

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

**BULLIED VICTIMS' COPING VIA DISCLOSURE: A PERSPECTIVE ON  
COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

A Dissertation in

Communication Arts and Sciences

by

Masaki Matsunaga

© 2009 Masaki Matsunaga

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2009

The dissertation of Masaki Matsunaga was reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Michael L. Hecht  
Distinguished Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences and Crime, Law, and Justice  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

James P. Dillard  
Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences  
Head of the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences

Denise H. Solomon  
Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences

Pui-Wa Lei  
Associate Professor of Educational Psychology

\*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.

## ABSTRACT

The current research examined communication and interpersonal relationships of the individuals who have suffered from bullying, or persistent aggression or other forms of harm-doing enacted upon an individual in a powerless position, and their correlates. Specifically, how such bullied individuals share the information about their victimized status with others and the effectiveness of this disclosure as a coping strategy were investigated through three studies.

Study 1 explored the assumption that parental misunderstanding of their children's experience of bullying marks a risk factor. The results showed that certain families are characterized by a larger child-parent discrepancy (i.e., children had experienced more bullying than their parents suspected) than others; moreover, such discrepancies were negatively associated with the children's post-bullying adjustment, providing evidence for the importance of disclosure to facilitate parental awareness of bullying.

Study 2 more directly examined the underlying dynamics related to victims' disclosure decision-making. The analysis revealed that families' communicative orientation was related to victims' efficacy for disclosure and those efficacy perceptions are, in turn, associated with the likelihood for victims to disclose. This study also replicated past findings on the effectiveness of disclosure as a coping strategy such that those who had disclosed about bullying crisis had better subjective well-being than those who remained undisclosed.

Finally, Study 3 compared the data collected from Japan and the U.S., and focused on how victims evaluate various types of support strategies elicited by their disclosure and also how this appraisal of received support lead to their subsequent motivation for further disclosure as well as post-bullying adjustment. The results suggest that emotional support is appreciated highly by both Japanese and U.S. Americans, whereas other strategies are less effective or even deteriorative. Notably, Japanese victims evaluated network support particularly negatively.

These findings are discussed in the last chapter with regard to the potential contribution of the communication- and relationship-centered perspective taken by the current research to the literature of bullying and the communication of information management. Directions for future research, as well as practical implications of the findings obtained through the three studies, are discussed along with the current studies' major limitations.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .....	vii
List of Figures .....	viii
Acknowledgment .....	ix
Chapter 1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	1
Conceptualizing “Bullying” .....	3
Histories of the Bullying Research .....	6
Limitations of the Existing Bullying Research .....	16
Structure and Goals of the Current Research .....	18
Conclusion .....	23
References .....	24
Endnotes .....	39
Chapter 2. EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL MISUNDERSTANDING OF BULLIED VICTIMS’ SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING .....	41
Bullying: Consequences and the Role of Family in It .....	44
Family Communication Standards .....	45
Method .....	49
Results .....	53
Discussion .....	57
References .....	66
Endnotes .....	73
Chapter 3. TESTING A STRUCTURAL MODEL OF VICTIMS’ DISCLOSURE AND ITS RELATIONS TO EFFICACY PERCEPTIONS AND FAMILY’S COMMUNICATION ORIENTATIONS .....	81
Disclosure as a Way of Coping with Victimization by Bullying .....	84
Self-Efficacy as a Key for Victims to Open Up .....	86
Family-Level FCS Profile as a Predictor of Victims’ Efficacy for Disclosure ...	88
Outcome of Disclosure: Replicating Past Findings with Increased Clarity .....	90
Method .....	91
Results .....	97
Discussion .....	99
References .....	109
Endnotes .....	116

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

Chapter 4. A JAPAN-U.S. CROSS-CULTURAL TEST OF A MEDIATIONAL MODEL OF BULLIED VICTIMS' EVALUATION OF RECEIVED SUPPORT AND POST-BULLYING ADAPTATION .....	124
Bullying .....	127
Underlying Mechanism of Disclosure's Positive Effects .....	129
Role of Culture in Crisis Disclosure .....	134
Method .....	136
Results .....	141
Discussion .....	145
References .....	153
Endnotes .....	163
Chapter 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	168
What Has Been Uncovered in This Research .....	169
What Has Remained To Be Addressed in the Future .....	178
Concluding Remarks .....	181
References .....	183

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1		
Major Conceptualizations of and Research Questions on Bullying by Discipline	.....	40
Table 2.1		
Conceptualization and Operationalization of Family Communication Standards	.....	74
Table 2.2		
Pearson's Product-Moment Bivariate Correlations and Reliabilities for the FCS Dimensions for Young-Adult Children	.....	76
Table 2.3		
Pearson's Product-Moment Bivariate Correlations and Reliabilities for the FCS Dimensions for Parents	.....	77
Table 2.4		
Bivariate and Partial Correlations between FCS and Child-Parent Discrepancies on Bullying	.....	78
Table 2.5		
Robust-Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the Three Family-Level FCS Profiles	.....	79
Table 3.1		
Bivariate Correlations, Reliabilities, and Equivalent CFA Model Fit of the FCS Dimensions for Young-Adult Children	.....	117
Table 3.2		
Bivariate Correlations and Reliabilities of the FCS Dimensions for Parents	.....	118
Table 3.3		
Full-Information Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the Three Family-Level FCS Profiles	.....	119
Table 3.4		
Full-Information Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the Disclosure LCA Model	.....	120
Table 3.5		
Robust Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the FCS → Efficacy → Disclosure Model	.....	121
Table 4.1		
Descriptive Statistics, Bivariate Correlations, and Scale for the Japanese (n = 148) and the U.S. (n = 192) Data	.....	164

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Family-Level FCS Profile → Child-Parent Discrepancy → Child’s Subjective Well-Being Mediation Model .....	80
Figure 3.1 Conceptual Model of the FCS → Efficacy → Disclosure Mediation .....	123
Figure 4.1 Conceptual Model of the Mediation Process of Appraisal, Social Support, and Adaptation for Bullied Victims .....	165
Figure 4.2 Results of the Structural Equation Modeling Analysis of the MASA .....	166
Figure 4.3 Expanded Conceptual Model of the Mediation Process of Appraisal, Social Support, and Adaptation for Bullied Victims .....	167



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Writing the acknowledgement for dissertation has long been my dream. Quizzical as it may sound, I have been looking forward to working on this “optional” section. Sources of this aspiration are diverse, some being less bizarre than others. “If included,” the Thesis Guide suggests, this section be utilized as an opportunity “to express the author’s professional and personal indebtedness” (p. 10). Sure. I do owe huge debt to those in my professional and personal relationships (many of whom residing in both domains) and am going to acknowledge below how they have helped me reach here. But I also have another, apparently silly, reason to be thrilled; I always wanted to write with the tacit approval afforded to the acknowledgement writer to freely use the first-person singular pronoun. Using this “I” word, which in scientific writings is viewed almost as a forbidden word if not anathema, in the document conventionally considered the constellation of one’s academic training, I confess, gives me a sweet satisfaction similar to what I used to feel when I was a little kid playing all sorts of mischievous behaviors.

I should be quick to add, however, that I believe this personal form of statement is most appropriate for acknowledging the people who have supported, worked with, and educated me at various stages over the past years. Science—often falsely described as impersonal, detached process that thrives by successful elimination of the researcher’s subjectivity—can actually never be done, I own, without serendipity that bring the opportunity to interact with great scholars, who provide precious critique and feedback otherwise unobtainable. Thus, if my dissertation has achieved something that is of lasting value at all, it should be attributed to the teachers and friends I have had the opportunity to learn from (while any mistake left in this document, of course, is entirely my own). As a dwarf who has just started his journey in academia, I hereby would like to sincerely thank all the giants who benevolently and passionately let me stand on their shoulder and see far across—further, in fact, than I had imagined I would ever do.

Among those benignant giants is Michael L. Hecht, my mentor and doctoral dissertation advisor, who has convinced me that I have bigger potential than I thought and brought it out through his guidance. In this sense, Michael reminds me of Guus Hiddink, a legendary head coach of football (the one played by foot and head, with no Super Bowl but the World Cup); when the Korean national team he was leading made it past the first round of matches of the Japan-Korea World Cup in 2002, Hiddink allegedly told his players, “This is one of the greatest achievements in the history. But, guys, *I’m still hungry*.” This never-ceasing ambition is exactly what I learned from Michael. When a given project is finished and its spin-off paper is accepted to a journal, for example, he most probably has already come up with two or three—if not more—new plans to work on tomorrow. At the same time, Michael always has made sure that I know his trust in my ability to meet his expectations. These two messages, “*Be Ambitious; Don’t Set the Limit to Yourself*” and “*You Can Do It*,” have driven me like two wheels of one cart.

I also would like to acknowledge the other great teachers in my doctoral dissertation committee, both present and past. James P. Dillard, the head of my beloved Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, has helped reinforce abovementioned Michael’s message about being ambitious and staying hungry. I remember, and terribly miss, the “Keep busy. Be brilliant!” remark Jim gave me whenever we passed each other in the hallway of the Sparks Building. He also has provided toughest critique that forced my thinking to go beyond its status quo. I recall the time when we were discussing over the paper on parceling in SEM, now published in *Communication Methods and Measures* (cited in Chapters 2 & 3 of this thesis); we agreed on some of the issues and ended up disagreeing on others, but surely has that disagreement brought the quality of that paper to a level it would otherwise never have reached. Granted, working such disagreement out sometimes felt daunting. (Perhaps all those differences in perspective may be traced to our “religious views.”) The other day, I accidentally found him on

facebook and found his “Dawkins atheist” statement; as you may find on my page, I’m a proud Gouldian/Huxleyian agnosticist, Jim.) Nonetheless, I deeply appreciate the critique and unique perspective he brings to the committee, as they always enhance the quality of the end product.

Denise H. Solomon, who has guided and encouraged me at various stages of my coursework, probably is the one who gave me the biggest culture shock, if not paradigm shift, in my academic training. Until I met Denise, I only had a vague idea about the notion of “program of research,” let alone how to organize studies, each with specific focus and theme, in a systematic manner and integrate them into a coherent theoretical framework. Whenever I feel I may be losing track in my research endeavor, I recall Denise’s talking in the *Communication in Personal Relationships* seminar, with her characteristic hand-waving gesture, that running a program of research is often like trekking through a deep forest, passing small-yet-unignorable obstacles and meeting short-term goals, but sometimes it is important for researchers to take a bird’s-eye view and ponder how, if at all, the works done so far make sense in a given framework and where (and wherefore) to proceed from that point. Additionally, she has given me another “culture shock” by demonstrating that being organized is not only possible but instrumental to stay productive for a researcher as well, though I still need practice in this lesson.

Pui-Wa Lei has introduced to me one of the most valuable statistical methods in my research, structural equation modeling. She taught me the way to explore and analyze data in a systematic, step-by-step procedure and also how to troubleshoot problems before they arise. In addition, Dr. Lei has helped alter my view on my ability as an “expert.” Having received no formal training in higher-level mathematics (calculus, for example was not covered in my high school’s curriculum and I took no mathematics course in undergraduate coursework), I always had this feeling of being a poser whenever I wrote or talked about statistics. I still do, to some extent, but it has been greatly reduced when Dr. Lei recognized my competence after reading my

paper. Without her words, I am not sure if I would be serving as an ad hoc reviewer for *Communication Methods and Measures*, a journal specialized in methodology and statistics.

Granted, my knowledge base in statistics is not solely built on one course taught by Dr. Lei (though I would enlist it among the most influential). Frank Lawrence, who had served in my committee during its early phase, taught my very first statistics course at Penn State and also another summer seminar. Through these courses, he installed in me the idea that statistics is really about the logic. His classes were exciting for me because I learned how to make sense of the numbers displayed on a computer screen and, moreover, I saw a bigger picture wherein a variety of statistical techniques were connected with one another to form a meaningful hierarchy.

Two more past committee members need to be noted. Walid A. Afifi was my first advisor at Penn State. He also was the graduate officer at the time when I was admitted to the school. As such, it is safe to say that I would not be who I am today without him. Things I learned from Walid are just too many in quantity and great in quality to describe duly in this space, but the first lesson I received in his *Epistemology* seminar, “Quality and quantity of work is not mutually exclusive; what counts is the quantity of quality work,” has always been lingering in my head and galvanized me to excel (and, yes, that seminar helped my cohort to bond together, as we can talk about how traumatic it was whenever we gather!). I am deeply indebted to Walid for his always-dead-on feedback, too, although I believe I did some work on my end by deciphering his handwriting. Incorporating his critique never failed to pay off not only content-wise but also by improving my writing. This improvement was attested by noticeable disappearance of the “You should carefully proofread your writing” or “Watch your English grammar” statements in the editor/reviewer’s comments on my papers submitted for publication after one year of working with Walid (I am afraid, though, he might pepper comments like, “*Huh?*” “*Overly flowery,*” or that *B*-phrase which shall remain unstated here, across this dissertation if he read it).

Tamara D. Afifi is another past committee member. Sometimes I am struck by realizing how lucky I was to be taught by one of the most productive researchers of the time. Hearing about the stories about her research first-hand and seeing them in print at numerous top journals was exciting and motivating for an aspiring scholar-to-be. Her teaching, too, was stimulating and eye-opening, for in almost every class she pointed out something that I missed in my reading. Further, in retrospect, I also feel lucky to have had Tammy during my first year at Penn State. Without the warmth and encouragement I received from her, I doubt if my transition from a local metropolitan city in Japan to the rural Pennsylvania would have been as smooth as it turned out.

Walid and Tammy also helped my adjustment at Penn State by welcoming me to the community—*family*, really—composed of themselves and their advisees, who greatly helped me and continue to be my important colleagues. Chris Morse supported me whenever I had a problem or question. I felt secure just thinking that he would be there anytime I need his help. Composed and humane, Chris provided me with a role model. Megan Dillow was another source of aspiration for me. I remember my admiring Megan even before I met her in person, as Walid shared her term paper as a “model work” in the abovementioned seminar. It is thus my great honor to be working with her now through our research collaboration. Tara G. McManus and Alysa Lucas have been my comrades throughout my years at Penn State and they still are across the ocean and continent. We have been through challenges, sometimes difficult and sometimes even impossible ones, together. Coming to the school computer room or grad students’ office to see their face was cheering and, in fact, indispensable for someone with a formal status as “alien” in the U.S. I look forward to paying this debt back to Tara and Alysa through our continuing friendship and collaboration. Amanda Coho, who left the program to pursue another career path, unforgettably impressed me by her intelligence. Coming to know and working with such a smart person as Amanda, even for a short period, was both an inspiring and humbling experience.

In addition, I would be remiss if I failed to write about my Penn State friends. Jennifer A. Kam's eagerness to acquire knowledge stimulated me and numerous discussions we engaged in through our work have sharpened my thoughts. Nicholas Thomas impressed me doubly through his intellectual capacity and dedication for teaching. Being a cubicle mate in the graduate students' office, I admire how he cares about and gives guidance to his students, whose performance incredibly improved after a semester. Another graduate student fellow whose presence I appreciate to the highest degree in my cohort is Kirsten Weber. Her intelligence has always helped me stay humble; at times when I found myself falling into the sin of pride, I was able to tell myself, "Someone, like Kirsten, surely could do better." Risé Lara has been (and she never will stop being) my source of consolation, as she radiates her characteristic exuberance and optimism. Rachel McLaren paved my path for acculturation by providing care and support during my first year at Penn State and on; she also provided me with another awe-inspiring figure through her insightful comments in classes we took together. Jennifer Priem has shown how learning an innovative methodology is worthwhile; she also openly revealed to me with her welcoming smile various challenges one may encounter in research. Both of these lessons are reflected on my work that often undertakes unconventional approaches and also on my brief that science is done by struggling humans, not by cold-blooded research machine. Keli R. Steuber added a portion of cheerfulness to my days at State College and her comments saved my ideas numerous times which otherwise might have drawn and sunk dead. The list could go on for pages; but instead of doing so, I would like to solemnly express my gratitude to all the friends I met at Penn State by stating here that I would never be able to survive through the coursework and, moreover, identify with the program without camaraderie and support they provided.

I am glad that I made the decision to go to Penn State also for the quality education and training experiences I entertained there from its faculty members, primarily in the Department of

Communication Arts and Sciences but from other departments as well. Within the CAS Dept., Michelle A. Miller-Day provided another “safe haven” with her tremendous competence to point out positive aspects of my work despite its flaws, and she also has filled a serious void in my research toolbox, namely qualitative research methods. Jon F. Nussbaum directed my eyes to an interesting area of life span communication in his seminar. In addition, both Michelle and Jon have shown great models of teacher through the time when I worked as their teaching assistant. Ronald L. Jackson, Jr., heavily influenced my disposition as a scholar by challenging many of the assumptions I unconsciously had. In fact, sitting in his seminar during my first semester at Penn State helped me regain the sense of humility I otherwise might have lost. Rosa A. Eberly welcomed and addressed my naïve questions about theories and philosophies. Christopher L. Johnston has shared his insights and enthusiasm for teaching. Rachel A. Smith let me peek into an area of methodology I would love to pursue; her colloquium lecture also reassured to me that the research on communication can and should address socially significant issues.

As for the education I received from other departments, I was especially enlightened in the courses offered at the Department of Educational Psychology and the Methodology Center. As for the former, in addition to Dr. Lei’s SEM class, Hoi K. Suen’s seminar on the scale validity and Jonna M. Kulikowich’s courses on hierarchical linear modeling and measurement analyses were particularly notable. Things I learned in these courses are simply mind-blowing, to me at least. The extent of care and breadth of issues I pay attention to on measurement have expanded enormously after taking EDPSY courses. At the Methodology Center, I took the *Latent Class and Latent Transition Analysis* seminar taught by Linda Collins, Stephanie Lanza, and Betherny Bray. Actually, when Michael suggested that I should take this seminar, I remember, I felt somewhat reluctant; taking this course, however, turned out to be extremely exciting and rewarding, as LCA/LTA—and its variant technique, latent profile analysis (LPA)—now

constitute arguably one of the strongest “selling points” of my work. These courses, both from the Educational Psychology Department and the Methodology Center, also gave me the sense of impatience and urgency. That is, knowing researchers in the fields other than my home ground are often seriously concerned over the issues that many communication scholars may not even consider made me feel that we need change, quickly and in a large scale, not to be left behind. I take such frustration positively as a driving force for me to maintain my growth and progress.

Reflecting over post-graduate education reminds me of my academic roots; Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka, Japan, where I earned my bachelor’s and master’s degrees. In its small and yet exceptionally rigorous program on communication studies, I was trained by Tadasu Todd Imahori and Akira Miyahara. The support and teaching I have received from Todd, my advisor for undergraduate senior’s and also master’s theses, is just indescribable; all I can say is that our encounter in 1997 and interaction ever since have determined my life in a significant way. Professor Miyahara, my predecessor at Seinan Gakuin and Penn State (and Nagazumi Elementary School), taught me through my entire undergraduate and graduate career at Seinan. As I conduct more research, I increasingly realize how much influence I received from him. When I struggle to make sense of complex results I obtained from my analyses, a breakthrough often comes through Prof. Miyahara’s words I remember from his seminars at Seinan. Interestingly, these two giants both told me, at different times and independently, that the only possibility for them to cope with the hefty debt they owe to their advisers would be to “pay forward” by educating the next generation. I would like to echo that; I will do my best to pass the wisdom and knowledge I learned from them down to the next generation, as that would be the only way I can repay what they have done for this urchin or, as Todd likes to call me, mutant.

Another important figure I met during my time at Seinan Gakuin University is Chie Torigoe. Ever smart and earnest, Chie provides one of the greatest colleagues of mine. Her



critical perspective gives me fresh insights into how to conceive of the world differently from the way I normally do. Although the idea for this dissertation originated from various sources, I am sure that Chie's disposition unshakably geared toward social justice has influenced its focus on the socially vulnerable (i.e., bullied victims). Besides these professional aspects, I have always cherished my personal relationship with her, whom I consider my "sister" in every sense of the word except the legal aspects. There are many things to be grateful to Chie.

At last, but definitely not least, I would like to acknowledge the support provided by Yuka Mori, my fiancée and soulmate. She always and unconditionally has offered mental and spiritual sustenance upon various challenges I underwent over the past two years. Her words encouraged me as I was about to take the comps. Her mails, sent across the ocean, shed precious lights in the dark nights after I received numerous rejection letters from the universities I applied for. When my father passed away in the last spring, her presence consoled my soul in the way no one else could. She also provides the hardest critic for my research. I know I have done something valuable if a brief explanation on my latest paper draws even a slight hint of excitement from her, as her intelligence is keen enough to cut through nonsense of the residents of an ivory like a hot knife through butter. And, of course, the most precious of all I receive from Yuka is the care she puts into our relationship, and love she shares with me. So, thank you, Yuka.

