kelder 1999, 774-75).

The overall model predicting church aggression from youth group size, church size, and town size was not meaningfully significant. However, with the addition of gender, parent marital status, and mentor type the model does become meaningful. Variables related to more aggression in church: (1) Youth group sizes 11-40, 41-70 were associated with more church aggression compared to having a youth group over 100, which is consistent to what was found on a personal level. (2) Church size over 500 was associated with more aggression compared to church size below 100 and 250-500. As other research has asked, there seems to be a possible connection to societal, or in this case church, expectations (Vail 1999, 38). (3) Town size over 200,000 was associated with more aggression compared to having a town of 10-50,000. (4) Not unexpected, males were associated with more aggression compared to females (Crick and Grotpeter 1995, 721; Gottheil and Dubow 2001, 27). (5) When parental support for aggression was added to the model, the model became much stronger. As expected, parental support for non-aggressive solutions led to less aggression and parental support for aggressive solutions led to more aggression, although gender became unimportant when parental support was added to the model (Orpinas and Horne 2006, 43-44). (6) When looking at the non-

parametric model, church size 101-250, compared to over 500, associated with higher odds of church aggression. Town size below 10,000, compared to over 200,000, was associated with lower odds of church aggression. Parental support for aggressive solutions was associated with higher odds of church aggression, in the same way it was associated with aggression on a personal level (Orpinas, Murray, and Kelder 1999, 774-75).

### **Research Question 7: Occurrence of Aggression**

Research Question 7 asks about the occurrence of student aggressive behavior in a church-based context as compared to the occurrence of aggressive behavior in society. The most significant contribution of this research possibly lies in the answers to Question 7 and the scale created to arrive at the answer.

The creation of the Victimization and Aggression Scale showed levels of bully, victim, and bully/victim behavior both inside and outside of church. The scale went from not a bully, mild bully, moderate bully, and severe bully (aggression) crossed with not bullied, mildly bullied, moderately bullied, and severely bullied (victimization). From the fourteen categories, a range of behaviors were determined that were then narrowed down to bully, victim, and bully/victim in an effort to compare with other data.

In the church context, the bully level was 3.7%, the victim level was 9.5%, and the bully/victim level was 10%. The total percentage of students involved in some form of aggressive behavior and victimization, 23.1%, is less than the three comparative projects of Nansel 29.9%, and Cook International 37.6% and National 47.1%. The idea that the percentage of victims and bully/victims exceeds the percentage of bullies is consistent with recent national findings (Limber, Olweus, and Luxenberg 2013, 8).

However, a survey of bully behavior outside the church context showed something very different: bully was the highest percentage with a level of 14.4%, victim level was 6.6%, and the bully/victim level was 11.9%. The total 32% of students involved in some form of aggressive behavior and victimization outside of church was higher than

Nansel's 29.9%, but lower than Cook International 37.6% and National 47.1% (Nansel 2001, 2094; Cook et al. 2011, 349). Key variance between in the church and outside the church is the level of bully behavior which could be explained in the limited time young people spend together at church, compared to the time they spend away from church in a week. Victim and bully/victim are relatively similar in both contexts.

Because of the nature and variances in bully research over the years, it is difficult to do exact comparison between any research. While not exact, the comparison between this research and that of Nansel and Cook does show some very specific insights. First, there is an obvious difference in the bully rate for students inside and outside of church. In church the bully rate is low at 3.7%, while the same group of students outside of church have a rate of 14.4%. There are likely many reasons for this difference, which could be studied in future research, but it is clear that an obvious difference exists between the aggressive actions of adolescents inside versus outside of church.

While the difference in bully behavior was significant, there was little difference in the level of victim and bully/victims. Inside the church it was 19.5%, and outside the church it was 17.9%. Both of those are higher than Nansel's finding of 16.3%, but lower than Cook International's 23.1% and National's 29.2%. The bully/victim percentage in church 10% and outside church 11.9% is greater than all three: Nansel 6.3%, Cook International 5.2% and National 7.7%. This variance is possibly explained in the fact that such a high percentage of students (75.1%) had a mentor who provided support and guidance in a developed relationship, which possibly helped them have a greater understanding of their own actions and the actions of others (Lanker and Issler 2010, 93).