With Love,

Masaki

*Dedicated to*  
*Taeko and Yuuji Matsunaga*

## Chapter 1

### Statement of the Problem

Bullying is a pervasive problem that is ubiquitous across the world (Nansel et al., 2004; Smith et al., 1999). Decades of research efforts notwithstanding, a number of issues on bullying remain unresolved. In particular, how bullied individuals cope with victimization and also how their surroundings (e.g., family) are involved in this coping process have received relatively little attention in the existing literature (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Smith, 2004). Although there is an emerging body of research on this important topic (e.g., Hunter, Merchan, & Ortega, 2004; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004), studies that illuminate the interaction between victims and their concerned others are still scarce.

At the same time, those recent studies do provide encouraging results on the benefit of a particular coping behavior by bullied victims, namely divulging the fact of bullying to others in seeking support (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Smith et al., 2004). Further, those findings suggest that a communication-centered perspective may have valuable insights to augment this promising line of research, for despite the positive outcomes associated with disclosure, victims typically do not venture to disclose about bullying; rather, they often make arduous efforts to keep the information about their victimization from being known (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Rigby & Barnes, 2002). This is alarming because individuals usually do not provide support without being prompted, and ambiguous solicitation typically begets poor-quality support or even none at all (see, e.g., Barbee & Cunningham, 1995; Cutrona, Suhr, & MacFarlane, 1990). In other words, potential of the allegedly effective coping strategy (i.e., disclosure of one's bullied status in seeking support) is currently underutilized, and the key to disentangle this frustrating paradox seems to lie in the communicative dynamics underlying bullied victims' interaction with potential recipient of disclosure. The current research takes this state of affairs as an important opportunity for communication research to address a socially significant issue (Roloff, 2002). In addition, investigating a social problem that traditionally has not been examined in the field (i.e., bullied

victims' coping) may provide a precious occasion to harvest fruitful implications to expand the scope of existing theories and enrich their contents.

With this exigency in mind, the current research undertakes three empirical studies to identify how bullied victims' interpersonal relationships are associated with their coping, what factors impact this process, and to what extent communication makes a difference in victims' well-being. As interrelated parts of the current research, the three studies considerably overlap with one another in scope; nonetheless, they each focus on specific parts of the abovementioned research agendas, along with other theoretical and practical implications related to bullying.

Prior to presenting those studies and their results, however, literature on bullying is reviewed below to place the current research in perspective. First, conceptualization of bullying is presented. The traditional perspective is critiqued through this discussion on “what counts and what doesn't” as bullying to include the types and venues of bullying that have been either largely unrecognized or newly emerging (Crick, 1995; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). Based on the conceptualization thus identified, previous findings on bullying accumulated across a number of relevant fields are reviewed. This literature review is intended to clarify what is currently known and, in turn, what remains to be studied (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Smith, 2004). Capitalizing on the latter point, namely the gaps of knowledge in the current literature, overview of the three studies for the present research will be provided. Finally, a brief remark on the overarching goal of the current research is stated in terms of establishing promising lines of research programs and thereby contributing to the improvement of the welfare of those who are involved in bullying.

### *Conceptualizing “Bullying”*

The phenomenon referred to as “bullying” is conceptualized along with three key characteristics proposed by Olweus (1978) and followed by the researchers of various disciplines ever since: *aggressiveness*, *repetitiveness*, and *power imbalance between bullies and victims*. First,

bullying involves certain aggressiveness or harm-doing that is deliberately enacted by an individual or a group of individuals upon the target (Olweus, 1993). This aggression not only causes harm to the victim's mental and physical well-being but it may also impair her or his interpersonal relationships and cause problems in the social life (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999). In this sense, bullying can be regarded as a specific form of aggression (Dodge, 1991; Olweus, 1993; Rivers & Smith, 1994). At the same time, the emphasis on the intentionality of aggressive behavior helps distinguish bullying from other forms of aggression or social violence, such as harassment, which may be done without the aggressor being conscious about how her or his behavior is taken by the victim.

Second, bullying is considered “a repeated behavior . . . that occurs over time” (Espelage & Swearer, 2003, p. 368). This recurring nature helps distinguish bullying from otherwise similar constructs such as aggression, maltreatment, and violence, because an incidental infliction of violence, although potentially damaging, does not constitute bullying unless it keeps occurring. For any aggressive behavior or harm-doing to constitute bullying, it must be executed repeatedly over time upon the same victim (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Mynard & Joseph, 2000).

Finally, the bully-victim relationship is characterized by asymmetry of power; that is, victims are often unable to defend themselves effectively by their own efforts alone. Roland (1989) captures this notion of asymmetry and victim defenselessness as follows: “Bullying is a longstanding violence, physical or mental, conducted by an individual or group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself [*sic*] in the actual situation” (p. 143). In other words, even when two equally powerful individuals engage in aggressive behavior against each other, repeatedly or otherwise, it will not be considered bullying.

Note that those key characteristics of bullying do not specify the age or life stage of the involved parties, though studies on school bullying is indeed a major constituent of the bullying

literature (e.g., Olweus, 1978, 1993; Swearer & Doll, 2001). Although bullying has historically been characterized as part of adolescence or earlier life stage, recent research has revealed that bullying occurs beyond primary and middle schools. An emerging body of literature suggests that college is far from a bullying-free environment (see Chapell et al., 2004; Lento, 2006). McDougall (1999), for example, found that one out of ten college students in U.K. have experienced being bullied while they are on campus. Workplace bullying has attracted scholarly attention as a serious problem in many professional settings (for reviews, see Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006; Rayner & Höel, 1997; Salin, 2003). Those recent findings challenge some of the previous notions contending that the frequency of bullying peaks at the beginning of middle school and decreases subsequently (Olweus, 1993; Sato, 2000; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Another prominent context wherein bullying has recently become a serious concern is the cyberspace or virtual environment (Keith & Martin, 2005; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a, 2004b). Those recent developments in the bullying research call for the revision of earlier definitions of bullying, which explicitly stated “students” and “schools” as the agent/victim and context, respectively, of bullying (Olweus, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994).<sup>1</sup> Although whether bullying remains a concern throughout one’s lifespan or ceases at some life stage is to be determined, a more inclusive perspective than the traditional, school-bound conceptualization is clearly necessary to keep up with the ever-ongoing evolution of bullying phenomena (Smith, 1997).

Additionally, it should be noted that bullying is not limited to forms of physical aggression and violence. A number of scholars critique conventional views of bullying as physical aggression, arguing that those definitions overly emphasize explicit behaviors while overlooking subtler yet equally, if not more, harmful types of bullying (Crick, 1995; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Morita et al. (1999) suggest that bullying should be seen as a multidimensional construct which encapsulates not only physical forms of aggression but also verbal and relational/social forms such as spreading

negative rumors and excluding an individual from a peer circle (see also Austin & Joseph, 1996; Mynard & Joseph, 2000). Crick and associates hold through their series of studies that relational bullying constitutes a unique dimension of bullying-victimization dynamics (Crick, 1995; Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, 1996). Unfortunately, to date, “few previous studies have included relational or indirect victimization, either in their own right . . . or as part of an index of composite victimization” (Hawker & Boulton, 2000, p. 452).

In this review, the term *bullying* is used to represent a broad set of behaviors enacted repeatedly over time by an individual or a group of individuals with an intention to harm the victims’ mental and physical well-being, as well as their healthy social life, using the asymmetry of power as the scaffold for those behaviors. With this inclusive conceptual definition of bullying in mind, representative samples of bullying research from different disciplines are reviewed next.

### *Histories of the Bullying Research*

The inception of systematic research on bullying dates back to the 1970s, when Olweus (1978) launched his investigation, originally in Norway, and subsequently in other Scandinavian countries. Various programs of research have arisen ever since across the world. For example, Japanese researchers began to study the phenomenon called *ijime*, a conceptual equivalent to bullying, to address the increased social concerns for youth suicide and school violence in the early 80s (Morita, 1985; Morita & Kiyonaga, 1986). British scholars, led by Smith (1994, 1997; Smith & Madsen, 1997; Smith & Thompson, 1991), have administered a number of anti-bullying programs and been continuously monitoring their effectiveness (see Smith, 1999, for a review).

Those series of research attempts, along with numerous others, have resulted in a number of findings across a range of disciplines, each with more or less unique focus (see Table 1.1 for the correspondence between disciplines and their primary research questions). Major disciplinary



approaches reviewed below include anthropology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, evolutionary psychology, and sociology. Although this is by no means an exhaustive set and those perspectives sometimes overlap substantially, they do exhibit representative and distinctive orientations in the research enterprise tackling bullying.

### *Anthropological Approaches*

Studies on bullying and victimization that take anthropological approaches focus on the cultural aspects of bullying phenomena and individuals' interpretation of their experiences. Methodologies typically employed in those studies include interviews, participant-observations, and discourse analysis (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). For example, Hughes (2001) interviewed 16 school counselors and staff members to explore anti-bullying strategies and their perceptions of school communities with regard to the effectiveness of those strategies. Clarke, Kitzlinger, and Potter (2004) analyzed television documentaries and interviews of gay and lesbian parents in order to describe how they interpret bullying dynamics involving their children.

Some of the anthropological studies scrutinize the symbols used by individuals involved in bullying/victimization (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006; Voroney, 2005). For example, Tracy et al. explored metaphors used by victims of workplace bullying to portray their experiences through in-depth interviews and focus-groups. Through these approaches, anthropologically oriented studies on bullying pursue research questions such as "What does bullying feel like?" (Tracy et al., 2006, p. 24) and "What are the characteristics of community/school/organizational cultures where bullying takes place?" (e.g., Voroney, 2005).

### *Cognitive Psychology Approaches*

Cognitive psychology conceptualizes bullying as a behavioral manifestation of one's cognitive functioning. There are two general approaches from cognitive-psychology perspectives to bullying: (a) attempts to identify psychological factors associated with bullying as predictors

and/or outcomes, and (b) studies that propose and test models of cognitive mechanisms undergirding bullying. Research representing the former attempt has identified a number of psychological constructs as antecedents to bullying. Such predictor variables include anger (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Huesmann, 1994), empathy (Borg, 1998; Menesini et al., 1997), Machiavellianism or one's tendency to regard others as manipulable objects (Andreou, 2000), among others (see Espelage & Swearer, 2003, for a review). For example, Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler (1994) found that bullies tend to have low empathy; they believe victims of bullying are in part to blame for their victimization and that bullying serves to "toughen" weak individuals (see also Rigby, 1997; Yamada, 1993). Similarly, one's risk to be victimized has been associated with anxiety (Craig, 1998; Slee, 1994), external locus of control (Andreou, 2000), and introversion/shyness (Jantzer, Hoover, & Narloch, 2006; Olweus, 1993; Schwartz, McFadyen, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1999) along with a score of other interrelated variables (see Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Olweus, 1993).

Additionally, a number of mental outcomes of bullying have been identified. In particular, victimization has been shown to result in depression (Callagan & Joseph, 1995; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998), loneliness (Boivin & Hymel, 1997; Crick & Grotpeter, 1996), low self-esteem (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Mynard & Joseph, 1997), and suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; MacLead & Morris, 1996; Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002), among others (see Hawker & Boulton, 2000, for a meta-analytic review). Given the nature of the phenomenon, those findings on dire outcomes of victimization should not be too surprising. What *is* interesting is that the worst outcomes are not found among those who are one-sidedly victimized. In fact, individuals at the highest risk in terms of mental well-being are those who have engaged in bullying and also been victimized (i.e., bully-victims). Bully-victims typically report lower self-esteem than only-bullies

or only-victims, who, in turn, have suboptimal well-being levels in comparison with those who are not involved in bullying (O'Moore, 1995; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001).

Another major subdomain in cognitive psychology research aims to determine the cognitive mechanisms that account for bullying dynamics. Early research contended that bullying is a behavioral manifestation of impairment in one's social problem-solving skill (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge & Coie, 1987). This model posited that individuals engaging in bullying have difficulties in both encoding and decoding information such that they are neither able to express their needs in socially competent manner nor understand others' mental state (Dodge, 1991). Recently, however, some scholars have questioned this "social skills deficit" model, arguing that bullying involves highly manipulative and skillful behaviors such as lying, rumor-spreading, and controlling group dynamics to socially exclude the target. To effectively execute these behaviors, bullies actually must possess highly sophisticated social skills, understand exactly how their victims feel, and have the capability to manipulate the group dynamics of their peer network (Sutton & Smith, 1999; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). Sutton et al. argue that bullies have a sound "theory of mind" and use such understandings to identify the safe target, who is particularly vulnerable and unlikely to receive support from surrounding peers (see also Garbarino & DeLara, 2002; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996).

#### *Developmental Psychology Approaches*

Similar to cognitive psychologists, developmental psychologists view bullying as reflection of individuals' mental functioning; those researchers, however, see it more closely tied to one's upbringing process and developmental stages. Naturally, research based on this perspective examines how bullying is associated with one's developmental dynamics and, particularly, connection of bullying with factors that are specifically relevant to a given developmental stage (e.g., childhood or young adolescence). One line of research in this area aims

to determine family processes and parenting practices that induce or reduce the risk of bullying and/or victimization (e.g., Dishion, French, & Patterson, 1995; Schwartz et al., 1999). Berdondini and Smith (1996), for example, found that children who bully others are often from families characterized by strong authoritarianism and power hierarchy, whereas victims' parents, particularly mothers, tend to be overprotective (see also Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; Olweus, 1993). Duncan (1999) has shown that being abused by one's parents during childhood increases the risk of victimization by bullying. Generally, research indicates that suboptimal family functioning leads to an elevated risk of bullying and victimization (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Zelli, & Huesmann, 1996). In view of these findings, Smith (1997) proposed a lifespan perspective on bullying research and points out the contingency of one's bullying/victimization risk on her or his early school experiences (see also Farrington, 1991). Using this framework, Smith, Singer, Hoel, and Cooper (2003) revealed that individuals who have experienced both bullying and victimization in school are at the highest risk of victimization by workplace bullying.

Another stream of developmental-psychology-based research focuses on a particular developmental stage and examines how bullying/victimization spawns within that context (Borg, 1998; McDougall, 1999; Olweus, 1978, 1993; Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie, 1993). Most of those studies focus on early adolescence as the most risky phase of life for individuals to get involved in bullying (Kupermine, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997; Long & Pellegrini, 2003; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999). Pellegrini (2002) posits that, upon transition between schools (e.g., from primary to middle school), students try to renegotiate their within-group relationships and establish the social hierarchy that puts them in a superior position over their peers; in this restructuring process, bullying is argued to provide a tool to pursue one's dominant status. Pellegrini and Long further this argument based on their finding that boys are far more likely than girls to engage in physical aggression and bullying in transition periods. Those

authors maintain that males bully other male peers to demonstrate their dominant status in the reestablished hierarchy and thereby to appeal to their opposite-sex counterparts. This line of argument on the association between needs for dominance and bullying has a lot in common with those incorporated in evolutionary psychology research, which is discussed next.

### *Evolutionary Psychology Approaches*

Evolutionary psychology (Buss, 1995; Kenrick, Li, & Butner, 2003; see Barrett, Dunbar, & Lycett, 2001, for a review) provides an alternative perspective to the social-learning paradigm which undergirds most of the studies noted above. From this perspective, the “fit value” of bullying becomes of interest. That is, attention is given to questions such as “What evolutionary benefit, if any, does bullying provide?” Particularly, the “evolutionary benefits” discussed in the literature in relation to bullying refer to the increase in one’s reproductive success (Buss, 1995). As such, this Neo-Darwinian perspective provides a function-based account for why individuals bully others. Bullying behaviors can be considered adaptive to the extent that they enhance one’s popularity, particularly that from the opposite-sex parties. Indeed, Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, and van Acker (2000) found that peer-nominated bullies tend to be regarded as “coolest” in class. In a similar vein, Connolly, Pepler, Craig, and Taradash (2000) found that adolescent bullies are more likely, whereas victims are particularly less likely, to have romantic partners than their peers who are uninvolved in bullying. Interestingly, aggressive boys seem to be perceived as popular and attractive disproportionately more by girls than by their male peers (e.g., Bukowski, Sippola, & Newcomb, 2000). Note that this asymmetry of perceived popularity hinged upon gender is consistent with the evolutionary psychology hypothesis that boys engage in bullying so as to attract the opposite-sex and enhance their reproductive success (Pellegrini & Long, 2002).

Those findings provide support to evolutionary psychology’s hypothesis that bullying is an adaptive behavior that has a high “fit value,” and therefore, it has been incorporated into human

behavioral repertoire. Further, research has consistently shown that victims of bullying are perceived as least popular and attractive by their peers of both same- and opposite-sex (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Connolly et al., 2000; Rodkin et al., 2000). Bukowski et al. (2000) integrate the evolutionary psychology perspective with that of developmental psychology and posit that adolescents are in need to establish mental separation from their parents and such needs, in turn, drive them to be attracted to peers who exhibit characteristics of independence (e.g., delinquency and disobedience) while discouraging them to befriend with those who show characteristics associated with dependence (e.g., compliance and obedience). Along with this model, Hawley (1999) argues that, by engaging in bullying, individuals establish their dominant status to enhance their popularity and, simultaneously, to reduce others' (i.e., victims') perceived attractiveness to gain a relatively superior position. Although no study has yet demonstrated whether and to what extent bullying and/or victimization in fact enhances or impinges one's reproductive success over the lifetime, it is safe to state that the evolutionary psychology has proved to be an important alternative vantage point to examine bullying phenomena.

### *Sociological Approaches*

Finally, sociologically oriented studies form a major part of the existing literature on bullying. In this body of research, bullying is deemed as a problem that arises as a result of friction between various social classes. More specifically, those studies aim to identify the social group categories (e.g., age group, gender, and ethnicity) and social infrastructure (e.g., classroom or school size, community/organizational climate, etc.) that are related to bullying. Determining the consequences of bullying and/or victimization in terms of social adjustment (e.g., academic achievement, delinquency, and substance use) is another important agenda for those studies. Methodologically, sociology-based research on bullying typically undertakes a large-scale quantitative survey, which sometimes transcends national borders (e.g., Nansel et al., 2001, 2004).

Those international studies have accumulated a convincing set of evidence that, although the reported prevalence of bullying varies from country to country, the existence of bullying per se as well as its consequence (e.g., damage to victims' mental well-being) seem ubiquitous and consistent in most human societies (Borg, 1999; Genta, Menesini, Fonzi, & Costabile, 1996; Junger-Tas & van Kesteren, 1999; Olweus, 1991; Wolke, Woods, Stanford, & Schultz, 2001).

What seems noteworthy in relation to this ubiquitous nature of bullying is that, although apparently counterintuitive at a glance, most of the social group variables examined in previous studies have turned out to be only marginally, if at all, relevant to bullying (Olweus, 1993). For example, findings on the relationship between race/ethnicity and bullying are mixed at best. In their national survey, Nansel et al. (2001) found that Hispanic youths engaged in bullying more than White or African American counterparts, and African American youths reported being bullied more than Whites or Hispanics. Nonetheless, the magnitude of between-group differences was quite small for both findings. Graham and Juvonen (2002) found that African Americans were more likely to be regarded by their peers as aggressive than Latina/o and multiethnic counterparts in urban middle schools, but this ethnicity-based difference was not supported by the self-report data; that is, children of any ethnicity were as likely to report having bullied others as African Americans. Moran, Smith, Thompson, and Whitney (1993) found little differences between Asian and White children aged 9-15 years in terms of their bullying and victimization experiences. Of note here, however, is that 50% of the Asian victims reported (compared to none in the White counterparts) being called names because of their skin color.

Similarly, the association between bullying and gender has turned out to be more complex than it used to be thought. In early studies, boys were alleged to engage in bullying more than girls (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Olweus, 1993). However, recent research has uncovered that females are no less prone to engage in bullying than are males. Crick and colleagues' studies indicate that

relational bullying is more prevalent among girls, whereas boys typically engage in more physical aggression and overt forms of verbal bullying (Crick, 1995; Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, 1996). On this front, it should be pointed out that some of the early studies only focused on boys and excluded girls from the sample (e.g., Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Schwartz et al., 1993; see Crick & Rose, 2001, for a review). Further, Morita et al. (1999) point out the moderating role played by culture. Although bullying has been traditionally considered prevalent among boys by European and North American researchers, Morita and colleagues suggest that exactly the opposite has been the normative view in Japan: “The word ‘ijime’ [i.e., bullying] is mostly used for ‘feminine’ attitudes and actions but it is not used for masculinity . . . Girls’ *ijime* in Japan is more frequent than girls’ bullying in other countries” (p. 321; see also Smith et al., 1999, for a review). Finally, with regard to the risk of victimization by bullying, research consistently shows that there are no gender differences; that is, males are as likely to be bullied and damaged thereupon as females (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Fekkes et al., 2005; Nansel et al., 2004).

With regard to the outcomes that are typically examined in the sociology-oriented research, bullying and victimization are found to result in serious social consequences. Research shows that victimization leads to a series of mental health problems, including lowered levels of perceived social acceptance (Andreou, 2000) and impaired sense of interpersonal trust in later life stages (Jantzer et al., 2006), as well as a variety of antisocial behaviors such as alcohol abuse, persistent theft, and burglary (Browne & Falshaw, 1996). Victimization is also found to raise risk of school maladjustment (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1995a, 1995b). In the workplace setting, victimization is associated with low retention rate and low job satisfaction (e.g., Crabb, 1995; Crawford, 1997). A national survey in Canada revealed that workplace with prevailing bullying problems must bear low productivity, increased absenteeism, and high staff turnover rate



(Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2005). Further, bullying adversely affects not only victims but bullies as well. Individuals who have the experience of bullying others are more likely than non-bullies to engage in violent behaviors, vandalism, theft, and other criminal activities later in life (Browne & Falshaw, 1996; Lane, 1989). Bully students generally show lower academic achievement at primary and middle schools (e.g., Olweus, 1993), as well as at college level (Chapell et al., 2004), than bystanders.

*Victims' Coping: Disclosure as a Hopeful yet Underutilized Strategy*

Finally, a recently emerging research on bullied victims' coping needs to be noted. Although this body of research is highly interdisciplinary and no concrete conceptualization or research agenda are yet to be formed among scholars, evidence accumulated over the past few years appear to point to a promising venue of research. At the same time, most previous studies in this area focus on the outcome of various coping strategies and there is still an unexplored frontier—namely, the interpersonal dynamics undergirding behind victims' coping process; this frontier provides the main context of the current research. Nonetheless, prior to explicating the limitation of previous studies, both on coping specifically and bullying more generally, some of the notable findings from the studies on bullied victims' coping are reviewed below.

To deal with the severe harm induced by bullying, victims undertake a variety of coping strategies. Research suggests that some strategies such as direct confrontation are less effective, whereas disclosing one's being bullied provides an effective coping strategy. In Kochenderfer and Ladd's (1997) study, for example, victims who shared their crisis with family or best friends and sought support showed better post-bullying adjustment than those who directly confronted (e.g., fought back) or ignored bullies (see also Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Hunter and colleagues found that victims who had divulged their bullied status in seeking support not only had

an improved level of mental health but also were more likely to escape from the victimhood than those who remained undisclosed (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Hunter, Merchan, & Ortega, 2004).

Not all, or even many, victims take this promising option, however; rather, they typically try not to let others know their crisis and, as a consequence, those who are relatively close to victims may not notice what they are undergoing (Fekkes et al., 2005). In fact, the study reported in Chapter 2 found that children often have experienced more bullying than their parents suspect. This is disconcerting because, as noted earlier, individuals usually do not offer support unless they feel their interactional partner is in need of help (Cutrona et al., 1990). In other words, it is unlikely that victims entertain effective coping resource if they do not disclose; but, at the same time, disclosing one's bullied status seems to be particularly difficult (Fekkes et al., 2005). This paradox provides the current research with the exigency, which is further clarified below through a discussion on the limitations of the existing literature on bullying.

#### *Limitations of the Existing Bullying Research*

Established histories of the bullying research just reviewed and the vast corpus of literature thus accumulated notwithstanding, there are several important limitations to be noted. First, most previous studies focus on describing bullying from sociological or psychiatric perspectives, but communicative aspects of bullying, particularly those concerning victims' coping process, have received disproportionately little attention. Such paucity of understanding in an apparently important process in bullying dynamics is in fact surprising, considering that previous psychology- or sociology-oriented studies have rendered available a great deal of detailed knowledge, such as where bullying is likely to occur (classroom, school hallway, and play ground, as well as online cyber space recently; see, e.g., Schwartz et al., 1993), who are at risk to be bullies and/or victims (e.g., Espelage et al., 2000; Schwartz et al., 1999),<sup>2</sup> or whether bullying harms its victims'

mental/social health and to what extent (it does severely and unswervingly; e.g., Hawker & Boulton, 2000) (for reviews, see Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Hawker and Boulton (2000) and Smith (2004) note that, although undoubtedly valuable and worth continued refinement, the existing body of knowledge does not necessarily allow researchers and practitioners to answer some tantalizing questions they encounter in dealing with bullying and, particularly, helping those who are bullied; such questions include how victims cope with bullying, why certain coping strategies work better than others, what role victims' surroundings (e.g., family) play in moderating the impact of bullying, and, ultimately, what factors underlie these complex coping processes. The current research takes a theory-based approach to some of those questions from a communication-centered perspective.

Second, research on bullying has long limited its scope to the bully-victim dyad and, consequently, the influence of the larger social network has yet to be clarified (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Smith, 2004). Studies suggest that the "interaction" between bullies and victims is actually a part of larger dynamics that determine the consequence of given bullying incidence (e.g., Berdondini & Smith, 1996; Smith & Myrono-Wilson, 1998). Nonetheless, those studies treated relational characteristics as contextual/environmental factors associated with the risk of bullying (e.g., whether children of low-SES families are likely to be bullied) or the coping outcome (e.g., whether the frequency of interaction with family or best friend is related to victims' post-bullying adjustment). For example, Berdondini and Smith found that parents' dispositional style is related to victimization by bullying such that having authoritarian parents increases a child's risk of falling victim. Valuable as they are, these findings explain little about what it is about interpersonal relationships surrounding bullied victims that help or hinder their coping with the crisis. In an effort to address this limitation, the current research highlights a relationship between bullied victims and their surroundings, including their family members and the confidants

to whom victims disclose about their bullied situation, and explores how those relationships and the interactional transactions therein operate in bullied victims' coping process.

Third, whereas the enterprise of bullying research per se has been international in its orientation, the underpinnings of the observed similarities and differences across nations have been little theorized in terms of culture-based constructs (see Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006, for an exception). On one hand, the existing literature documents well the relative frequency of certain types of bullying and their consequences across nations (e.g., Eslea et al., 2004; Nansel et al., 2004). On the other hand, whether and how bullied victims' coping processes differ across cultures is less well known, partly because the subject of coping has just caught bullying researchers' attention only recently (Hunter et al., 2004; Kanetsuna et al., 2006). To address this limitation, research is needed to examine whether and how different supportive behaviors operate in terms of victims' appraisal and subsequent coping.

#### *Structure and Goals of the Current Research*

To address these limitations, the current research undertakes three studies, each focusing on distinct and yet related aspects of victims' coping process. Namely, Study 1 puts its focal point on the communicative dispositions of bullied individuals' family members, particularly victims and their parents, and examines how the patterns of such family-level orientation will be associated with victims' post-bullying adjustment; as a mediator of this association, Study 1 explores the discrepancy, if any, between victims' actual experience of bullying and their parents' perceptions about the extent to which their children might have been bullied. Study 2 builds on this initial study by featuring child-father-mother triad as the unit of analysis, but it also extends the findings obtained in Study 1 by exploring the generative mechanisms that give rise to the child-parent discrepancy on bullying. Specifically, this study highlights victims' perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and its associations with their family's communicative orientation, as

well as the victims' likely disclosure/non-disclosure patterns; additionally, the impact of victims' disclosure (or lack thereof) on their subjective well-being is explored. Finally, Study 3 takes a somewhat different approach to explore bullied victims' coping process by examining Japan-U.S. cross-cultural data on the social support victims receive upon their disclosure and how this received support is related to victims' post-bullying adjustment. As such, this study attempts to explore the working mechanisms that account for the positive effects of bullied victims' disclosure in seeking support (e.g., Hunter et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2004).

Together, these studies are tied by an attempt to identify ways victims cope with the challenges posed by bullying and effective strategies to support them. This approach somewhat contrasts with that which is taken by a number of existing bullying studies, which strive to find ways to predict the inception and consequences of bullying and thereby prevent its occurrence (Smith, 2004). Although such attempts are without doubt important and therefore should be pursued with continued enthusiasm, it should be noted that they leave suffering of those who are currently victimized unaddressed. That is, research on predicting and preventing bullying may not necessarily help alleviate the agony experienced by victims (e.g., knowing that victimization is positively associated with one's lack of physical strength will explain why certain children are bullied, but such knowledge per se does not help them escape their victimized status).

Particularly, the studies conducted for the current research focus on the antecedents and outcomes of bullied individuals' coping process through sharing of the information on bullying with their surroundings. Letting others know about bullying recently has attracted attention both from practitioners and researchers as an important step for victims' coping (e.g., Hunter et al., 2004; Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey, 2001; Smith et al., 2004). Although heroic victims overcoming the torment of bullying with splendid determination and inner strength abound in non-scientific literature (e.g., Knapp, 2006) and other popular media (e.g., Fuji Television, 2007), research

suggests that those depictions may be misleading, if not pied-piper dangerous. Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner's (2002) study, for example, shows that direct confrontation might exacerbate the situation, whereas behaviors such as disclosing about one's bullied status and seeking social support often bring a positive outcome (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Smith et al., 2004).

This hopeful measure of self-disclosure and support-seeking is, however, not as widely utilized by bullied victims as would be expected in the light of its empirically demonstrated effectiveness; many victims engage in less effective strategies such as fighting back or swallowing the harm (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Salmivalli, Karhunen, & Lagerspetz, 1996). In view of this dilemma, the current research aims to (a) establish the effectiveness of victims' information-sharing in terms of their coping, (b) explore the motivational factors underlying victims' self-disclosure of their bullied status to a third party, and (c) examine cross-cultural differences and similarities in these processes. These goals will be featured in Studies 1 through 3, respectively. More details on these studies are elaborated in turn below.

Study 1 aims to establish the validity of the approach that goes beyond the bully-victim dichotomy (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Smith, 2004). This study highlights the child-father-mother triad as the unit of analysis and examines the correlates of the discrepancy between parents' perceptions about bullying and their children's actual experience of bullying. Research suggests that parents typically are unaware of the prevalence of bullying and, consequently, they often fail to notice when their children are being bullied (Fekkes et al., 2005; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). Little research exists, however, on whether such child-parent discrepancies indeed constitute a risk factor. Study 1 thus examines the linkage of those discrepancies with victims' subjective well-being while controlling for the impact of the degree of bullying they have experienced. If this association is found to be of an appreciable magnitude, it demonstrates that family communication makes a difference such that even victims with the same

degree of victimization experience would vary in their post-bullying adjustment depending on how accurately their families understand their crisis.

In addition, as an initial step to theorize the way in which families are involved in bullied victims' coping process, Study 1 explores family members' (including victims') beliefs in the "ideal" ways, or *standards*, of communication (Caughlin, 2003). The child-father-mother triads are classified in terms of their profile of those standard endorsement patterns, which, in turn, will be used to predict child-parent discrepancy on bullying. This evidence-based approach, if established, will help identify at-risk victims based on their family's communicative orientation.

In Study 2, the underlying motivational mechanism of victims' disclosure behavior is scrutinized. Given the dilemma that disclosure is an effective and yet underutilized coping strategy, a study is needed to explore the underlying factor of bullied victims' disclosure behavior. With this rationale in mind, Study 2 draws on Bandura's (1997, 2001) social cognitive theory and highlights the construct of self-efficacy. Victimization by bullying is a strongly stigmatizing experience, and therefore, victims often fear that letting others know the fact of their being bullied might bring negative consequences (Rigby & Barnes, 2002). Naturally, efficacy provides an important prerequisite; that is, victims would not disclose unless they feel capable of talking about bullying and doing so would result in positive outcomes such as the release of their stress and possibly amelioration or even termination of the crisis. To further pursue this idea, Study 2 examines multiple interrelated notions of efficacy (coping, communication, and target efficacies) and explores which factor is more influential in terms of victims' disclosure behavior. Similar to Study 1, child-father-mother triads will be classified into several profiles based on their family communication standard (FCS; Caughlin, 2003). This "FCS profile" will then be used to predict victims' efficacy perceptions, which are, in turn, examined in terms of their associations with victims' disclosure behavior.

Finally, Study 3 hypothesizes a meditational model of supportive communication that is instigated upon victims' disclosure with a twist of cross-cultural perspective. As noted earlier, although the existing bullying literature is not without international hues (Smith et al., 1999), exploration of the factors operating behind cross-cultural differences and similarities is still scarce. As a valuable exception, Kanetsuna et al. (2006) found some culturally specific patterns through their investigation in England and Japan. Those researchers referred to Hofstede's (2001, 2005) notion of individualism-collectivism to account for the observed differences in pupils' attitudes toward bullying. Drawing on their findings, Study 3 compares data collected from two nation states that traditionally have been treated as prime examples of collectivistic and individualistic cultures, namely Japan and the U.S., respectively (Gudykunst, 2003).

On this point, however, recent critiques on the dichotomy of "collectivistic East versus individualistic West" should be noted; scholars such as Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier (2002) and Levine et al. (2003) pointed out that, actually, samples from some of the cultures typically considered collectivistic had not shown significantly stronger collectivism than their allegedly individualistic counterparts. With such critiques in mind, the current study attempts to explore whether and how supportive communication for bullied victims would differ between Japan and the U.S., instead of specifying certain theoretical constructs such as individualism-collectivism (Hofstede, 2005) or self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and testing their effects. This exploratory approach is argued to be justified in light of the existing literature on supportive communication as well. Cross-cultural findings on social support and its outcome are rather mixed and further describing of the phenomenon is necessary prior to more specific, pinpoint theorizing (Mortenson, Liu, Burleson, & Liu, 2006; Xu & Burleson, 2001).

Based on the rationale just articulated, Study 3 explores how different support strategies are associated with victims' perceptions and later adjustment. Research indicates that certain



supportive behaviors such as emotional support are pan-culturally effective, though the existing evidence is not sufficiently conclusive (e.g., Mortenson et al., 2006). Thus, one of the purposes of Study 3 is to replicate the previous findings on the differences in effectiveness across various support behaviors with regard to bullied victims' perceptions. Additionally, to gain a toehold in theorizing about victimized individuals' coping process and the role of their surroundings' communication therein, how victims appraise enacted social support will be examined in terms of their subsequent adjustment and motivation for active coping through disclosure.

### *Conclusion*

Despite the vast and interdisciplinary corpus of research, bullying still remains to be explored. Particularly, the current research finds the issue of bullied victims' coping process as both challenging and promising. Insights from a communication-centered perspective is expected to shed light on the complexities revolving around the interaction between victims and their surrounding parties as they cope with the predicament posed by bullying. To this end, three empirical studies will be conducted that each explores specific aspects of bullied victims' coping process with emphasis on communication and interpersonal relationship dynamics.

Finally, it should be reminded that the current research is an initial step of a new research program and its three studies are designed to plant seeds of potential lines of research on bullying. Those three studies are regarded as the "root species" of sort that lays some basis for new ideas and theoretical thoughts to branch out upon. The perspective centering on communication and the process of victims' coping is relatively unacquainted within the bullying literature (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Smith, 2004). It is hoped that this new perspective will shed light on some unexplored aspects of the bullying phenomena and thereby prove useful to help those who find themselves or their beloved ones in a state of longstanding suffering called bullying.

## References

- Andreou, E. (2000). Bully/victim problems and their association with psychological constructs in 8- to 12-year-old Greek schoolchildren. *Aggressive Behavior, 26*, 49-56.
- Austin, S., & Joseph, S. (1996). Assessment of bully/victim problems in 8- to 11-year-olds. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 66*, 447-456.
- Baldry, A. C., & Farrington, D. P. (2000). Types of bullying among Italian school children. *Journal of Adolescence, 22*, 423-426.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 1-26.
- Barbee, A. P., & Cunningham, M. R. (1995). An experimental approach to social support communications: Interactive coping in close relationships. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 18* (pp. 381-413). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Barrett, L., Dunbar, R., & Lycett, J. (2001). *Human evolutionary psychology*. London: Macmillan.
- Berdondini, L., & Smith, P. K. (1996). Cohesion and power in the families of children involved in bully/victim problems at school: An Italian replication. *Journal of Family Therapy, 18*, 99-102.
- Boivin, M., & Hymel, S. (1997). Peer experiences and social self-perceptions: A sequential model. *Psychology, 33*, 135-145.
- Bond, L., Carlin, J. B., Thomas, L., Rubin, K., & Patton, G. (2001). Does bullying cause emotional problems? A prospective study of young teenagers. *British Medical Journal, 323*, 480-484.
- Borg, M. G. (1998). The emotional tractions of school bullies and their victims. *Educational Psychology, 18*, 433-443.

Borg, M. G. (1999). The extent and nature of bullying among primary middle school children.

*Educational Research, 41*, 137-153.

Bosworth, K., Espelage, D. L., & Simon, T. (1999). Factors associated with bullying behavior in

middle school students. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 19*, 341-362.

Boulton, M. J., & Smith, P. K. (1994). Bullying/victim problems in middle-school children:

Stability, self-perceived competence, peer perceptions, and peer acceptance. *British*

*Journal of Developmental Psychology, 12*, 315-329.

Bowers, L., Smith, P. K., & Binney, V. (1994). Perceived family relationships of bullies, victims,

and bully/victims in middle childhood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 11*,

215-232.

Browne, K., & Falshaw, L. (1996). Factors related to bullying in secure accommodation. *Child*

*Abuse Review, 5*, 123-127.

Bukowski, W. M., Sippola, L. K., & Newcomb, A. F. (2000). Variations in patterns of attraction to

same- and other-sex peers during early adolescence. *Developmental Psychology, 36*, 147-

154.

Buss, D. M. (1995). Evolutionary psychology: A new paradigm for psychological science.

*Psychological Inquiry, 6*, 1-30.

Callagan, S., & Joseph, S. (1995). Self-concept and peer victimization among schoolchildren.

*Personality & Individual Differences, 18*, 161-163.

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. (2005). *OSH Answers: Health*

*promotion/wellness/psychosocial, bullying in the workplace*. Retrieved March 28, 2007

from <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html>

- Caughlin, J. P. (2003). Family communication standards: What counts as excellent family communication and how are such standards associated with family satisfaction? *Human Communication Research, 29*, 5-40.
- Chapell, M., Casey, D., De la Cruz, C., Ferrell, J., Forman, J., Kipkin, R., et al. (2004). Bullying in college by students and teachers. *Adolescence, 153*, 53-64.
- Clarke, V., Kitzlinger, C., & Potter, J. (2004). 'Kids are just cruel anyway': Lesbian and gay parents' talk about homophobic bullying. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 43*, 531-550.
- Coie, J. D., & Dodge, K. A. (1998). Aggression and antisocial behavior. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology, Vol. 3* (pp. 779-862). New York: Wiley.
- Connolly, J., Pepler, D., Craig, W., & Taradash, A. (2000). Dating experiences of bullies in early adolescence. *Child Maltreatment, 5*, 299-310.
- Crabb, S. (1995). Bullying: The brutal truths. *People Management, 27*, 25-27.
- Craig, W. M. (1998). The relationship among bullying, victimization, depression, anxiety, and aggression in elementary school children. *Personality and Individual Differences, 24*, 123-130.
- Crawford, N. (1997). Bullying at work: A psychoanalytic perspective. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 7*, 219-225.
- Crick, N. R. (1995). Relational aggression: The role of intent attributions, feelings of distress, and provocation type. *Development and Psychopathology, 7*, 313-322.
- Crick, N. R., Casas, J. F., & Ku, H. C. (1999). Relational and physical forms of peer victimization in preschool. *Developmental Psychology, 35*, 376-385.
- Crick, N. R., Casas, J. F., & Mosher, M. (1997). Relational and overt aggression in preschool. *Developmental Psychology, 33*, 579-588.

- Crick, N. R., & Dodge, K. A. (1994). A review and reformulation of social information-processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, 115*, 74-101.
- Crick, N. R., & Grotpeter, J. K. (1995). Relational aggression, gender, and social-psychological adjustment. *Child Development, 66*, 710-722.
- Crick, N. R., & Grotpeter, J. K. (1996). Children's treatment by peers: Victims of relational and overt aggression. *Development & Psychopathology, 8*, 367-380.
- Crick, N. R., & Rose, A. J. (2001). Toward a gender-balanced approach to the study of social-emotional development: A look at relational aggression. In P. H. Miller & E. K. Scholnick (Eds.), *Toward a feminist developmental psychology* (pp. 153-168). New York: Routledge.
- Cutrona, C. E., Suhr, J. A., & MacFarlane, R. (1990). Interpersonal transactions and the psychological sense of support. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Personal Relationships and social support* (pp. 30-45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dishion, T. J., French, D. C., & Patterson, G. R. (1995). The development and ecology of antisocial behavior. In D. Cicchetti & D. J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology, Vol. 2: Risk, disorder, and adaptation* (pp. 421-471). New York: Wiley.
- Dodge, K. A. (1991). The structure and function of reactive and proactive aggression. In D. J. Pepler & K. H. Rubin (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression* (pp. 201-216). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Dodge, K. A., & Coie, J. D. (1987). Social information processing factors in reactive and proactive aggression in children's peer groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*, 1146-1158.
- Duncan, R. D. (1999). Maltreatment by parents and peers: The relationship between child abuse, bully victimization, and psychological distress. *Child Maltreatment, 4*, 45-55.