### **Research Applications**

This research examined aggressive behavior and victimization in adolescence, specifically in the church environment. The purposed study contains numerous research applications. At the beginning of the process it was a desire of the researcher to see if adolescents connected to churches manifest different levels of aggressive behavior

(bullying) than those adolescents in the general culture around them. In the end, this research showed that when comparing total aggression and victimization numbers, the church is lower than all others in combined bully, victim, and bully/victim behavior 23.1%, compared to Nansel's 29.9%, Cook's International 37.6%, and National 47.1% (Nansel 2001, 2094; Cook et al. 2011, 349).

Does this mean that church is a place void of victimization? No, the research shows clearly that in the church context, there is still a level of victimization (9.5%) and bully/victim behavior (10%).

One possible way to look at the data is to combine not a bully and mild bully (1 to 3 times) from the aggression scale with not bullied and mildly bullied (1 to 3 times) from the victimization scale, finding that it makes up 96.3% in the church and 94.6% outside of church. By doing so, it becomes clear that the church could be able to create a very safe and encouraging place if participants in mild behaviors were to eliminate the behavior, but it would require intentionality in what is taught and communicated to young people about how different and transformational their actions could be.

An important piece of the research did show that when teenagers show positive interactions toward others, they receive positive interactions in response. While it would not always be true, the research does show that most of the time one positive interaction does lead to a positive response, affirming the importance of all people living out the "Golden Rule" of treating others as one desires to be treated (Matt 7:12).

A second application was to investigate the connection of how adolescents respond to aggressive behavior based on what they are taught by their parent or guardian. The research showed that how parents encouraged their children to respond to unwanted behavior had a significant influence on their level of aggression. It also showed that males were more verbally and physically aggressive, and that those with divorced parents were more likely to find aggressive solutions to problems than non-aggressive solutions.

The researcher's first graduate class was a Family Counseling course in which

the class was taught with one main premise: Counselors must be slow to judgment and quick to try to determine what makes any action make sense. It would seem from the research that that premise is key in dealing with bullying in the church context. When aggressive behavior happens, no matter the marital status of students' parents or what the student might have done or said, the first question those involved in the situation must ask is, "What makes the action make sense?"

Some would say that responding to difficult people and situations around the issue of bullying requires a high level of tolerance. Ronald Cram in his book, *Bullying: A Spiritual Crisis*, argues,

Tolerance is an inadequate and destructive way for persons to be in relation with one another. I contend that the cultural myth of tolerance sets the stage for bullying and for violence. We know that intolerance is destructive to the practice of Christian diversity. But the opposite of intolerance is not tolerance; its empathy. Tolerance as an end results in intolerance. (Cram 2003, 51)

Students need to know today the importance of their actions and their words. As a child, the researcher's mother would often say, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." Ministers and church leaders must help adolescents understand that empathy and concern in their daily lives will go a long way in helping them respond in a Christ-like manner to the world around them (Phil 2:3-8).

A third application investigated was whether the presence of a mentor in the life of an adolescent has any influence on his/her level of aggressive bully behavior or victimization. The data showed that about three quarters (75%) of participants had a mentor, with more girls having a mentor than boys. A key insight from the research was that youth without a mentor had a higher level of parental support for aggression, while youth with a mentor had a greater level of support for non-aggressive solutions and received more positive interaction. Youth with a mentor also reported less parental support for aggression than those without a mentor.

### **Research Limitations**

There were several limitations of this research that need to be understood.



First, this research was limited to students participating in Uplift 2012. Therefore, this research did not attempt to study adolescents from walks of life not represented by the members of that group. While 97% of the research sample were adolescents affiliated with the Church of Christ fellowship, the findings of the research are not universal to all young people in the Church of Christ.

Another limitation of the study was that each participant came with a different level of understanding of aggressive bully behavior and victimization. Research has shown that an adolescent's understanding of aggressive behavior is connected to how his/her daily environment deals with and responds to aggressive actions (Coloroso 2003, 1-10). Due to the fact that Uplift campers came from numerous states and different-sized communities, there was no uniformity in how aggressive behavior was understood.

Connected to this limitation, this research was unable to deal with all circumstances that adolescents perceived as aggressive. Ideally, this research would have had an equal group of non-churched youth with which to compare. While numerous studies looking at aggression in varied context have been completed, the researcher was unable to find any study completed with the same demographic makeup of this study, which made exact comparison unachievable.

### **Further Research**

This study is a first attempt to examine the presence of aggression and victimization in a church-related context. It is the view of the researcher that the Christian faith community has the opportunity to take the lead in culture in helping people respond positively to aggressive behavior and victimization because of the Christian belief that all people are created in the *Image of God* (Hoekema 1994, 11-32) and because of Jesus' constant example in Scripture of touching and connecting with the outcast and abused (Mark 1: 40-45; John 4: 1-26). The hope of the researcher is that this is the beginning of a growing understanding of adolescents both in a church-related context and in the broader cultural community. The ensuing list is what the researcher sees as some immediate

future research possibilities:

1. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in a church-based context, and at what level do adolescents participate in discipleship?
2. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behavior in a church based-context and the leadership style(s) of the paid church staff?
3. What relationship exists, if any, between adolescent aggressive behaviors in church-based relationships and the type of education an adolescent experiences (public school, private school, homeschool)?
4. At what level, is cyber-bullying present in the lives of young people who identify themselves as followers of Jesus?
5. Regarding adolescents who identify themselves as Christians vs. those who do not: how do they respond to aggressive behavior and what have they been taught, if anything, about such behavior?
6. What, if any, influence does the amount of entertainment media an adolescent consumes have on his/her view of aggressive behavior and victimization?

### **Summary of Conclusions**

When the researcher started this project, it was driven simply by the desire to know if bullying happened at church. As a youth minister for ten years, he knew the answer was “yes,” but the question was at what level. The research confirmed that, without question, there is a level of bullying happening, but there is also a large number of adolescents who are neither acting as bully nor being bullied. The research also showed the importance of parents, mentors, and positive interactions in the struggle to both prevent and respond to bully behavior.

There is a growing need for parents, ministers, and church leaders to be aware of the challenges facing young people today. It has been said that schools must pay close attention to the “climate of the school” in creating the right environment for learning and safety that nurtures people’s best qualities (Kenny et al. 2009, 229-43). It is clear from bully research that culture desires for people to be loved like Jesus loved people, but are unwilling to give up the personal freedom for that to be true (Limber, Olweus, and Luxenberg 2013, 15). The researcher believes that churches, only surpassed by family, should be the foundational place in culture that helps people learn to live together in

empathetic and Christ-like ways that nurture people to find their ultimate value in who God created them to be (Cram 2003, 102).

Some would say that there should be no bullies in the church and that no one should ever experience victimization in any context. The researcher would agree, but it must also be understood that humanity lives in a fallen place where pain, inappropriate actions, and victimization are an inescapable part of the spiritual battle (Eph 6:12). The message of love and acceptance from Jesus is for everyone, from the demon-possessed man, to the women caught in adultery, to the rich young ruler, and so many others.

The church, along with families and communities, should be aware of the unique challenges that face young people today. Bully behavior in any form should not take place, but when it does happen, the church should lead the way to help understand what would make the actions of the aggressor make sense. It is difficult because the fallen human nature wants revenge. However, people of faith should remember that revenge belongs to the Lord and their role is to love their enemies (Rom 12:9-21).

Giving titles, and calling students names like “bully” should never be an option and only used for research purposes. As one study argued, “It is important to note that these terms—victim, bully, and bully-victim—should not be used to label individual children” (Limber, Olweus, and Luxenberg 2013, 3). The church, a community of faith, should see all children as possible brothers and sisters in Christ—as members or possible members in the “priesthood of all believers” (Gal 3:28). The church’s love for bullies, victims, and bully/victims should be evident in all that is said and done. It should be an issue that is mentioned often, both to bring awareness to what happens with the church but also to how the church can be a place of hope in a fallen world, showing that all of humanity was created in the image of God and should desire a relationship with Him (Hoekema 1994, 11).