- Eslea, M., Menesini, E., Morita, Y., O'Moore, M., Mora-Merchán, J. A., Pereira, B., Smith, P. K., & Wenxin, Z. (2004). Friendship and loneliness among bullies and victims: Data from seven countries. *Aggressive Behavior, 30*, 71-83.
- Espelage, D. L., Bosworth, K., & Simon, T. (2000). Examining the social context of bullying behaviors in early adolescence. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 78*, 326-333.
- Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? *School Psychology Review, 32*, 365-383.
- Farrington, D. P. (1991). Childhood aggression and adult violence: Early precursors and later-life outcomes. In D. J. Pepler & K. H. Rubin (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression* (pp. 5-29). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Fekkes, M., Pijpers, F. I. M., & Verloove-Vanhorick, S. P. (2005). Bullying: Who does what, when and where? Involvement of children, teachers and parents in bullying behavior. *Health Education Research, 20*, 81-91.
- Fuji Television (2007). *Life* [Television series]. Tokyo: Fuji Television Network.
- Garbarino, J., & DeLara, E. (2002). *And words can hurt forever: How to protect adolescents from bullying, harassment, and emotional violence*. New York: Free Press.
- Genta, M. L., Menesini, E., Fonzi, A., & Costabile, A. (1996). Bullies and victims in schools in central and southern Italy. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 11*, 97-110.
- Gorman-Smith, D., Tolan, P. H., Zelli, A., & Huesmann, L. R. (1996). The relation of family functioning to violence among inner-city minority youths. *Journal of Family Psychology, 10*, 115-129.
- Graham, S., & Juvonen, J. (2002). Ethnicity, peer harassment, and adjustment in middle school: An exploratory study. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 22*, 173-199.

- Gudykunst, W. B. (2003). Issues in cross-cultural communication research. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and intercultural communication* (pp. 149-161). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hawker, D. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 41*, 441-455.
- Hawkins, D. L., Pepler, D. J., & Craig, W. M. (2001). Naturalistic observations of peer interventions in bullying. *Social Development, 10*, 512-527.
- Hawley, P. H. (1999). The ontogenesis of social dominance: A strategy-based evolutionary perspective. *Developmental Review, 19*, 97-132.
- Hodson, R., Roscigno, V. J., & Lopez, S. H. (2006). Chaos and the abuse of power: Workplace bullying in organizational and interactional context. *Work & Occupations, 33*, 382-416.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (2005). *Culture and organizations: Software of the mind* (2nd. ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Huesmann, L. R. (Ed.). (1994). *Aggressive behavior: Current perspectives*. New York: Plenum.
- Hughes, G. (2001). Examples of good practice when dealing with bullying in a further/higher education college. *Pastoral Care in Education, 19*, 10-13.
- Hunter, S. C., & Borg, M. G. (2006). The influence of emotional reaction on help seeking by victims of school bullying. *Educational Psychology, 26*, 813-826.
- Hunter, S. C., Merchan, J. M., & Ortega, R. (2004). The long-term effects of coping strategy use in victims of bullying. *Spanish Journal of Psychology, 7*, 3-12.

- Jantzer, A. M., Hoover, J. H., & Narloch, R. (2006). The relationship between school-aged bullying and trust, shyness and quality of friendship in young adulthood: A preliminary research note. *School Psychology International, 27*, 146-156.
- Junger-Tas, J., & van Kesteren, J. N. (1999). *Bullying and delinquency in a Dutch school population*. Hague, the Netherlands: Kugler.
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Rimpela, M., Marttunen, M., Rimpela, A., & Rantanen, P. (1999). Bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation in Finnish adolescents: School survey. *British medical Journal, 319*, 348-351.
- Kanetsuna, T., Smith, P. K., & Morita, Y. (2006). Coping with bullying at school: Children's recommended strategies and attitudes to school-based interventions in England and Japan. *Aggressive Behavior, 32*, 570-580.
- Keith, S., & Martin, M. E. (2005). Cyber-bullying: Creating a culture of respect in a cyber world. *Reclaiming Children & Youth, 13*, 224-228.
- Kenrick, D. T., Li, N. P., & Butner, J. (2003). Dynamical evolutionary psychology: Individual decision rules and emergent social norms. *Psychological Review, 110*, 3-28.
- Knapp, J. R. (2006). *Bobby's story*. Chicago: Thornton Publishing.
- Kochenderfer, B. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). Victimized children's responses to peers' aggression: Behaviors associated with reduced versus continued victimization. *Development and Psychopathology, 9*, 59-73.
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., & Skinner, K. (2002). Children's coping strategies: Moderators of the effects of peer victimization? *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 267-278.
- Kupermine, G. P., Leadbeater, B. J., Emmons, C., & Blatt, S. J. (1997). Perceived school climate and difficulties in the social adjustment of middle school students. *Applied Developmental Science, 1*, 76-88.



- Lane, D. A. (1989). Violent histories: Bullying and criminality. In D. P. Tattum & D. A. Lane (Eds.), *Bullying in schools* (pp. 95-105). London: Trentham
- Lento, J. (2006). Relational and physical victimization by peers and romantic partners in college students. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 23*, 331-348.
- Levine, T. R., Bresnahan, M. J., Park, H. S., Lapinski, M. K., Wittenbaum, G. M., Shearman, S. M., et al. (2003). Self-construal scales lack validity. *Human Communication Research, 29*, 210-252.
- Loeber, R., & Dishion, T. (1983). Early predictors of male delinquency: A review. *Psychological Bulletin, 94*, 68-99.
- Long, J. D., & Pellegrini, A. D. (2003). Studying change in dominance and bullying with linear mixed models. *School Psychology Review, 32*, 401-417.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2006). Take this job and ...: Quitting and other forms of resistance to workplace bullying. *Communication Monographs, 73*, 406-433.
- MacLead, M., & Morris, M. (1996). *Why me? Children talk to ChildLine about bullying*. London: ChildLine.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*, 224-253.
- McDougall, L. (1999). A study of bullying in further education. *Pastoral Care in Education, 17*, 31-37.
- Menesini, E., Eslea, M., Smith, P. K., Genta, M. L., Giannetti, E., Fonzi, A., et al. (1997). Cross-national comparison of children's attitudes towards bully/victim problems in school. *Aggressive Behavior, 23*, 245-257.

- Moran, S., Smith, P. K., Thompson, D., & Whitney, I. (1993). Ethnic differences in experiences of bullying: Asian and white children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *63*, 431-440.
- Morita, Y. (Ed.). (1985). *Sociological study on the structure of bullying group*. Department of Sociology, Osaka City University.
- Morita, Y., & Kiyonaga, K. (1986). *Ijime: Kyoshitsu no yamai* [Bullying: The ailing classroom]. Tokyo: Kaneko Shobou.
- Morita, Y., Soeda, H., Soeda, K., & Taki, M. (1999). Japan. In P. K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, & P. Slee (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 309-323). New York: Routledge.
- Mortenson, S., Liu, M., Burlison, B. R., & Liu, Y. (2006). A fluency of feeling: Exploring cultural and individual differences (and similarities) related to skilled emotional support. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *37*, 366-385.
- Mynard, H., & Joseph, S. (1997). Bully/victim problems and their association with Eysenck Personality Dimensions in 8 to 13 year olds. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *67*, 51-54.
- Mynard, H., & Joseph, S. (2000). Development of the multidimensional peer-victimization scale. *Aggressive Behavior*, *26*, 169-178.
- Nansel, T. R., Craig, W., Overpeck, M. D., Saluja, G., Ruan, W. J., & the health Behaviour in School-aged Children Bullying Analyses Working Group. (2004). Cross-national consistency in the relationship between bullying behaviors and psychosocial adjustment. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, *158*, 730-736.

- Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M. D., Pills, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 285*, 2094-2100.
- National Center for Educational Statistics (1995a). *Student strategies to avoid harm at school* (NCES 95-203). Washington, DC: Department of Education.
- National Center for Educational Statistics (1995b). *Student victimization at school* (NCES 95-204). Washington, DC: Department of Education.
- Naylor, P., Cowie, H., & del Rey, R. (2001). Coping strategies of secondary school children in response to being bullied. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry Review, 6*, 114-120.
- Oliver, R., Hoover, J. H., & Hazler, R. (1994). The perceived roles of bullying in small-town midwestern school. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 72*, 416-421.
- Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys*. Washington, DC: Wiley.
- Olweus, D. (1991). Bully/victim problems among schoolchildren: Basic facts and effects of a school based intervention program. In D. J. Pepler & K. H. Rubin (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression* (pp. 411-448). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know what we can do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- O'Moore, A. M. (1995). Bullying behaviour in children and adolescents in Ireland. *Children & Society, 9*, 54-72.
- O'Moore, M., & Kirkham, C. (2001). Self-esteem and its relationship to bullying behaviour. *Aggressive Behavior, 27*, 269-283.
- Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*, 3-72.

- Pellegrini, A. D. (2002). Bullying and victimization in middle school: A dominance relations perspective. *Educational Psychologist, 37*, 151-163.
- Pellegrini, A. D., & Long, J. (2002). A longitudinal study of bullying, dominance, and victimization during the transition from primary to secondary school. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 20*, 259-280.
- Rayner, C., & Höel, H. (1997). A summary review of literature relating to workplace bullying. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 7*, 181-191.
- Rigby, K. (1997). Attitudes and beliefs about bullying among Australian school children. *Irish Journal of Psychology, 18*, 202-220.
- Rigby, K., & Barnes, A. (2002). To tell or not to tell: The victimised student's dilemma. *Youth Studies in Australia, 21*, 33-36.
- Rivers, I., & Smith, P. K. (1994). Types of bullying behaviour and their correlates. *Aggressive Behavior, 20*, 359-368.
- Rodkin, P. C., Farmer, T. W., Pearl, R., & van Acker, R. (2000). Heterogeneity of popular boys: Antisocial and prosocial configurations. *Developmental Psychology, 36*, 14-24.
- Roland, E. (1989). A system oriented strategy against bullying. In E. Roland & E. Munthe (Eds.), *Bullying: An international perspective* (pp. 143-151). London: David Fulton.
- Roloff, M. E. (2002). The state of the art of interpersonal communication research: Are we addressing socially significant issues? In M. Allen, R. W. Preiss, B. M. Gayle, & N. Burrell (Eds.), *Interpersonal communication research: Advances through meta-analysis* (pp. 423-446). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Salin, D. (2003). Ways of explaining workplace bullying: A review of enabling, motivating and precipitating structures and processes in the work environment. *Human Relations, 56*, 1213-1232.

- Salmivalli, C., Karhunen, J., & Lagerspetz, K. M. J. (1996). How do the victims respond to bullying? *Aggressive Behavior, 22*, 99-109.
- Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K. M. J., Björkqvist, K., Österman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (1996). Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behavior, 22*, 1-15.
- Salmon, G., James, A., & Smith, D. M. (1998). Bullying in schools: Self-reported anxiety, depression and self-esteem in secondary school children. *British Medical Journal, 317*, 924-925.
- Sato, M. (2000). *Ijime mondai no takakuteki kentou: Nichiei deno torikumi no genjou to kadai* [Multiperspectival thoughts on bullying: Current situations and agendas in Japan and the United Kingdom]. *Published Symposium, 2*, 50-52. Tokyo: University of Tokyo.
- Schwartz, D., Dodge, K. A., & Coie, J. D. (1993). The emergence of chronic peer victimization in boys' play groups. *Child Development, 64*, 1755-1772.
- Schwartz, D., McFadyen, K. S., Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., & Bates, J. E. (1999). Early behavior problems as a predictor of later peer group victimization: Moderators and mediators in the pathways of social risk. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 27*, 191-201.
- Slee, P. T. (1994). Situational and interpersonal correlates of anxiety associated with peer victimization. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development, 25*, 97-107.
- Smith, P. K. (1994). *Bullying: Don't suffer in silence—An anti-bullying pack for schools*. London: HMSO.
- Smith, P. K. (1997). The “safer schools—safer cities” bullying project. In D. Tattum & G. Herbert (Eds.), *Bullying: Home, school and community* (pp. 99-113). London: David Fulton.

- Smith, P. K. (1999). England and Wales. In P. K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, & P. Slee (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 68-90). London: Routledge.
- Smith, P. K. (2004). Bullying: Recent developments. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 9*, 98-103.
- Smith, P. K., & Madsen, M. (1997). *A follow-up survey of the DFE Anti-Bullying Pack for Schools: Its use, and the development of anti-bullying work in schools*. London: DfEE.
- Smith, P. K., Madsen, K. C., & Moody, J. C. (1999). What causes the age decline in reports of being bullied at school? Toward a developmental analysis of risks of being bullied. *Educational Research, 41*, 267-285.
- Smith, P. K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R., & Slee, P. (Eds.). (1999). *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, P. K., & Myrono-Wilson, R. (1998). Parenting and school bullying. *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 3*, 405-417.
- Smith, P. K., & Sharp, S. (1994). *School bullying: Insights and perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, P. K., Singer, M., Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2003). Victimization in the school and the workplace: Are there any links? *British Journal of Psychology, 94*, 175-188.
- Smith, P. K., Talamelli, L., Cowie, H., Naylor, P., & Chauhan, P. (2004). Profiles of non-victims, escaped victims, continuing victims and new victims of school bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 565-581.
- Smith, P. K., & Thompson, D. A. (Eds.). (1993). *Practical approaches to bullying*. London: David Fulton.

- Stockdale, M. S., Hangaduambo, S., Duys, D., Larson, K., & Sarvela, P. D. (2002). Rural elementary students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of bullying. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 26*, 266-277.
- Sutton, J., & Smith, P. K. (1999). Bullying as a group process: An adaptation of the participant role approach. *Aggressive Behavior, 25*, 97-111.
- Sutton, J., Smith, P. K., & Swettenham, J. (1999). Bullying and "theory of mind": A critique of the "social skills deficit" view of anti-social behaviour. *Social Development, 8*, 117-127.
- Swearer, S. M., & Doll, B. (2001). Bullying in schools: An ecological framework. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, 2*, 7-23.
- Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Alberts, J. K. (2006). Nightmares, demons and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. *Management Communication Quarterly, 20*, 1-38.
- Voroney, J. (2005). Workplace bullying: A cultural perspective. *Culture of Peace Online Journal, 1*, 21-30.
- Vossekuil, B., Fein, R. A., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). *The final report of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education.
- Whitney, I., & Smith, P. K. (1993). A survey of the nature and extent of bullying in junior/middle and secondary schools. *Educational Research, 35*, 3-25.
- Wolke, D., Woods, S., Stanford, K., & Schultz, H. (2001). Bullying and victimization of primary school children in England and Germany: Prevalence and school factors. *British Journal of Psychology, 92*, 673-696.

- Xu, Y., & Burleson, B. R. (2001). Effects of sex, culture, and support type on perceptions of spousal social support: An assessment of the “support gap” hypothesis in early marriage. *Human Communication Research, 27*, 535-566.
- Yamada, T. (1993). *Ijime no mondai wo dou miteiruka: Chuu ni ei no “ijime” mondai anke-to nit suite* [How students see the issue of bullying: On the junior high second-year A “bullying” issue questionnaire]. *Studies of the Middle School Associated with the Department of Pedagogy of Nagoya University, 38*, 51-61.
- Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2004a). Online aggressor/targets, aggressors, and targets: A comparison of associated youth characteristics. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 45*, 1308-1316.
- Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2004b). Youth engaging in online harassment: Associations with caregiver-child relationships, Internet use, and personal characteristics. *Journal of Adolescence, 27*, 319-336.



## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, Olweus (1993) defined bullying as follows: “A person is being bullied or picked on when exposed, repeatedly over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other *students*” (p. 9; emphasis added). Similarly, Smith and Sharp (1994) describe bullying as a set of behaviors that take place among students:

A student is bullied or picked on when another student says nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a student is hit, kicked, threatened, locked inside a room, sent nasty notes, and when no one ever talks to him [*sic*]. (p. 1)

<sup>2</sup> For example, children with physical strength tend to be bullies during childhood (Andreou, 2000; Bosworth et al., 1999). From early adolescence on, however, intelligent and popular individuals are most likely to bully others (e.g., Chapell et al., 2004; Eslea et al., 2004). With the increase of indirect and cyber bullying, however, some scholars suggest effectively anyone can be bullies and/or victims (Crick et al., 1997; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a).

Table 1.1

*Major Conceptualizations of and Research Questions on Bullying by Discipline*

Discipline	Research Question
Anthropology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the characteristics of the community/school/organizational culture in which bullying is (or is not) prevalent?</li> <li>• How do individuals interpret their bullying and/or victimization experience?</li> </ul>
Cognitive Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the cognitive factors associated with bullying/victimization?</li> <li>• What are the psychological mechanisms and consequences related to bullying and victimization?</li> </ul>
Developmental Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what developmental stage is bullying prevalent?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between one's psychological development and bullying?</li> <li>• How is one's bullying/victimization experience in one developmental stage related to her or his likely experience in the next?</li> </ul>
Evolutionary Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the adaptive value of bullying in terms of enhancing one's evolutionary fitness?</li> </ul>
Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the sociodemographic factors associated with bullying and victimization?</li> <li>• What are the consequences of bullying and victimization in terms of social adjustment (e.g., criminal record and delinquency)?</li> </ul>

## Chapter 2

Exploration of the Impact of Parental Misunderstanding on Bullied Victims' Subjective Well-Being\*

\* A modified version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in *Human Communication Research* as an article entitled, "Parents Don't (Always) Know Their Children Have Been Bullied: Child-Parent Discrepancy on Bullying and Family-Level Profile of Communication Standards" (*Vol. 35*, pp. 221-248).

### Abstract

Discrepancy between bullied victims' experience and their parents' understanding indicates underutilization of family support system, and thus, presents an important risk factor. Online survey ( $N = 300$  child-father-mother triads) was conducted to establish a framework that helps distinguish families with different child-parent discrepancy levels. This family-level variability was modeled by profiling child-father-mother triad's family communication standard (FCS) orientations. This "FCS profile" indeed distinguished families with different levels of discrepancies. Further, SEM analyses revealed that those discrepancies presented a distinct risk factor vis-à-vis effects of bullying reports per se. Finally, FCS profile had an indirect association with victims' well-being via mediation by child-parent discrepancy. These findings are discussed with regard to the role of family communication in bullied individuals' coping processes.

**Keywords:** Bullying, Coping, Family Communication Standard, Latent Profile Analysis, Subjective Well-Being

Bullying is a pervasive social problem that impairs victims' mental, physical, and relational well-being, if not *vita ipsum* (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999). Whereas early studies tended to focus on the bully-victim dyad, recent research suggests that family plays an important role in victims' coping process (Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey, 2001; for critiques of the bully-victim dyadic view, see Espelage & Swearer, 2003; P. K. Smith, 2004). From this family-centered perspective, what is worrisome among the findings reported in the literature is the discrepancy between children's experience and their parents' knowledge. That is, parents typically misjudge the risk of bullying and are often unaware of the problem even if their children are undergoing the agony of victimization (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002).

Such perceptual discrepancies are actually not uncommon in the child-parent relationship (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995b; Petronio, 1994; Sillars, Koerner, & Fitzpatrick, 2005). There are reasons, however, that the child-parent discrepancies on bullying may form a considerable risk factor. Family can provide a valuable coping resource for victims of bullying (Naylor et al., 2001). Unfortunately, though, this family support system often does not function to its full potential because many bullied individuals do not reveal their victimized status to their family, and parents remain uninformed of their children's predicament (Fekkes et al., 2005). Put differently, discrepancies between children's victimization experience and their parents' understanding of bullying indicate deprivation, if passive, of coping resources from victims. Given the appalling impact of bullying (e.g., Hawker & Boulton, 2000), such underutilization of coping resources is alarming in terms of victims' well-being. It is thus vital to identify what differentiates families where parents accurately grasp their children's bullying-related experiences from those in which large parent-child perceptual discrepancies exist.

With this exigency in mind, the current research explores how family members' dispositions toward communication are associated with child-parent discrepancies on bullying. Such dispositions are operationalized by utilizing a construct called family communication standard (FCS; Caughlin,

2003), and families with distinctive dispositions are identified by profiling the members' FCS orientations. To bring these elements of the current study into perspective, relevant literature is reviewed in turn below. First, previous findings on bullying, particularly its negative effects and the "information gap" between victims and their parents, are presented. Second, FCS is highlighted as a promising construct to gauge individuals' orientations with regard to family interaction and thereby to provide a useful framework to classify families with different communicative dispositions. Finally, based on these bodies of literature, research hypotheses are advanced on the associations between FCS, child-parent discrepancy on bullying, and victims' well-being.

*Bullying: Consequences and the Role of Family in It*

Bullying is defined as deliberately enacted harm-doing that persists over a prolonged period upon individuals, who are in a powerless position and thus cannot effectively defend themselves by their own measure (Olweus, 1978, 1993). Among recent discoveries, two classes of findings are particularly disconcerting: Negative influence of bullying on victims' well-being and the "gap" between victims' actual experience of bullying versus their parents' understanding of the problem.

Bullying is a highly hurtful experience for victims and its ramifications involve a wide range of mental, physical, and social issues. Nansel et al. (2004) found in their international study that victimization by bullying is ubiquitously associated with poor psychosocial adjustment, including health problems, emotional and school maladjustment, and alcohol use. Other studies demonstrate that bullying hurts victims' mental and physical health (e.g., Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Hodges & Perry, 1999; Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001). Hawker and Boulton (2000) conducted a meta-analysis and found that victims of bullying suffer anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, and other psychosocial adjustment problems (see also Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999).

Research has identified a number of ways by which victims cope with these dire influences of bullying. In particular, family—especially parental care and support—has been found among the most effective (Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; P. K. Smith & Myrono-Wilson, 1998). Hunter and

associates found that bullied children who sought help from their parents not only had lesser stress but were also more likely to escape the victimhood than those who did not disclose the crisis (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Hunter, Merchan, & Ortega, 2004). Similarly, Naylor et al.'s (2001) study has demonstrated that seeking social support from families and peers helped victims cope with bullying and maintain resiliency (see also Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002).

Such protective effects of family are not readily exploited, however. In fact, too often do parents fail to provide support and protection for their children even when they are being bullied. Fekkes et al. (2005) found that nearly half of the parents of victims did not know that their children were bullied. Research suggests that this parental unawareness is the rule, rather than an exception, and parents are often unaware of their children's undergoing the crisis (Rigby & Barnes, 2002; P. K. Smith, 2000). This "information gap" between children's experience and their parents' knowledge of bullying constitutes an unignorable risk factor, because parents cannot render support for their bullied children if they do not know the need for such support in the first place. Thus, it is critical to identify what distinguishes families with large child-parent discrepancies from those where parents have a good grasp of their children's experience of bullying. Establishing such a framework requires classification of families based on certain characteristics that are associated with the child-parent discrepancies with regard to bullying. The current research undertakes this challenge by utilizing the construct called family communication standards (Caughlin, 2003).

#### *Family Communication Standards*

*Family communication standards* (FCSs; Caughlin, 2003) refer to individuals' beliefs about the "ideal" ways of interacting among family members. FCS is a multidimensional construct that nests a number of specific beliefs. Based on the literature on a broader concept of relational standard (Baucom, Epstein, Rankin, & Burnett, 1996; Fletcher & Simpson, 2001) and also through his own exploratory studies, Caughlin (2003) has developed a 10-dimensional typology of FCS (see Table 2.1 for a summary of conceptualization and operationalization of FCS).

### *FCS as a Behavioral Guideline: Standard-Discrepancy Link*

As a cognitive system, FCS provides an evaluative benchmark for individuals to interpret actual family interactions and guide their behavior therein. Previous research suggests that people's beliefs about the "ideal," or standards, in general, and FCS, in particular, are associated with their attributions of the partner behavior (Gordon, Baucom, Epstein, Burnett, & Rankin, 1999) and family communication schemata (Caughlin, 2003). Recently, Matsunaga and Imahori (2009) found that FCS would predict individuals' enactment of family conflict strategies. Together, these findings indicate that FCS serves as a behavioral guideline and individuals' family interaction patterns reflect what they consider is "ideal" family communication.

Drawing on this guiding characteristic of the construct, the current study examines how the FCS orientation of victims, vis-à-vis their parents' orientations, is associated with the given family's child-parent discrepancy on bullying. It seems plausible, for example, that individuals who believe that "ideal" families should share both good and bad feelings (*openness*) or support one another in times of need (*emotional/instrumental support*) would likely disclose their crisis of victimization to their parents; on the other hand, those who believe that "ideal" families should not talk about issues that are too personal (*avoidance*) might dare not to tell their parents about bullying. Such differences in victims' propensity would, in turn, provide their parents with varying degrees of understanding on bullying. Therefore, the following hypothesis is set forth:

H1: Victims' FCS orientations are associated with child-parent discrepancies on bullying.

### *Family-Level FCS Profile: Capturing the Interactive Climate of the Family*

At the same time, this reflection of victims' FCS orientations on child-parent discrepancies would be affected by their parents' FCS orientations. Such "interference" is expected by several theories that suggest communication of information management is a relational and transactional process. For example, communication privacy management theory (Petronio, 1991, 2002) posits that individuals control the flow of information by constructing privacy boundaries, whose permeability



varies as a function of those individuals' relationship with their counterpart (see Petronio, 1994; Petronio, Flores, & Hecht, 1997). Theory of motivated information management (W. A. Afifi & Weiner, 2004) suggests that how a given information-management episode unfolds should depend in part on the disposition (e.g., self-efficacy), as well as the reactions, of one's interactional partner.

From these relational-transactional perspectives, it is suggested that a given family's child-parent discrepancies on bullying should be predicated not only on children's FCS orientations but on their parents' orientations as well. To illustrate, while individuals (e.g., victims) project their standards as they appraise given interactions and adjust their communication therein according to their orientation, their interactional counterparts (e.g., parents), more or less concurrently, also would make their own projections and adjustment. For example, even if children initially drew on their openness standard and determined to reveal their victimized status, they would be forced to change the plan when their parents were primarily avoidant; on the other hand, children might venture to disclose information they otherwise would hide, if their parents showed sincere concerns and made heartfelt inquiries. As a result of such transactional processes, the FCS orientations endorsed by each family member interact and altogether shape the family's communicative climate (cf. Barbato, Graham, & Perse, 2003; Fitzpatrick, Marshall, Leutwiler, & Kremer, 1996).

Presumably, there would be considerable variability across families in terms of this climate, or the configuration of family members' FCS orientations. Some families may consist of members who all endorse FCS with strong proclivity toward information sharing, whereas others might be composed of members whose FCS endorsement patterns tend more generally toward information concealment; and yet others would show a variety of unique combination patterns. Thus, FCS would provide an apparatus to distinguish various families by their unique communicative orientations.

To model this family-level variability, the current study takes a holistic approach called latent profile analysis (Gibson, 1959) to delineate families' "profile" with regard to their members' FCS orientations altogether. As an approximation of the family's communicative climate, these profiles

may help identify families with large child-parent discrepancies on bullying, provided FCS is linked to such discrepancies (H1). Taken together, these surmises are put into the following hypothesis:

H2: Families can be classified by qualitatively distinct profiles based on the configuration of their members' FCS orientations, and families with different FCS profiles would show different levels of parent-child discrepancies on bullying.

*Bullying, Family-Level FCS Profile, Child-Parent Discrepancy, and Victims' Well-Being*

Finally, this study examines the impact of child-parent discrepancies on victims' subjective well-being. As noted earlier, such discrepancies indicate that parents' failure to notice their children's victimized status and to provide support that might alleviate the anguish of bullying if only it were rendered. Given the dreadful impact of bullying that sometimes drives victims to even committing suicide (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999), such failures may be literally fatal, and thus, child-parent discrepancies on bullying constitute an important risk factor in terms of bullied victims' well-being.

It should be noted that child-parent discrepancies would be correlated with the degree to which children experienced bullying. Presumably, there should be a positive association between the discrepancies and children's experience of bullying, because parents cannot underestimate their children's experience of bullying if the children have not been bullied. Granted, theoretically, parents can overestimate (i.e., they falsely consider their children are bullied, although the children are actually not bullied); however, research indicates that such overestimation by parents is quite unlikely and minor in degree if present (Fekkes et al., 2005; Stockdale et al., 2002). Thus, it is plausible that child-parent discrepancies are systematically positively correlated with children's experience of bullying. Therefore, the effects of the latter needs to be controlled when examining the impact of the former on victims' well-being. Nonetheless, given the strongly negative impact of bullying (Hawker & Boulton, 2000) and parental support's potency to alleviate those distressing effects (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002), it is hypothesized that child-parent discrepancies present a distinct risk factor in terms of victims' well-being. Stated formally:

H3: Controlling for the effects of victims' experience of bullying, child-parent discrepancies on bullying are associated with those victims' subjective well-being.

If corroborated, these hypotheses of the current research are argued to be of both theoretical and practical import. Theoretically, they provide support for the notion of family-centered view that goes beyond the traditional bully-victim dyadic perspective and thereby expand the scope of research on bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; P. K. Smith, 2004). Further, obtaining evidence for these family-centered hypotheses will demonstrate the validity of the transactional theories, which posit that the unfolding of a given communicative event is predicated not only by one party but also their relational/interactional counterparts (W. A. Afifi & Weiner, 2004; Petronio, 2002). Practically, they would substantiate the role of family and parents in bullied victims' coping process and illuminate an additional source of the variance in those victims' well-being, namely child-parent discrepancies.

### *Method*

#### *Participants*

The current study's participants were undergraduates at a large northeastern university in the United States and their parents from 300 families. As for the children (i.e., students), there were more females (60%) than males (40%); the vast majority (95.9%) was Caucasian and the rest identified with Asian American (1.4%), Latina/o or Hispanic (2.0%), and mixed (0.7%). Children's mean age was 19.8 years ( $SD = 1.6$ ). Parents' median age was 51-55 years and about 90% were between 41 and 60 years. Parents' ethnicity breakdown was comparable to the children's. Over 85% of fathers and 63.5% of mothers had college or graduate degree, and the median income was \$75,000-\$100,000 for fathers and \$25,000-\$50,000 for mothers. More than 98% of the parents were in their first marriage.

#### *Procedure*

Participants took online surveys anonymously. First, a preliminary demographic survey was administered to all students enrolled in a public-speaking course offered to all majors as part of the course's research subject-pool protocol.<sup>3</sup> Via this preliminary survey, students who had reportedly

experienced bullying in the past and both of whose parents would be able to participate in the study were identified. From this potential participant pool, 384 were randomly sampled.<sup>4</sup> It turned out, however, 84 students had no experience of bullying; thus, those individuals' data were not analyzed.

Next, the students were asked to forward the participation invitation message to each of their parents. The message emphasized the voluntary nature of participation, while noting that completion of the survey would take only a short period of time (less than 10 minutes). The invitation contained a unique 6-digit "family code," which was generated automatically for each family and used to match the parent-child responses. After several reminders, all parents successfully completed the survey.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, upon forwarding the invitation to parents, students were provided with the uniform resource locator (URL) of the child-version survey website and the family code. They received partial course credit for participation. Completion of the child-version survey took about 45-60 minutes. To establish the response authenticity, about 10% of the children were randomly selected from the overall pool and contacted via e-mail; they all verified that they had completed the survey by themselves. For both parents and children, item missing rate was less than 2% for all scales used.

### *Measurement Instruments*

Because the scales for FCS and victimization have not been applied to non-student adult samples, measurement invariance analyses (Meredith, 1993) were performed to verify that they would operate equivalently for young-adult children and parents. Specifically, a series of multi-group confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were run; in each CFA, the same set of indicators were used and their factor loadings were constrained to equality across all three parties, using Little, Slegers, and Card's (2006) non-arbitrary latent factor identification technique, which minimizes potential biases due to the model parameter specification procedures. Following Little's (2000) modeling rationale, measurement invariance was deemed verified when the model yielded acceptable fit of  $RMSEA \leq .08$  and  $CFI \geq .90$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Item-level missing data were accommodated by utilizing the full-information maximum-likelihood estimator (Enders & Bandalos, 2001; Schafer & Graham, 2002).

*Family communication standards.* A modified version of Caughlin's (2003) measure was used to assess FCS orientations. Each dimension was tapped by four or five items on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Because some dimensions had less than four items, new items were developed based on the respective dimension's conceptualization (Table 2.1). For all dimensions, measurement-invariant models yielded reasonable fit; RMSEA ranged from .00 to .08, and CFI from .93 to .98. As expected from previous findings (Caughlin, 2003; Matsunaga & Imahori, 2009), the associations among the FCSs turned out to be quite complex (see Tables 2.2 & 2.3 for the correlations and reliabilities of the ten FCS dimensions for young-adult children and parents, respectively).

*Children's experience of victimization and parents' knowledge.* Children's experiences and parents' understanding of bullying were measured using Mynard and Joseph's (2000) peer-victimization scale. First, participants were presented with the following definition of bullying, which was composed based on the conceptualization by Olweus (1993) and P. K. Smith (2004):

*Bullying is defined as a set of behaviors that cause physical, mental, and/or material harm; those behaviors are deliberately enacted by an individual or a group of individuals and repeated over a prolonged period; usually the target of bullying is in a weaker power position than the bully(ies) and thus has few means to defend her- or himself.*

Children were asked to recall and report their experience of bullying over any given period of three months or longer on a 5-point scale (0 = "Never"; 4 = "Almost Everyday"). The mean length of recall recency was 4.82 years ( $SD = 3.3$ ). Perceived recall fidelity ("How well do you remember those incidents?") was quite high:  $M = 4.23$  ( $SD = 1.1$ ) on a 5-point scale. Parents used the same scale and estimated their children's experience of bullying. Specifically, they were asked to report "the frequency [they] think [their] daughter/son has ever experienced each of the behaviors below in any given period of three months or longer" using the same 5-point scale as the child-version scale.

Mynard and Joseph's (2000) scale was originally composed of five dimensions; however, the preliminary analyses suggested that three of them, all representing some non-physical aspects of

bullying (*social manipulation, relational bullying/isolation, and verbal victimization*), were not empirically distinguishable from one another and a 5-factor invariance model yielded unacceptable fit (RMSEA = .13 and CFI = .77). When those three dimensions were reconfigured as one factor, however, the invariance model fit the data reasonably (RMSEA = .06 and CFI = .95). Thus, the decision was made to merge them to form a unified dimension of *indirect bullying* (Crick, 1995).

The reformulated 3-dimensional scale tapped *physical victimization* (e.g., “Someone hit you [your daughter/son].”;  $\alpha_{\text{child}} = .90$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{father}} = .76$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{mother}} = .66$ ), *indirect bullying* (e.g., “Someone made fun of you [your daughter/son] when you [s/he] said something.”;  $\alpha_{\text{child}} = .80$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{father}} = .76$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{mother}} = .86$ ), and *property bullying* (e.g., “Someone deliberately damaged your [your daughter’s/son’s] property.”;  $\alpha_{\text{child}} = .79$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{father}} = .79$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{mother}} = .69$ ). These scales were all moderately positively correlated with one another ( $r_s = .20-.40$ ). As expected, parents underestimated the prevalence of victimization vis-à-vis children’s recalled experiences: for *physical victimization*,  $M_{\text{child}} = 1.71$  ( $SD = 0.59$ ),  $M_{\text{father}} = 1.28$  ( $SD = 0.31$ ), and  $M_{\text{mother}} = 1.21$  ( $SD = 0.26$ ); for *indirect bullying*,  $M_{\text{child}} = 2.47$  ( $SD = 0.96$ ),  $M_{\text{father}} = 1.99$  ( $SD = 0.62$ ), and  $M_{\text{mother}} = 1.79$  ( $SD = 0.47$ ); and for *property bullying*,  $M_{\text{child}} = 1.67$  ( $SD = 0.53$ ),  $M_{\text{father}} = 1.53$  ( $SD = 0.37$ ), and  $M_{\text{mother}} = 1.50$  ( $SD = 0.35$ ).

*Child-Parent Discrepancy on Bullying.* After measuring children’s experience and parents’ understanding of bullying, the latter’s score on a given dimension (e.g., physical victimization) was subtracted from that of the former on the same dimension to compute the child-parent discrepancy scores. Consistent with the literature on the pervasive parental underestimation of bullying (Fekkes et al., 2005; Stockdale et al., 2002), the mean scores of these discrepancies were all positive, indicating most parents rated the frequency of bullying incidents to be lesser than what their children actually had experienced. Although there were a few cases where parents did estimate the frequency of bullying to be higher than their children’s report, those cases were quite rare (less than 5% for all discrepancy scores computed) and the magnitude of such parental overrating of bullying was small (the largest negative discrepancy score was  $-0.5$  on the possible range of  $-4.0$  to  $+4.0$ ).<sup>6</sup>

Further inspection revealed that those child-parent discrepancy scores were highly positively correlated across the three dimensions of bullying, indicating that families with large discrepancy on one dimension (e.g., physical victimization) tended to have also a high discrepancy score on another dimension (e.g., indirect bullying). Thus, to enhance analysis parsimony, the decision was made to aggregate those discrepancy scores across the three bullying dimensions into two composite scores, one for child-father discrepancy ( $M = 0.72$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ,  $Min. = -0.36$ ,  $Max. = 2.36$ ,  $\alpha = .89$ ) and the other for child-mother discrepancy ( $M = 0.51$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ,  $Min. = -0.50$ ,  $Max. = 1.81$ ,  $\alpha = .85$ ).<sup>7</sup>

*Young-adult children's subjective well-being.* Children's subjective well-being was assessed using six 5-point Likert-type items (1 = "Strongly Disagree"; 5 = "Strongly Agree") taken from the scales developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) and Jones and Crandall (1986). Both scales have been established as measures of individuals' general mental well-being (see Ryan et al., 1999). Example items include "*When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out*" and "*I am very satisfied with how my life has turned out*" (RMSEA = .03 and CFI = .98;  $\alpha = .91$ ). As often would be the case with non-clinical populations, the mean was high ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ), though the observed responses covered the whole range of scores from 1.00 to 5.00.

## Results

### *H1: FCS Associations with Child-Parent Discrepancies on Bullying*

The first hypothesis predicted that victims' FCS orientations would be associated with child-parent discrepancies on bullying. To examine this hypothesis, a series of correlation analyses were performed (see Table 2.4 for a summary). The results showed that some FCSs indeed had significant correlations with child-parent discrepancies. Specifically, *openness* had negative correlations and *avoidance* had positive correlations with both child-father and child-mother discrepancies. A number of other FCSs were also significantly associated with the child-father or child-mother discrepancies.

At the same time, post hoc partial correlation analyses revealed that those associations between victims' (i.e., children's) FCS and child-parent discrepancies were qualified by parents' FCS in an

intricate manner (Table 2.4). That is, when the variance related to parents' FCS orientations was controlled, most of the associations between victims' FCSs and discrepancies changed their magnitude and, in some cases, direction. It should be noted that nine out of 20 associations between victims' FCS and child-parent discrepancies were statistically significant even after the variance related to both parents' FCSs was partialled out; thus, H1 was partially supported. Nonetheless, those changes suggested that the dynamics underlying child-parent discrepancies operated along not only with victims' but also their parents' FCS orientations, providing a warrant for the family-level analysis to examine the second and third hypotheses of the current research.

### *H2 & H3: Family-Level FCS Profiles, Child-Parent Discrepancy, and Victims' Well-Being*

*Analysis plan.* The second hypothesis posited that families would be uniquely characterized by their members' FCS and, moreover, those "family-level FCS profiles" would differentiate families by their levels of child-parent discrepancies on bullying. Those discrepancies were, in turn, hypothesized to have effects on victims' subjective well-being, independently of their experience of bullying per se (H3). These hypotheses were examined in the following two steps.

First, a series of latent profile analyses (LPAs) were performed using *Mplus* 4.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2007) to identify family-level FCS profiles based on children's and parents' FCS orientations within each family. LPA models the size and property of latent categorical factor based on multiple continuous variables (see Vermunt & Magidson, 2002, for a review). As such, LPA is particularly useful when the phenomenon of interest is multidimensional yet conceptually coherent. Family-level FCS profile exemplifies such a case, for different families consider different communication styles as "ideal" and thus they form unique clusters, or profiles, rather than a hierarchical order along which all families can be ranked on a unidimensional space. It should be noted that, in the LPA, child-father-mother triad was treated as the unit of analysis to account for the intra-family interdependence.