In the end, it is the view of the researcher that bully behavior has no place in the local church and that the church should be helping to provide answers to the bully

epidemic in America. While school programs, political agendas, and relevant legislation have their place, the answers to this epidemic, whether in church or society, will never be found exclusively in such programs, agendas, or laws. They will only be found when people of faith grow in wisdom and relationship with God for their own wellbeing, and in turn serve others by being the hands and feet of Jesus, understanding that the mission in response to bullying is to be active in loving one's neighbor (Roberts 2006, 165).

APPENDIX 1  
BULLY SURVEY

Think about what happened DURING THE LAST 7 DAYS  
when you answer these questions:

During the last 7 days:	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 times	4 times	5 times	6+ times
1. I teased students to make them angry.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
2. I got angry very easily with someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
3. I fought back when someone hit me first.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
4. I said things about other kids to make other students laugh.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
5. I encouraged other students to fight.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
6. I pushed or shoved other students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
7. I was angry most of the day.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
8. I got into a physical fight because I was angry.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
9. I slapped or kicked someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
10. I called other students bad names.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
11. I threatened to hurt or hit someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+

Think about what happened DURING THE LAST 7 DAYS  
when you answer these questions:

During the last 7 days:	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 times	4 times	5 times	6+ times
1. A student teased me to make me angry.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
2. A student beat me up.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
3. A student said things about me to make other students laugh (made fun of me).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
4. Other students encouraged me to fight.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
5. A student pushed or shoved me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
6. A student asked me to fight.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
7. A student slapped or kicked me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
8. A student called me (or my family) bad names.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
9. A student threatened to hurt or hit me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
10. A student tried to hurt my feelings.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+

Think about what happened DURING THE LAST 7 DAYS  
when you answer these questions about your CHURCH:

During the last 7 days:	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 times	4 times	5 times	6+ times
1. How many times did a kid from your church tease you?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
2. How many times did a kid from your church push, shove, or hit you?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
3. How many times did a kid from your church call you a bad name?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
4. How many times did kids from your church say that they were going to hit you?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
5. How many times did other kids in your church leave you out on purpose?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
6. How many times did a student in your church make up something about you to make other kids not like you anymore?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
7. How many times did you tease a kid from your church?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
8. How many times did you push, shove, or hit a kid from your classroom?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
9. How many times did you call a kid from your church a bad name?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
10. How many times did you say that you would hit a kid from your church?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
11. How many times did you leave out another classmate on purpose?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
12. How many times did you make up something about other students in your church to make other kids not like them anymore?	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+

Think about what happened in your church DURING THE LAST 30 DAYS  
when you answer these questions:

In the past 30 days, how many times in your church:	Never	Once or twice	About once a week	Several times a week
1. A kid said or did something nice to me.				
2. A kid said “thanks” or “you are welcome” to me.				
3. A kid helped me.				
4. A kid said or did something that make me feel good.				
5. A kid invited me to participate in a game, group conversation, or a class activity.				
6. A kid said a compliment (praise, kind word) to me.				
7. A kid offered to help me.				
8. A kid shared something with me.				
9. A kid acted friendly with me.				
10. A kid showed interest in my ideas or activities.				

In the past 30 days, how many times did YOU:	Never	Once or twice	About once a week	Several times a week
1. I said or did something nice to a kid from my church.				
2. I said “thanks” or “you are welcome” to a kid from my classroom.				
3. I helped a kid from my church.				
4. I said or did something that made a kid from my church feel good.				
5. I invited a kid from my church to participate in a game, group conversation, or a class activity.				
6. I said a compliment (praise, kind word) to a kid from my church.				
7. I offered to help a kid from my church.				
8. I shared something with a kid from my church.				
9. I acted friendly with a kid from my church.				
10. I showed interest in ideas or activities from a kid from my church.				