Next, a conceptual model was developed by combining the rationale for H2 and H3, which, together, predicted the sequential mediation (FCS profile → Discrepancy → Well-Being). This



theoretical model was then examined via a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis wherein the effects of victims' experience of bullying on their well-being were statistically controlled. The model fit was evaluated by the same criteria used for CFAs (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

*Latent profile analysis: Identifying the mixture of distinct family-level FCS profiles.* The objective in the application of LPA is to identify the optimal number of profiles, which is determined by comparing multiple models with a different number of profiles based on several criteria. In this study, the *Bayesian Information Criterion* (BIC) was used as the primary criterion because it is the most widely used index in the literature (Bauer & Curran, 2003). Another criterion to evaluate a given LPA model is *entropy*, which indexes the likelihood that the model predicts the endorsement of extracted profiles accurately and a value greater than .80 is considered acceptable (Vermunt & Magidson, 2002). Finally, interpretability of the model provides an important criterion such that all extracted profiles must be theoretically meaningful and clearly distinguishable from one another (see Matsunaga & Imahori, 2009, for an empirical application of LPA to communication research).

The results pointed to the 3-profile model. The BIC dropped substantially when a third profile was added ( $\Delta\text{BIC}_{2 \rightarrow 3} = -205.31$ ) and this 3-profile model had an adequate entropy of .84. When a fourth profile was added, however, the changes in the BIC and entropy were negligible ( $\Delta\text{BIC}_{3 \rightarrow 4} = -68.20$ ;  $\Delta\text{entropy} = 0.02$ ). Moreover, an inspection revealed that the fourth profile was marginally different from the third one, adding little to the model's theoretical utility.

All profiles in the 3-profile model exhibited clearly distinct characteristics (see Table 2.5). The first profile, labeled as *Open-Affectionate*, was characterized by strong endorsement of "relationship-focused" standards by all members (Baucom et al., 1996; Caughlin, 2003). The second profile was labeled as *Detached*; all members of these families had markedly low *openness*, *expression of affection*, *emotional/instrumental support*, and high *avoidance* in comparison with other families. Finally, the third profile was an interesting combination of apparently *Open-Affectionate* children and mothers with *Detached* fathers, and thus, labeled as *Mixed*.

*Structural equation modeling: Testing FCS profile → discrepancy → well-being mediation.*

Finally, to test the model developed based on H2 and H3, an SEM analysis was run using *Mplus* 4.2. Consistent with LPA, the unit of analysis was set to be the child-father-mother triad because the model included family-level factors (i.e., family-level FCS profile and child-parent discrepancies).

All factors except family-level FCS profile were modeled as latent variables using Bollen's (1989) latent-composite method; indicators of a given factor were first aggregated into one parcel, then the factor loading of this parcel on the respective latent variable was set at 1.0 and its error variance at  $(1 - \alpha) \times s^2$  where  $\alpha$  represents the scale reliability such as Cronbach's alpha coefficient and  $s^2$  the observed variance of the parcel (see Matsunaga, 2008b, for a review of the use of parcels in SEM). The family-level FCS profile was modeled by creating two dummy-coded variables, one of which represented the endorsement of *Open-Affectionate* profile whereas the other dummy-coded variable indicated the endorsement of *Mixed* profile (i.e., the *Detached* profile was treated as the baseline category in examining the impact of FCS profiles). Following Preacher and Hayes's (2008) suggestion, an inter-factor correlation was modeled for the two mediators (i.e., child-parent discrepancies) to account for the interdependence between them.

This mediation model fit the data well: FIML  $\chi^2(8) = 5.45, p = .71, RMSEA = .00$  (90% confidence interval = .00-.05), CFI = 1.00 (see Figure 2.1 for a visual summary with standardized path coefficients).<sup>8</sup> With regard to H2, *Open-Affectionate* profile was associated with significantly lower levels of child-father discrepancy ( $B = -0.82, SE = .10, p < .001$ ) and child-mother discrepancy ( $B = -0.71, SE = .10, p < .001$ ) than those for their *Detached* counterpart. As for *Mixed* families, their child-father discrepancy was not distinguishable from that of *Detached* ( $B = 0.26, SE = .15, p = .09$ ), but *Mixed* families had a significantly smaller child-mother discrepancy than *Detached* ( $B = -0.63, SE = .13, p < .001$ ). Together, these results provided support for this study's second hypothesis.

Additionally, the unique effects of the two child-parent discrepancies on victims' subjective well-being were examined. The results indicated that, controlling for the negative impact of bullying,

both child-father discrepancy ( $B = -0.24$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and child-mother discrepancy ( $B = -0.36$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ ) had unique and negative effects on bullied victims' subjective well-being (Figure 2.1). Thus, H3 was supported. Finally, mediated influences of FCS profile on well-being were examined using Sobel's (1982) equation (see MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002, for a review of mediation analyses). This analysis revealed that the *Open-Affectionate* profile was associated with a significantly higher level of victims' subjective well-being ( $B = 0.45$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ ) relative to the *Detached* profile; on the other hand, the indirect effect of the *Mixed* profile was not significant, although it approached statistical significance and was in the same direction as *Open-Affectionate* ( $B = 0.16$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p = .08$ ).<sup>9</sup>

### *Discussion*

The current study examined the problem of child-parent “information gap” on bullying from a family-centered perspective. More specifically, the associations between victims' beliefs of the “ideal” family interaction, or family communication standard (FCS), and their families' child-parent discrepancies on bullying were examined. Whereas victims' FCS orientations certainly had some robust associations with discrepancies, those associations were qualified by their parents' FCS styles in an overwhelmingly complex manner, calling for family-level analyses (Table 2.4). Subsequent analyses using LPA identified three family-level profiles, each representing a unique configuration pattern of family members' FCS orientations. Thus identified profiles were found in the SEM analysis to distinguish families with different levels of child-parent discrepancies; further, those discrepancies provided a distinct risk factor, vis-à-vis the negative effects of bullying per se, in terms of victims' subjective well-being. These results are discussed in turn below with reference to the role of family in bullied victims' coping as well as some practical implications of the current findings.

#### *FCS and Child-Parent Discrepancies on Bullying*

The scrutiny based on the current study's first hypothesis has revealed that victims' FCS orientations may be used to predict the degree of “information gap” they would likely have with their

parents on bullying experience (Table 2.4). In particular, the robust positive association between the *avoidance* standard endorsement and child-parent discrepancies seems notable, as it held even after the effects of parents' FCSs were controlled. It indicates that, *ceteris paribus*, parents of the individuals who believe "ideal" families would keep some things left unsaid in their interactions (cf. Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a) tend to underestimate those individuals' experience of bullying, perhaps because they do not actively disclose such experiences as per their beliefs in avoidance.

Theories of information management provide accounts for these findings. Communication privacy management (CPM; Petronio, 2002) theory, for example, suggests that sharing information is a risky maneuver because it may reveal aspects of individuals' private life that they do not want others to know. This notion is particularly informative for this study, for victimization by bullying is often viewed as due to victims' possessing some undesirable characteristics such as unpopularity among peers or interpersonal skill deficit (Stockdale et al., 2002). Thus, it seems reasonable that individuals who hold beliefs geared toward avoidant family interaction tend to conceal their victimized status; such tendencies toward information concealment would, in turn, lead to child-parent discrepancy because parents would have less chance to know about what their children are undergoing. Or, theory of motivated information management (TMIM; W. A. Afifi & Weiner, 2004) posits that individuals' appraisals such as perceived cost-reward ratio and self-efficacy determine how they would manage the information at issue (e.g., victimized status). Perhaps one's beliefs on the "ideal" family interaction are associated with those appraisals such that individuals with certain FCS orientations perceive reward and feel efficacious in discussing the experience of bullying. Future research should draw insights from relevant theories such as CPM and TMIM and examine the factors that would account for the FCS-discrepancy linkage found in this study.

#### *Family-Level Dynamics and Child-Parent Discrepancies*

On the other hand of these individual-level findings on the association between victims' FCS orientations and child-parent discrepancy, the results of partial correlation analyses pointed to larger

dynamics operating at the family level. To model this complexity in a theoretically meaningful and yet analytically parsimonious manner, the underlying variability across families was explored via LPA on child-father-mother triads' FCS orientations. Thus identified three profiles—*Open-Affectionate*, *Detached*, and *Mixed*—provided an operational apparatus to examine the FCS-discrepancy linkage from an alternative perspective centering on family as the unit of analysis.

The SEM analyses incorporating this family-level FCS profile as the predictor of child-parent discrepancy revealed that, relative to the *Detached* families, the *Open-Affectionate* families had smaller discrepancies; similarly, the *Mixed* families tended to have smaller child-mother discrepancy, though their child-father discrepancy level was statistically indistinguishable from that of the *Detached* counterpart (Figure 2.1). These patterns complement the findings on the link between FCS and child-parent discrepancy at the individual level, because the ways in which those family-level profiles differentiated with regard to their child-parent discrepancy levels were consistent with the individual-level findings. For example, the *Open-Affectionate* families, all of whose members' FCS orientations opted for information sharing (e.g., high *openness*, *emotional/instrumental support*, *regular routine interaction*, and low *avoidance*), had smaller child-parent discrepancies than the *Detached*, whose members unanimously had relatively low *openness* and high *avoidance* orientations.

As for the *Mixed* families, it should be noted that their fathers had a distinctly “detached” disposition. At the same time, their children were apparently no less oriented toward information-sharing than the *Open-Affectionate* children. The relatively large child-father discrepancy of the *Mixed* and *Detached* families thus seems attributable to their fathers' rather disengaged stance toward family communication. Put differently, child-parent discrepancy seems to be a function of the interaction of the involved parties' dispositions such that if one or both of the two sides endorse a detached view, children's experience and parents' understanding of bullying disagree.

Inasmuch as this interpretation is consistent with the individual-level findings discussed above and also provides a sensible account in line with the transactional view of communication (W. A. Afifi

& Weiner, 2004; Petronio, 1991, 2002), it also raises a question: Does the information management related to child-parent discrepancy on bullying operate primarily at the dyadic, as opposed to family, level? This study's findings seem to indicate that the child-father discrepancy, for example, is only a function of the children and fathers' FCS orientations, leaving mothers out of the equation. From systems theory's viewpoint (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Yerby, 1995), it is suggested that such compartmentalized functioning may be just a tip of iceberg and the current research might have overlooked some broader dynamics that involve the entirety of the given family.

Alternatively, the prominence of dyad-level interaction found in this study may be explained by the stigma associated with victimization by bullying (Stockdale et al., 2002; see R. A. Smith, 2007, for a discussion of stigma and communication). Because bullying is strongly stigmatizing and victims fear their crisis might be known by others, bullied children who disclose their victimized status would likely ask their confidant not to share the information with anyone else (Rigby & Barnes, 2002; P. K. Smith, 2000). Then, information dynamics related to victimization, such as child-parent discrepancy, would be structurally managed at the dyadic, rather than family, level. Further, in a vein related to this surmise, the gender difference in parental FCS orientations should be noted. Two out of the three profiles identified in this study had fathers with relatively disengaged FCS orientations whereas only one profile had detached mothers. In short, there were more fathers than mothers who showed disengaged orientations. This general pattern might have driven children, particularly those in *Mixed* families, to disclose selectively to their mothers, contributing to the dyad-based information management patterns found in the current study. Researchers of future studies therefore should be encouraged to explore how, if at all, dynamics related to gender generate the primarily dyad-based patterns of information management by victims and their family members.

Yet another possibility for the centrality of dyad is cultural. Most samples in this study were Caucasian living in the U.S., who is generally individualistic (Adams, 2004; Coontz, 2003). Families with other ethnic heritage and cultural values may share information more willingly within the whole

family. African Americans and Latina(o)/Hispanic have strong communal orientations and family-based collectivism; likewise, Asian-heritage individuals are known to hold strong collectivistic values (Demo, Allen, & Fine, 2000; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). Thus, to the extent that cultural values such as individualism-collectivism intersects with bullied victims' and their families' information management, future research examining child-parent discrepancy from a cross-cultural perspective might discover some dynamics that have been left undetected in this study.

#### *Child-Parent Discrepancy as a Distinct Risk Factor for Victims' Well-Being*

Another set of important findings obtained in this study is the negative impact of child-parent discrepancies on victims' subjective well-being. Controlling for the effects of bullying reports, the "gap" between children's experience and parents' understanding of bullying were found to pose a distinct risk factor with regard to those children's long-term life satisfaction. Further, family-level FCS profile—*Open-Affectionate* profile, in particular—was indirectly associated with victims' well-being through the mediation by those discrepancies. Although few previous studies examined child-parent discrepancies, these findings deserve attention from both theoretical and practical standpoints.

A number of studies that have pointed out the link between family relationships and bullying in terms of both its inception and duration (e.g., Bowers et al., 1994; Olweus, 1993) notwithstanding, researchers only recently have started to pay attention to the role of family in bullied victims' coping process (see Espelage & Swearer, 2003; P. K. Smith, 2004). Nonetheless, those recent studies have demonstrated that disclosing one's victimized status to family members significantly helps victims cope by reducing stress and potentially bringing bullying to an end (Hunter et al., 2004; Rigby & Barnes, 2002; P. K. Smith, 2000). The current study's discovery of negative effects of child-parent discrepancies on victims' well-being offers a complementary view to those findings. Because such discrepancies indicate parental unawareness of the victims' crisis (Fekkes et al., 2005), it seems plausible that those victims are unable to make use of the protective effects of family support; this lack of support, in turn, would result in the suboptimal state of mind and low life satisfaction on the victims'

side. Further, the current SEM analysis indicated that such discrepancies' impact on well-being might operate distinctively vis-à-vis victims' experience of bullying per se.

Appraisal-based theories of stress and coping provide some accounts for this distinct impact of child-parent discrepancies on victims' well-being. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posit that *how* people cognitively process a given event is as important a contributor to the generation or reduction of stress as *what* they experience. From this perspective, whereas the experience of bullying per se undoubtedly presents a severe stressor, how victims perceive and communicate those experiences also would affect their coping process (see Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002, for a review). As in an old adage, shared grief is half the sorrow; on the other hand, closeting the experience of bullying not only engenders child-parent discrepancies and prevents parents from providing effective support but might also amplify the impact of victimization in and of itself because containing negative experiences to oneself often leads to the feelings of helplessness and despair (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002).

Given that the victims whose parents underestimate their crisis would most likely be forced to undergo such "lonely" coping, the distinct impact of child-parent discrepancies indicates that those victims probably appraise their experience more negatively than their counterparts whose parents accurately grasp their victimized status and help them cope with the predicament. This surmise, in turn, suggests that future research should examine how child-parent discrepancies on bullying influence parents' communication with victims as well as the impact of their support (or lack thereof) on the victims' well-being from an appraisal-based point of view (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Further, the current findings on the direct and indirect associations of family-level FCS profile with child-parent discrepancies and victims' well-being (Figure 2.1) point to the importance of exploring those interactive coping processes with regard to the family as a unit.

### *Practical Implications*

Together, this study's findings provide some implications for practitioners, the most notable of which is the need to go beyond the bully-victim dyad and to include parents when analyzing victims'



coping processes (cf. Espelage & Swearer, 2003; P. K. Smith & Myrono-Wilson, 1998). The current findings suggest that, even when two children with exactly the same disposition (e.g., FCS) are equally bullied, how well they are likely to cope might very well differ by their parents' orientations. For example, some children who apparently possess an open-affectionate orientation may nonetheless suffer from large child-parent discrepancies and be found unexpectedly vulnerable to bullying if their parents do not share those beliefs in openness, care, and support. Thus, practitioners such as school counselors and teachers should make efforts to talk to and know victims' parents in order to effectively help bullied individuals cope with their crisis.

This suggestion, however, should be taken with three important caveats. First, treatment of the information on bullying requires careful handling (Olweus, 1993; P. K. Smith, 2000). Uncritical co-sharing of potentially vulnerable information may cause boomerang effects and end up harming, rather than helping, the victim (cf. Petronio, 1994; Petronio et al., 1997). Second, and related to the first point, not all parents will be willing or able to provide effective support, even if they were told of their children's being bullied. Stockdale et al. (2002) found that, although rare, some parents have the attitude to blame victims for their weakness or other deficits that "invite" bullying. Further, even when parents are willing to support victims, they may not necessarily have skills to do so in a competent manner (for a discussion of supportive communication from a skill-based perspective, see Burlison & Goldsmith, 1998). Matsunaga (2008a) recently found that, whereas emotional support alleviates bullied victims' well-being and enhances their proclivity to disclose the victimized status to seek help, other types of support (e.g., network support) may not be as effective or even deteriorative.

Third, due to its cross-sectional nature, this study could not determine the causal relationship between child-parent discrepancy and victims' well-being. Therefore, although it seems reasonable to posit that large child-parent discrepancies indicate malfunctioning of family support system that affects victims' well-being (i.e., discrepancy → well-being), it is also possible that victims with low life satisfaction, perhaps due to poor child-parent relationships, choose not to reveal their crisis to parents

(i.e., well-being → discrepancy). In the latter case, merely encouraging victims to share their crisis with parents would probably fall short and more intensive counseling that involves parents may be necessary. To address these caveats, future research should examine the underlying mechanism by which child-parent discrepancy on bullying and victims' well-being are structurally associated.

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

Several additional limitations should be noted as qualifiers of this study's findings in general. Most important, the retrospective nature of the data should be taken into account when evaluating the current findings, although the reported recency was relatively short and recall fidelity high. Thus, future research should examine the inception of bullying, victims' information management, and impact of child-parent discrepancies in a more immediate fashion. At the same time, the long-term impact of bullying has been pointed out by several scholars (Farrington, 1991; Hunter et al., 2004) and the finding that parental underestimation of victimization still bore sizable effects on young-adult children's subjective well-being, even after years of interval, should not be discounted.

Also related to this retrospective nature of the current data is the validity of interpreting the difference between children's and parents' reports on bullying as an observed indicator of child-parent discrepancy. Because no step was taken to have those parties come to a consensus on which specific incident of victimization to recall, it is possible—very likely, even—that children and parents based their reports on different episodes. This, however, is the very point undergirding the current study's hypotheses; that is, if parents do not accurately grasp and therefore cannot identify their children's victimization experiences, such “gaps” pose a risk factor in the children's post-bullying adjustment process. This contention found support in the current study which has demonstrated the negative impact of child-parent discrepancies on the bullied victims' subjective well-being levels.

Second, the use of college students may have skewed the findings. Bullying has been shown to harm students' academic performance (e.g., Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivera, & Kernic, 2005). Thus, if severely bullied individuals are systematically less likely to go to college, this study's sampling

procedure might have biased the results. However, such biases, if present, should work to reduce the range of reported victimization experiences, and thus, make it difficult to find effects related to those experiences. In other words, the sampling bias caused by the use of college students, if any, should have resulted in *underestimation*, rather than *overestimation*, of the effects examined in this study.

Readers also should be reminded that the current study's sample consisted of predominantly Caucasian families who are relatively wealthy, well-educated, and non-divorced. Whereas research suggests that bullying is not limited to any particular segment of the society (Olweus, 1993), whether and how individuals with different ethnic-cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds communicate about bullying needs to be seen. Thus, researchers of future studies should make efforts to include various groups that were underrepresented in the current study (cf. Coontz, 2003). In a related vein, predominance of first-marriage families in the sample prohibited the test of the impact of divorce on the family dynamics associated with victims' coping and child-parent discrepancy. Finally, this study did not include the entirety of family but only one young-adult child and parents. Expanding the scope to a broader set of family members (e.g., siblings and grandparents) would shed light on complex family dynamics, whose surface the current study has scratched with the specific focus on child-parent perceptual discrepancies on the children's victimization experiences.

Despite these limitations, this study has obtained many interesting findings, which, in turn, point to several future directions. For example, scrutinizing victims' perceptions of the information on their victimization in terms of relevant concepts such as coping efficacy (W. A. Afifi & Weiner, 2004) and chilling effect (T. D. Afifi & Olson, 2005) would help clarify their information-management actions and inactions, as well as the generative process of child-parent discrepancies. Or, as noted above, exploration of effective communication to support bullied victims would prove valuable for practitioners. Building upon the current study's findings, future studies should explore these lines of research to advance better understanding of the coping process of bullied individuals.