Do your parents tell you these things about fighting?	Yes	No
1. If someone hits you, hit them back.	Y	N
2. If someone calls you names, hit them.	Y	N
3. If someone calls you names, call them names back.	Y	N
4. If someone calls you names, ignore them.	Y	N
5. If someone asks you to fight, hit them first.	Y	N
6. If someone asks you to fight, you should try to talk you way out of a fight.	Y	N
7. You should think the problem through, calm yourself, and then talk the problem out with your friend.	Y	N
8. If another student asks you to fight, you should tell a teacher or someone older.	Y	N
9. If you can't solve the problem by talking, it is best to solve it through fighting.	Y	N
10. No matter what, fighting is not good; there are other ways to solve problems.	Y	N

## APPENDIX 2

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to study adolescent behavior in the church context. This research is being conducted by Andrew Baker for purposes of dissertation research. In this research, you will answer a list of questions to the best of your ability. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. ***Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.***

By your completion of this survey, and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

**1) Grade this fall:**

6      7      8      9      10      11      12      College Fresh.

**2) Age:**

10      11      12      13      14      15      16      17      18+

**3) Gender:**

Male                      Female

**4) Church Affiliation:**

Church of Christ      Other

**5) Church size:**

Below 50      51-100      101-250      250-500      Above 500

**6) Youth Group size:**

Below 10      11-40      41-70      71-100      Above 100

**7) Hometown size:**

Below 10,000      10,001-50,000      50,001-100,000      100,001-200,000      Above 200,000

**8) Are your biological parents divorced?**

Yes                      No

**9) Do you have a Mentor:** person who acts as a guide, role model, or sponsor providing you knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and support.

Yes                      No

**10) If you answered YES to question 1 above, is your primary mentor:**

- (a) a member of your family      (b) an adult not related to you  
(c) someone close to your age, but not related to you?

APPENDIX 3

UPLIFT INDIVIDUAL CAMPER AGREEMENT  
TO PARTICIPATE

You are being requested to give permission for a minor or member of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to study adolescent behavior in the church context. This research is being conducted by Andrew Baker for purposes of dissertation research. In this research, a person will take a four page validated survey. Any information provided will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will a person's name be reported, or a person's name identified with his or her responses. ***Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and the person you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.***

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4

### UPLIFT SURVEY AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

You are being requested to give permission for your group, minors or members of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to look at adolescent behavior in the church context. This research is being conducted by Andrew Baker for purposes of dissertation research. In this research, a person will take a four page validated survey. Any information provided will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will a person's name be reported, or a person's name identified with his or her responses. ***Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and the person or group you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.***

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated group of minors or members of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Group Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## ABSTRACT

### A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF ADOLESCENT AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN A CHURCH- BASED CONTEXT: BULLY IN THE PEW

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This dissertation examines aggressive behavior (bullying) among adolescents in a church-based context.

Chapter 1 introduces the research concern that adolescent aggression is a challenge, not only in schools and work environments, but also in church. While the church should be a place of safety and transformation, the research asks if it has become an unsafe place for some.

Chapter 2 examines existing literature that addresses the concepts of bullying, the influence of bullying on identity formation, mechanisms used to prevent bullying, and the biblical and theological ideas of wisdom and the pursuit of it as a powerful response to the challenges of bullying.

Chapter 3 outlines the means used in this study to analyze and compare the levels of aggressive behavior occurring between adolescents in a church-based context. The researcher shares the research design overview, research population, samples and delimitations, limitations of generalization, research instrument, procedures for the research, and significance of the study.

Chapter 4 shows how the research study sought to analyze and compare the level of aggressive behavior occurring among adolescents in a church-based context. To study this objective properly, the researcher examined aggression and victimization in

youth, both in general and specifically, in the church-related environment among campers at Uplift in the summer of 2012. The findings and statistical data are evaluated and reviewed in this chapter in a concise manner.

Chapter 5 seeks to analyze and compare the levels of aggressive behavior among adolescents in a church-based context. In this chapter there is a review of what the findings mean and the significance of these findings for parents, youth workers, and church leaders. After looking at the possible implications from the stated research questions, the researcher discusses possible ideas for future research in the area of adolescent behavior in a church-based context.



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