## References

- Adams, B. N. (2004). Families and family study in international perspective. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *66*, 1076-1088.
- Afifi, T. D., & Olson, L. (2005). The chilling effect in families and the pressure to conceal secrets. *Communication Monographs*, *72*, 192-216.
- Afifi, W. A. & Weiner, J. L. (2004). Toward a theory of motivated information management. *Communication Theory*, *14*, 167-190.
- Barbato, C. A., Graham, E. E., & Perse, E. M. (2003). Communicating in the family: An examination of the relationship of family communication climate and interpersonal communication motives. *Journal of Family Communication*, *3*, 123-148.
- Baucom, D. H., Epstein, N., Rankin, L. A., & Burnett, C. K. (1996). Assessing relationship standards: The inventory of specific relationship standards. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *10*, 72-88.
- Bauer, D. J., & Curran, P. J. (2003). Distributional assumptions of growth mixture models: Implications for overextraction of latent trajectory classes. *Psychological Methods*, *8*, 338-363.
- Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural equations with latent variables*. New York: Wiley.
- Bond, L., Carlin, J. B., Thomas, L., Rubin, K., & Patton, G. (2001). Does bullying cause emotional problems? A prospective study of young teenagers. *British Medical Journal*, *323*, 480-484.
- Bowers, L., Smith, P. K., & Binney, V. (1994). Perceived family relationships of bullies, victims, and bully/victims in middle childhood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *11*, 215-232.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, *22*, 723-742.
- Burleson, B. R., & Goldsmith, D. J. (1998). How the comforting process works: Alleviating emotional distress through conversationally induced reappraisals. In P. A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion: Research, theory, applications, and contexts* (pp. 245-280). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

- Burleson, B. R., & MacGeorge, E. L. (2002). Supportive communication. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (3rd ed., pp. 374-424). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Caughlin, J. P. (2003). Family communication standards: What counts as excellent family communication and how are such standards associated with family satisfaction? *Human Communication Research, 29*, 5-40.
- Coontz, S. (2003). Diversity and communication values in the family. *Journal of Family Communication, 3*, 187-192.
- Crick, N. R. (1995). Relational aggression: The role of intent attributions, feelings of distress, and provocation type. *Development and Psychopathology, 7*, 313-322.
- Demo, D., Allen, K. R., & Fine, M. A. (2000). *Handbook of family diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71-75.
- Enders, C. K., & Bandalos, D. L. (2001). The relative performance of full information maximum likelihood estimation for missing data in structural equation models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 8*, 430-457.
- Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? *School Psychology Review, 32*, 365-383.
- Farrington, D. P. (1991). Childhood aggression and adult violence: Early precursors and later-life outcomes. In D. J. Pepler & K. H. Rubin (Eds.), *The development and treatment of childhood aggression* (pp. 5-29). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Fekkes, M., Pijpers, F. I. M., & Verloove-Vanhorick, S. P. (2005). Bullying: Who does what, when and where? Involvement of children, teachers and parents in bullying behavior. *Health Education Research, 20*, 81-91.

- Fitzpatrick, M. A., Marshall, L. J., Leutwiler, T. J., & Krcmar, M. (1996). The effect of family communication environments on children's social behavior during middle childhood. *Communication Research, 23*, 379-406.
- Fletcher, G. J. O., & Simpson, J. A. (2001). Ideal standards in close relationships. In J. P. Fprgas, K. D. Williams, & L. Wheeler (Eds.), *The social mind: Cognitive and motivational aspects of interpersonal behavior* (pp. 257-273). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gibson, W. A. (1959). Three multivariate models: Factor analysis, latent structure analysis, and latent profile analysis. *Psychometrika, 24*, 229-252.
- Glew, G. M., Fan, M.-Y., Katon, W., Rivera, F. P., & Kernic, M. A. (2005). Bullying, psychosocial adjustment, and academic performance in elementary school. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 159*, 1026-1031.
- Gordon, K. C., Baucom, D. H., Epstein, N., Burnett, C. K., & Rankin, L. A. (1999). The interaction between marital standards and communication patterns: How does it contribute to marital adjustment? *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 25*, 211-223.
- Guerrero, L. K., & Afifi, W. A. (1995a). Some things are better left unsaid: Topic avoidance in family relationships. *Communication Quarterly, 43*, 276-296.
- Guerrero, L. K., & Afifi, W. A. (1995b). What parents don't know: Topic avoidance in parent-child relationships. In T. J. Socha & G. H. Stamp (Eds.), *Parents, children, and communication: Frontiers of theory and research* (pp. 219-246). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Hawker, D. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 41*, 441-455.
- Hodges, E.V., & Perry, D. G. (1999). Personal and interpersonal antecedents and consequences of victimization by peers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*, 677-685.

- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*, 1-55.
- Hunter, S. C., & Borg, M. G. (2006). The influence of emotional reaction on help seeking by victims of school bullying. *Educational Psychology, 26*, 813-826.
- Hunter, S. C., Merchan, J. M., & Ortega, R. (2004). The long-term effects of coping strategy use in victims of bullying. *Spanish Journal of Psychology, 7*, 3-12.
- Jones, A., & Crandall, R. (1986). Validation of a short index of self-actualization. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 12*, 63-73.
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Rimpela, M., Marttunen, M., Rimpela, A., & Rantanen, P. (1999). Bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation in Finnish adolescents: School survey. *British Medical Journal, 319*, 348-351.
- Kochenderfer, B. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). Victimized children's responses to peers' aggression: Behaviors associated with reduced versus continued victimization. *Development and Psychopathology, 9*, 59-73.
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., & Skinner, K. (2002). Children's coping strategies: Moderators of the effects of peer victimization? *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 267-278.
- Kumpulainen, K., Räsänen, E., & Puura, K. (2001). Psychiatric disorders and the use of the mental health services among children involved in bullying. *Aggressive Behavior, 27*, 102-110.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Little, T. D. (2000). On the comparability of constructs in cross-cultural research: A critique of Cheung and Rensvold. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 31*, 213-219.
- Little, T. D., Slegers, D. W., & Card, N. A. (2006). A non-arbitrary method of identifying and scaling latent variables in SEM and MACS models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 13*, 59-72.

- MacKinnon, D. P., Lockwood, C. M., Hoffman, J. M., West, S. G., & Sheets, V. (2002). A comparison of methods to test mediation and other intervening variable effects. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 83-104.
- Matsunaga, M. (2008a, November). *Bully for the bullied victims: A Japan-U.S. cross-cultural test of a mediational model of appraisal, social support, and adaptation (MASA)*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, San Diego, CA.
- Matsunaga, M. (2008b). Item parceling in structural equation modeling: A primer. *Communication Methods and Measures, 2*, 260-293.
- Matsunaga, M., & Imahori, T. T. (2009). Profiling family communication standards: A U.S.-Japan comparison. *Communication Research, 36*, 3-31.
- Meredith, W. (1993). Measurement invariance, factor analysis and factorial invariance. *Psychometrika, 58*, 525-543.
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (2007). *Mplus user's guide* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Muthén & Muthén.
- Mynard, H., & Joseph, S. (2000). Development of the multidimensional peer-victimization scale. *Aggressive Behavior, 26*, 169-178.
- Nansel, T. R., Craig, W., Overpeck, M. D., Saluja, G., Ruan, W. J., & the health Behaviour in School-aged Children Bullying Analyses Working Group. (2004). Cross-national consistency in the relationship between bullying behaviors and psychosocial adjustment. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 158*, 730-736.
- Naylor, P., Cowie, H., & del Rey, R. (2001). Coping strategies of secondary school children in response to being bullied. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry Review, 6*, 114-120.
- Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know what we can do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.



- Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*, 3-72.
- Petronio, S. (1991). Communication boundary management: A theoretical model of managing disclosure of private information between marital couples. *Communication Theory, 1*, 311-335.
- Petronio, S. (1994). Privacy binds in family interactions: The case of parental privacy invasion. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 241-257). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Petronio, S. (2002). *Boundaries of private disclosure*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Petronio, S., Flores, L. A., & Hecht, M. L. (1997). Locating the voice of logic: Disclosure discourse of sexual abuse. *Western Journal of Communication, 61*, 101-113.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Contemporary approach to assessing mediation in communication research. In A. F. Hayes, M. D. Slater, and L. B. Snyder (Eds), *The Sage sourcebook of advanced data analysis methods for communication research* (pp. 13-54). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rigby, K., & Barnes, A. (2002). To tell or not to tell: The victimised student's dilemma. *Youth Studies in Australia, 21*, 33-36.
- Ryan, R. M., Chirkov, V. I., Little, T. D., Sheldon, K. M., Timoshina, E., & Deci, E. L. (1999). The American dream in Russia: Extrinsic aspirations and well-being in two cultures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*, 1509-1524.
- Schafer, J. L., & Graham, J. W. (2002). Missing data: Our view of the state of the art. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 147-177
- Sillars, A. L., Koerner, A., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2005). Communication and understanding in parent-adolescent relationships. *Human Communication Research, 31*, 102-128.
- Smith, P. K. (2000). *Bullying: Don't suffer in silence—An anti-bullying pack for schools* (2nd ed.). London: HMSO.

- Smith, P. K. (2004). Bullying: Recent developments. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 9*, 98-103.
- Smith, P. K., & Myrono-Wilson, R. (1998). Parenting and school bullying. *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 3*, 405-417.
- Smith, R. A. (2007). Language of the lost: An explication of stigma communication. *Communication Theory, 17*, 462-485.
- Sobel, M. E. (1982). Asymptotic confidence intervals for indirect effects in structural equations models. In S. Leinhardt (Ed.), *Sociological methodology* (pp. 290-312). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Stockdale, M. S., Hangaduambo, S., Duys, D., Larson, K., & Sarvela, P. D. (2002). Rural elementary students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of bullying. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 26*, 266-277.
- Vermunt, J. K., & Magidson, J. (2002). Latent class cluster analysis. In J. A. Hagenaars & A. L. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Applied latent class analysis* (pp. 89-106). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Yerby, J. (1995). Family systems theory reconsidered: Integrating social construction theory and dialectical process. *Communication Theory, 5*, 339-365.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>3</sup> The total number of the students enrolled in the respective course was over 3,600 for the semesters over which the current study's data were collected.

<sup>4</sup> Any students whose parents were unable to participate were not recruited for this study.

<sup>5</sup> Eighty-nine percent of the parents provided complete response to all questions (more than 50% provided response to an open-ended question asking for feedback). About 10% of the parents' response was incomplete or partially missing. No apparently systematic missing pattern was detected.

<sup>6</sup> To examine the impact of using the raw discrepancy score (including the negative discrepancies indicating rare parental overrating of bullying vis-à-vis their children's experience), all analyses reported in the current manuscript were repeated twice: In one such duplicate analysis, absolute discrepancy scores were used (i.e., negative discrepancy scores were converted to positive values) instead of the raw score, whereas in the other duplicate analysis, all negative discrepancy scores were transformed into zero. These duplicate analyses, however, yielded virtually the same results as those reported in the main text of the current manuscript; that is, the direction and statistical significance of all paths in the computed model remained the same. Perhaps such results were unsurprising after all, given the small proportion of negative discrepancy scores in the original data. Thus, the decision was made to report the results based on the raw discrepancy scores, for they were the most "natural" in the sense of representing what participants reported on the survey.

<sup>7</sup> The alpha reliability coefficients for the child-parent discrepancy scores were computed based on the three discrepancy scores with regard to each parent (e.g., child-father discrepancies on physical victimization, indirect bullying, and material bullying for child-father discrepancy's alpha).

<sup>8</sup> The regression weights reported in the main text (i.e., *B*s) are unstandardized.

<sup>9</sup> These results on indirect effects did not change in terms of statistical significance, even when direct paths from family FCS profiles to well-being were added to the model.

Table 2.1

*Conceptualization and Operationalization of Family Communication Standards*

Standard Dimension	Conceptualization	Operationalization (Example Questionnaire Item)
<i>Openness</i>	Beliefs in open communication and disclosures of a wide range of topics	People in families with good communication can talk openly to one another about any topic.
<i>Expression of Affection</i>	Beliefs in intimate interactions in which family members express love and care through both verbal and nonverbal means	People in families with good communication often say things like “I love you” to other family members.
<i>Maintaining Structural Stability</i>	Beliefs in rigid hierarchy and power structure as important components of family interaction	People in families with good communication have one person in the family whom everyone else always listens to and obeys.
<i>Emotional/Instrumental Support</i>	Beliefs in mutual and unconditional support	People in families with good communication help one another when they need it.
<i>Politeness</i>	Beliefs in respectful and polite family interaction	People in families with good communication are never rude to one another.

(Continued)

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Standard Dimension	Conceptualization	Operationalization (Example Questionnaire Item)
<i>Mindreading</i>	Beliefs in tacit understanding and sensitivity to each other's needs	People in families with good communication know what is going on in other family members' lives without asking.
<i>Discipline</i>	Beliefs in the importance of adhering to and keeping family rules	People in families with good communication understand that there will be swift punishment for violating family rules.
<i>Humor/Sarcasm</i>	Beliefs in the value of humor and sarcasm for family interaction	People in families with good communication poke fun of one another.
<i>Regular Routine Interaction</i>	Beliefs in having a regular basis for family members to see each other and do things together	People in families with good communication meet regularly to discuss things.
<i>Avoidance</i>	Beliefs that too personal or hurtful topics should be avoided in family interaction	People in families with good communication avoid topics that are too personal.

Table 2.2

*Pearson's Product-Moment Bivariate Correlations and Reliabilities for the FCS Dimensions for Young-Adult Children*

FCS Dimension	OPEN	EOA	MSS	EIS	PLT	MR	DCP	HS	RRI	AV
<i>Openness (OPEN)</i>	.86									
<i>Expression of affection (EOA)</i>	.65**	.86								
<i>Maintaining structural stability (MSS)</i>	.28**	.38**	.72							
<i>Emotional/instrumental support (EIS)</i>	.53**	.58**	.34**	.85						
<i>Politeness (PLT)</i>	.21**	.28**	.32**	.27**	.73					
<i>Mindreading (MR)</i>	.29**	.32**	.42**	.26**	.29**	.86				
<i>Discipline (DCP)</i>	.22**	.29**	.62**	.32**	.44**	.47**	.84			
<i>Humor/sarcasm (HS)</i>	.08	.16**	.11	.14*	-.15**	.23**	.12*	.79		
<i>Regular routine interaction (RRI)</i>	.47**	.49**	.40**	.38**	.39**	.36**	.43**	.15**	.81	
<i>Avoidance (AV)</i>	-.22**	-.10	.10	-.04	.34**	.24**	.20**	.12*	.14*	.73

Note. Diagonal elements are the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 2.3

*Pearson's Product-Moment Bivariate Correlations and Reliabilities for the FCS Dimensions for Parents*

FCS Dimension	OPEN	EOA	MSS	EIS	PLT	MR	DCP	HS	RRI	AV
<i>Openness</i> (OPEN)	.87/.84	.76**	.35**	.67**	.49**	.19**	.38**	.02	.24**	-.03
<i>Expression of affection</i> (EOA)	.84**	.90/.92	.32**	.68**	.40**	.21**	.47**	.23**	.33**	.13*
<i>Maintaining structural stability</i> (MSS)	.59**	.51**	.61/.56	.38**	.40**	.21**	.61**	.08	.31**	.16**
<i>Emotional/instrumental support</i> (EIS)	.80**	.64**	.51**	.85/.83	.42**	.13*	.47**	.03	.23**	.11
<i>Politeness</i> (PLT)	.32**	.20**	.33**	.24**	.71/.68	.31**	.61**	-.07	.39**	.44**
<i>Mindreading</i> (MR)	.33**	.24**	.37**	.32**	.41**	.88/.82	.38**	.11	.32**	.14*
<i>Discipline</i> (DCP)	.17**	.14*	.51**	.20**	.39**	.29**	.89/.90	.07	.40**	.21**
<i>Humor/sarcasm</i> (HS)	-.06	-.03	.03	.06	.26**	.21**	.30**	.72/.75	.18**	.06
<i>Regular routine interaction</i> (RRI)	.21**	.20**	.39**	.26**	.39**	.32**	.50**	.29**	.70/.73	.17**
<i>Avoidance</i> (AV)	-.17**	-.15**	.11	-.15**	.37**	.18**	.22**	.21**	.20**	.80/.86

Note. Diagonal elements are the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for fathers (left) and mothers (right). Values in the lower off-diagonal triangle are for fathers and those in the upper triangle are for mothers.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 2.4

*Bivariate and Partial Correlations between FCS and Child-Parent Discrepancies on Bullying*

Family Communication Standard	Child-Father Discrepancy				Child-Mother Discrepancy			
	$r_{CD}$	$r_{CD,F}$	$r_{CD,M}$	$r_{CD,FM}$	$r$	$r_{CD,F}$	$r_{CD,M}$	$r_{CD,FM}$
<i>Openness</i>	<b>-.16**</b>	<b>-.16**</b>	-.01	.06	<b>-.19**</b>	<b>-.26***</b>	-.07	-.05
<i>Expression of Affection</i>	-.09	-.03	.04	.08	<b>-.25***</b>	<b>-.22***</b>	<b>-.12*</b>	-.10
<i>Maintaining Structural Stability</i>	.01	<b>-.13*</b>	.07	-.04	<b>-.19**</b>	<b>-.32***</b>	<b>-.12*</b>	<b>-.27***</b>
<i>Emotional/Instrumental Support</i>	-.11	<b>-.16**</b>	.01	-.06	<b>-.27***</b>	<b>-.39***</b>	<b>-.15**</b>	<b>-.36***</b>
<i>Politeness</i>	<b>.14*</b>	-.07	<b>.25***</b>	.01	-.06	<b>-.14*</b>	.06	-.04
<i>Mindreading</i>	-.04	<b>-.23***</b>	.00	<b>-.24***</b>	-.11	<b>-.15**</b>	-.11	<b>-.18**</b>
<i>Discipline</i>	.08	-.03	<b>.15**</b>	.05	<b>-.15**</b>	<b>-.17**</b>	-.07	-.02
<i>Humor/Sarcasm</i>	.04	<b>.12*</b>	.01	<b>.24***</b>	.04	.00	.05	<b>.23***</b>
<i>Regular Routine Interaction</i>	.05	-.09	<b>.14*</b>	.10	<b>-.17**</b>	<b>-.28***</b>	-.06	<b>-.15**</b>
<i>Avoidance</i>	<b>.41***</b>	<b>.17**</b>	<b>.54***</b>	<b>.31***</b>	<b>.25***</b>	<b>.22***</b>	<b>.34***</b>	<b>.32***</b>

Note.  $r_{CD}$  = bivariate correlation between child's FCS and discrepancy score.  $r_{CD,F}$  = partial correlation controlling for father's FCS.  $r_{CD,M}$  = partial correlation controlling for mother's FCS.  $r_{CD,FM}$  = partial correlation controlling for father's and mother's FCS.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



Table 2.5

*Robust-Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the Three Family-Level FCS Profiles*

FCS Dimension	Family-Level FCS Profile								
	<i>Open-Affectionate</i>			<i>Detached</i>			<i>Mixed</i>		
	<i>(n = 136; 45.3%)</i>			<i>(n = 114; 38.0%)</i>			<i>(n = 50; 16.7%)</i>		
	Child	Father	Mother	Child	Father	Mother	Child	Father	Mother
<i>Openness</i>	4.44	4.72	4.72	3.80	3.89	4.12	4.65	3.82	4.45
<i>Expression of Affection</i>	4.41	4.82	4.73	3.64	3.70	4.01	4.77	3.73	4.50
<i>Maintaining Structural Stability</i>	3.48	4.17	3.98	3.27	3.62	3.46	4.42	3.44	3.85
<i>Emotional/Instrumental Support</i>	4.68	4.84	4.84	4.05	3.92	4.23	4.90	3.89	4.54
<i>Politeness</i>	3.10	3.69	3.72	2.89	3.50	3.34	3.81	3.31	3.69
<i>Mindreading</i>	3.63	3.63	3.44	3.33	3.37	3.06	3.98	3.27	3.18
<i>Discipline</i>	3.51	4.01	4.25	3.36	3.93	3.88	4.30	3.53	3.97
<i>Humor/Sarcasm</i>	3.41	2.98	2.87	3.31	3.29	2.68	3.18	3.03	2.82
<i>Regular Routine Interaction</i>	3.24	3.47	3.62	2.90	3.38	3.19	4.02	3.62	3.75
<i>Avoidance</i>	2.57	2.90	2.83	3.23	3.43	3.35	2.82	3.58	2.88

Note. All FCS dimensions were measured on a 5-point scale and higher scores indicate stronger endorsement of the respective dimension.

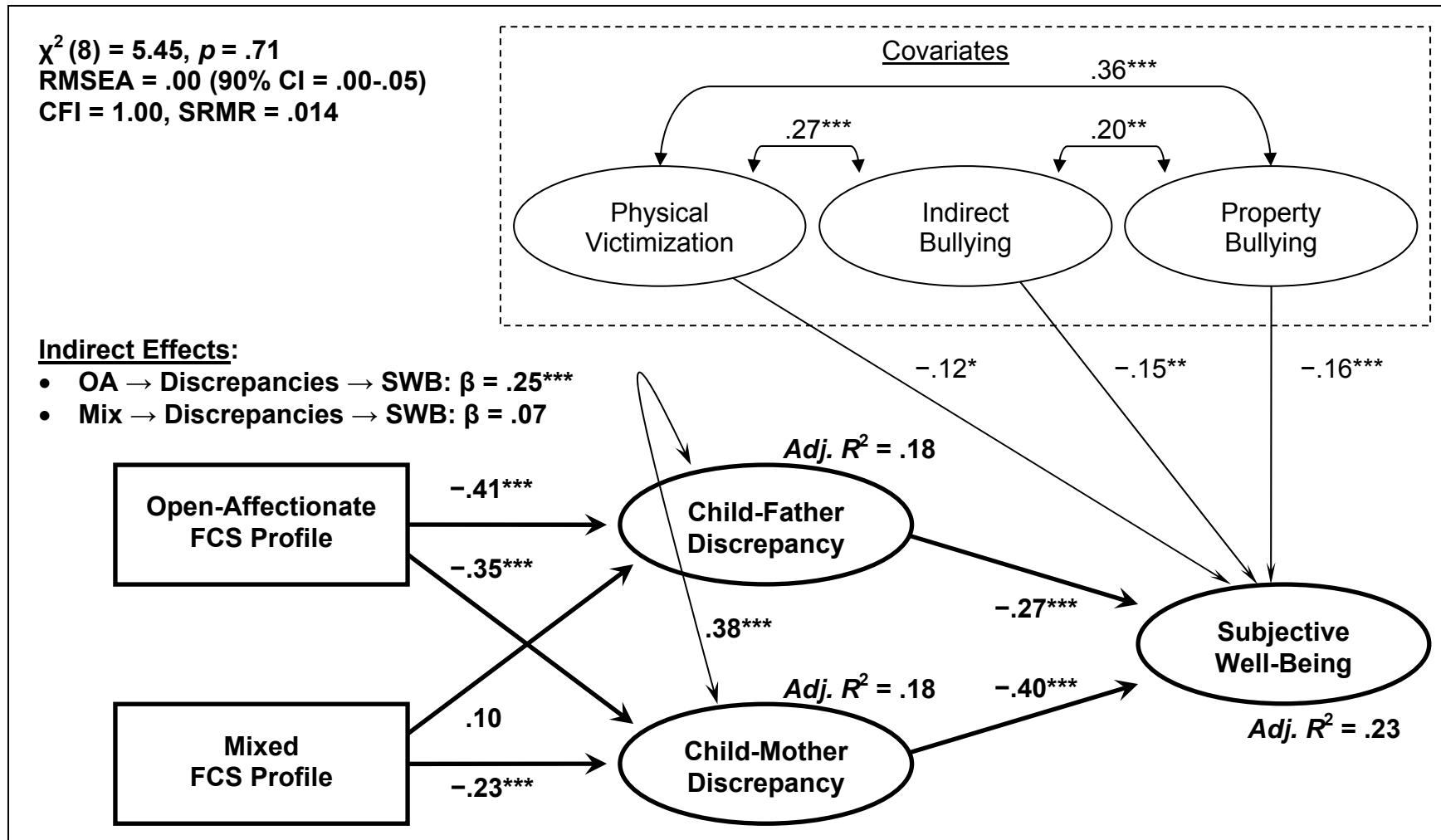


Figure 2.1. Family-Level FCS Profile → Child-Parent Discrepancy → Child's Subjective Well-Being Mediation Model. All path coefficients are standardized. Rectangles represent dummy-coded FCS profiles, whereas ovals represent unobserved latent factors. Arrow-headed paths indicate postulated causal relationships. Doubly-arrow-headed arcs indicate inter-factor correlations. Effects of bullying factors on child-parent discrepancies were controlled but the paths are not shown in the Figure. The *Detached* FCS profile was treated as the baseline category to estimate the effects of the *Open-Affectionate* and *Mixed* profiles.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

### Chapter 3

## Testing a Structural Model of Victims' Disclosure and Its Relations to Efficacy Perceptions and Family's Communication Orientations

### Abstract

Understanding how bullying comes to be disclosed remains a challenge to theory and practice. While it is clear that disclosure is frequently an effective coping strategy and we are learning more about how the process of disclosing key life events, little is known about the disclosure of bullying. This study ( $N = 261$  child-father-mother triads) examined the structural relationships among bullied individuals' disclosure of victimization experiences, efficacy perceptions, and their family's communicative orientation through a retrospective approach. Families were classified into three distinctive orientation profiles. Similarly, victims' disclosure patterns were explored through a latent class analysis. Thus identified family profiles and disclosure patterns were found to be structurally associated with each other via victims' efficacy perceptions. This mediation was discussed with reference to previous findings on parental misunderstanding of bullying and victimized individuals' coping process. Additionally, the disclosure patterns were found to differentiate victims by their post-bullying adjustment levels such that those who disclosed their experience to parents, best friend, and/or teacher showed more enhanced levels of subjective well-being than their undisclosed counterparts.

Bullying is a surprisingly frequent experience with estimates running as high as above 50% among the youth of the age of 11-15 years (Nansel et al., 2004); with victimization typically comes trauma and attendant physical and psychological problems (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001). In addition, the suffering of victims often is enduring, especially when they cannot talk about bullying to their surroundings. Disclosure provides such victims with one of the few effective coping strategies. Many, however, choose not to undertake this action (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). Thus, identifying what determines bullied victims' disclosure decision-making (i.e., whether to disclose about their being bullied or not; cf. Rigby & Barnes, 2002) marks an urgent agenda for the research on bullied victims' coping process.

Unfortunately, the research on bullying and bullied victims' coping is still at an emerging stage, with the motivational and structural factors related to bullied victims' disclosure behavior remaining largely unexplored. To fill this gap in the literature, the current study focuses on communicative disposition of victims' families and how it structurally relates to victims' perceptions of efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2001) and, ultimately, their disclosure behavior. Additionally, to what extent such disclosure behaviors are associated with the improvement of victims' mental well-being is examined to replicate previous findings.

In what follows, relevant literature is reviewed to map out this framework of the current study in greater detail. First, previous findings on disclosure as a coping strategy are presented with a note on bullied victims' tendency to avoid disclosing. Second, the construct of efficacy is highlighted as a key mechanism that undergirds victims' disclosure decision-making. Finally, the association between efficacy and communicative disposition of one's family is illustrated using the concept of family communication standard (FCS; Caughlin, 2003; see also Chapter 2). Following these reviews, research hypotheses are posed on the structural relationships among victims' disclosure, efficacy, FCS, and the outcome of disclosure in terms of mental well-being.

### *Disclosure as a Way of Coping with Victimization by Bullying*

Research suggests that disclosing about bullying may open up a gate to effective coping for victims (Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey, 2001; Smith, 2000). A number of studies have demonstrated that disclosure not only alleviates the damage of bullying but also helps victims escape their crisis. At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that not many make use of this promising strategy, suggesting the need for research on the motivational and structural factors that determine victims' decision-making on whether to reveal their state of affairs.

#### *Positive Outcomes Associated with Disclosure*

Disclosure about bullying (i.e., revealing one's bullied status to someone) is shown to be associated with positive emotional states of victims (Dumont & Provost, 1999). Hunter and Borg (2006), for example, found that victims who sought help, which requires the disclosure of their bullied status, showed less stress than their counterparts who concealed the fact of bullying from others. Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner (2002) revealed that the negative impact of bullying would be mitigated for the school children who talked to friends or family members about victimization, but not for those who engaged in either active problem-solving (e.g., directly telling bullies to stop) or passive strategies (e.g., ignoring bullies, crying, or running away). These findings suggest that disclosure may operate as a moderator that assuages the agony of victimization (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002).

In addition, disclosure seems to extinguish, or at least help victims escape, bullying. Hunter, Merchan, and Ortega (2004) discovered through their longitudinal study that victims who had told peers and/or family members about their being bullied would tend to become non-victims over a 2-year period. Similar findings are reported by Kochenderfer and Ladd (1997) and Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, and Chauhan (2004). Although Rigby and Barnes (2002) point out that telling school teachers about bullying sometimes may be ineffective or even worsen the situation,

they agree with other researchers on the point that disclosure, particularly to trusted figures such as family members, generally provides an effective coping strategy for bullied victims (see also Boulton, Trueman, Chau, Whitehand, & Amatya, 1999; Hunter et al., 2004).

*Proviso: Underutilization of Disclosure by the Victims*

This apparently promising coping strategy is, however, not utilized by many victims. In fact, a considerable proportion of victims keep the information on bullying from being known by others. Fekkes and associates (2005) report that as many as 30-50% of regularly victimized children in the Netherlands do not tell their parents about bullying. Rigby and Barnes (2002) estimate that approximately a quarter of Australian victims hide the fact of being bullied. Moriguchi (2007) and Yamawaki (2006) note that concealment is the norm, not an exception, among victims in Japan. Further, this global tendency of information concealment seems stable, if not amplified, beyond grade schools (Chapell et al., 2004; Glendinning, 2001).

This underutilization entails grim implications because it indicates that coping resources otherwise available and allegedly particularly useful to victims are not readily exploited. Given the dire consequences of victimization by bullying (Bond et al., 2001; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999), even a slight loss of coping resource should not be overlooked; and, in fact, the risk of losing coping resources that would become accessible via disclosure is argued to be of nontrivial impact.

Among a number of risk factors, disclosure helps reduce the alarming unawareness of victims' parents about bullying. The study reported in Chapter 2 investigated parents' (mis)understanding on bullying and found that parents largely underestimate their children's victimization experience. To explore this phenomenon structurally, families were classified into three profiles by their endorsed family communication standards (FCS; Caughlin, 2003) and the study found that certain profiles were associated with higher levels of child-parent discrepancy on

bullying. Further, this discrepancy was found to predict victims' mental well-being such that the children who had experienced bullying more than their parents suspected reported significantly low life satisfaction. Although such discrepancies may stem from various sources, it is plausible that the lack of children's disclosure would constitute a major cause. Put another way, identifying a motivational factor that determines bullied victims' decision-making on disclosure, and establishing the association between this mechanism and FCS profile, would elucidate the underlying structure of the FCS-discrepancy link found in the Chapter 2 study.

### *Self-Efficacy as a Key for Victims to Open Up*

The search for this explanatory mechanism that would help distinguish victims who venture to disclose from their unvoiced counterparts leads to a construct called efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2001). *Efficacy* refers to individuals' perceptions of the likelihood of their success to achieve a given goal—be it executing a certain behavior or attaining an outcome they desire. Bandura holds that the feeling of efficacy empowers its holders by reinforcing their agency and enhancing confidence to perform the respective behavior successfully. Afifi and Weiner (2004) posit in their theory of motivated information management that efficacy operates as the immediate predictor of one's management of anxiety-laden information.

The construct of efficacy involves a mixture of domain-specific perceptions (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1995). Among those, the current research focuses on coping, communication, and target efficacies. Although this is by no means an exhaustive set of efficacy variations,<sup>10</sup> these three concepts have been found useful in predicting one's management of the information loaded with anxiety and uncertainty, such as cancer diagnosis (Johnson, 1997), HIV/AIDS status (Benight et al., 1997), sexual health condition (Afifi & Weiner, 2006; Hale & Trumbetta, 1996), and relationship-threatening acts by romantic partners (Afifi, Dillow, & Morse, 2004). This well-demonstrated utility of efficacy for information management provides a theoretical basis for



incorporating it into the current research on bullied victims' disclosure management. Given the socially stigmatized nature of victimization by bullying (Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002) and victims' heavy anxiety tied to it (Yamawaki, 2006), the decision-making on whether to disclose about bullying may operate similarly to the management of sensitive information such as those noted above. Thus, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that efficacy provides a predictor of bullied victims' disclosure decision-making. Below, rationale for this working hypothesis is explicated along with a review of each of the specific efficacy concepts.

First, *coping efficacy* represents individuals' confidence about whether they can successfully manage and cope with the consequence of their information-management act (Bandura, 1997). This notion is especially relevant in the current study's context, because victims often are afraid that disclosure might result in escalation, rather than extinction or diminution, of bullying because it would inflame bullies (Yamawaki, 2006). Crick and Dodge (1994) point out that victims also fear their parents, once knowing the fact of bullying, might do something they do not want and make things uncontrollable. Thus, victims who feel they cannot manage possible outcomes of disclosure would likely avoid revealing their crisis.

*Communication efficacy* refers to individuals' perceptions regarding whether they can competently explain the background of the matter in question and make themselves understood. Some victims hesitate to talk about bullying because they are not confident in communicating about the problem (Yamawaki, 2006). Note that this notion of communication efficacy is distinct from that of coping efficacy, because the former represents one's confidence to approach the action in question (i.e., disclosure) in a competent manner whereas the latter concerns whether the anticipated results following that action could be successfully dealt with.

Finally, *target efficacy* concerns the individuals' perception of whether their interactional partner would readily engage in the process of information management. Of particular interest for

bullied victims is whether the recipient of their disclosure is able and willing to accommodate their disclosure. It should be noted that this notion involves two distinct concerns, one of which has to do with whether the target can perform the behavior victims want (i.e., *target ability*). As pointed out in Chapter 2, not all parents are suitably skilled to accommodate victims' disclosure. It seems plausible that victims are inclined to talk about their crisis to the extent that their parents are perceived as capable of accommodating their disclosure and, possibly, providing help. The other determining factor of target efficacy is the perceived willingness of a target to take part in the disclosure conversation (i.e., *target willingness*). Some parents are known to blame, rather than support, victims for their deficits that "invite" bullying (MacLead & Morris, 1996; Stockdale et al., 2002). Such attitudes would reduce victims' confidence that their parents would be helpful and thereby discourage them from disclosing their victimized situation.

Together, there seems a sufficiently strong theoretical basis for the following hypothesis:

H1: Victims are likely to disclose about bullying to their parents to the extent that they perceive coping, communication, and target efficacies toward doing so.

If substantiated, this hypothesis would shed light on the psychological mechanism underlying one of the most frustrating paradoxes of bullying research: Namely, the incongruity between well-documented positive outcomes of disclosure and victims' reluctance to talk about bullying.

#### *Family-Level FCS Profile as a Predictor of Victims' Efficacy for Disclosure*

Another aspect of disclosure dynamics is the communication system the victim perceives. One obvious motivation for victims to disclose is the hope that disclosure might produce others' support and thereby help them cope with bullying (Naylor et al., 2001). As Petronio (2002) points out, however, disclosure of socially undesirable matters entails risk because it may invite blame and pointing fingers, rather than support and listening ears. As noted above, victimization by bullying in fact exemplifies such stigmatized, hard-to-unveil experiences (Stockdale et al. 2002).

Nonetheless, victims whose family espouses mutual support and openness as the norm might be able to command strong coping efficacy in talking about bullied experiences.

It therefore seems plausible that victim's decision to disclose to families is based on their family's endorsed communication standards (Chapter 2; Matsunaga & Imahori, 2009).

*Communication standard* refers to individuals' cognitive representation of how "ideal" communication should unfold and, as such, it operates as an evaluative benchmark to which actual interactions are compared (Caughlin, 2004). The Chapter 2 study of the current research utilized this construct and classified the communicative disposition of 300 child-father-mother triads into three distinct "FCS profiles," or unique patterns of family communication standard endorsement. Given the impact of the surrounding social environment on individuals' thoughts in general, and their perception of efficacy, in particular (Bandura, 2000; Crick & Dodge, 1994), it is likely that bullied victims' efficacy can be traced to their families' FCS profile.

Yamawaki (2006) maintains that parents' receptiveness and the history of child-parent communication provide a central context that determines the children's confidence to talk about bullying (see also Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Consistent with this assertion, Berdondini and Smith (1996) found that victims with authoritarian (i.e., highly directive but not responsive; Baumrind, 1991) parents tend to conceal their bullied status and suffer the lack of adult figures with whom they feel comfortable to discuss the problem. Thus, to the extent that such communicative characteristics of a family as parental receptiveness and the power distance within child-parent relations reflect its members' endorsed standards, FCS profile would provide a useful apparatus to predict children's communication efficacy.

In addition, a certain FCS profile would either enhance or impair victims' target efficacy, which is a function of the perceived ability and willingness of the target (e.g., parents) to accommodate their disclosure. Unfortunately, some parents are not well-equipped to perform this

task ably and/or willingly (see Desforges with Abouchaar, 2003, for a review), or even consider bullying as in some part caused by victims' own fault (Stockdale et al., 2002). It should come as no surprise, then, if the children of such parents cannot feel confident about the parental ability and/or willingness to accommodate their disclosure. Thus, to the extent the construct of family communication standard taps parental dispositions and value orientations in a meaningful way, FCS profile should provide a viable predictor of bullied victims' target efficacy perceptions.

Together, it seems likely that FCS orientation of one's family is systematically linked to their efficacy perceptions. To test this surmise, the current study utilizes FCS profile (Chapter 2) to operationalize such familial dispositions and examines the hypothesis below:

H2: The FCS profile of bullied victims' family is associated with those victims' perceptions of coping, communication, and target efficacy.

Finding support for this hypothesis, in combination with the H1 of the current study, would establish a mediating path that connects the family-discrepancy link found in the Chapter 2 study (i.e., FCS Profile → Victims' Efficacy → Disclosure/Discrepancy). Further, it would clarify the role of family, particularly the significance of family communication, in the coping process of bullied victims (Berdondini & Smith, 1996; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Fekkes et al., 2005).

#### *Outcome of Disclosure: Replicating Past Findings with Increased Clarity*

Finally, the association between bullied victims' disclosure and their subjective well-being is examined to replicate previous findings. As noted earlier, a number of studies have demonstrated that disclosure helps bullied individuals cope with victimization (e.g., Dumont & Provost, 1999; Hunter & Borg, 2006; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). As Smith (2004) points out, however, many of those studies do not take into account the degree of victimization, because victims are typically identified in terms of whether they have been reportedly bullied or not (see also Espelage & Swearer, 2003). To address this limitation, the current study quantifies

the extent to which individuals have been bullied and controls for the variance associated with those victimization experiences in evaluating the buffering effect of their disclosure.<sup>11</sup> More specifically, the following hypothesis is tested in an attempt to reconfirm previous findings on the positive impact of disclosure on bullied victims' mental health with added precision:

H3: Controlling for the variance associated with experiences of bullying, individuals who have disclosed to their parents about victimization have a higher level of subjective well-being than do their undisclosed counterparts.

### *Method*

#### *Participants*

The current study's participants included 261 undergraduate students enrolled in a public-speaking course at a large northeastern university in the U.S. and their parents (195 fathers and 233 mothers). Among children (i.e., students), there were 156 females (59.8%) and 100 males (38.3%; five individuals did not indicate their sex). The majority was Caucasian/White (89.5%), followed by Latina/o or Hispanic (5.2%), African American (3.1%), and Asian American (2.2%). Mean age of the children was 19.8 years ( $SD = 2.9$ ), whereas parents' mean age was 50.7 ( $SD = 4.2$ ). Ethnicity breakdown of the parents was similar to that of the children. These parents were generally well-educated (about 70% had at least bachelor's degree) and relatively wealthy (median annual income was \$75,000 to \$100,000). Most (95.9%) were in their first marriage.

#### *Data-Collection Procedure*

Participants took online surveys. First, students who had experienced bullying and also both of whose parents would be willing and able to participate in the current research were identified via a preliminary survey.<sup>12</sup> From this initial pool, 266 victims were recruited.<sup>13</sup> The researcher then contacted those individuals via e-mail and had them forward a research participation invitation message to each of their parents separately. The message described the

study purpose and stressed the voluntary nature of participation. The message also contained a link to the parent-version survey website. Each family received a, automatically generated, unique 5-digit family code, which was used to match the response of parents and children. A pilot study with voluntary community members indicated that the completion of the parent-version survey would take 10-15 minutes at most (74.7% and 89.3% of fathers and mothers, respectively, successfully completed the survey after several reminders sent via their children).

When students had successfully forwarded the invitation message to both of their parents, they contacted the researcher, who, in turn, provided them with the uniform resource locator (URL) of the child-version survey website and also their family code. Completion of the child-version survey took 45-60 minutes and the children received partial course credit for participation. The survey was anonymous and the credit allocation to the students was managed by an independent research administrator. Finally, about 10% of the children were randomly selected and asked whether they indeed had taken the survey by themselves. All of them verified that they had completed the survey, establishing the response authenticity of the current data.

### *Measurement Instruments*

A series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were performed to examine the factor structure of the scales used in the current study, except for the disclosure of victimization experience (which was assessed via dichotomous questions; see below). These CFA models were considered acceptable when they met the criteria of  $RMSEA \leq .08$  and  $CFI \geq .90$  (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004). Full-information maximum likelihood estimator was used to accommodate missing data (Enders & Bandalos, 2001; Schafer & Graham, 2002).

*Family communication standards.* The FCS scale used in Chapter 2 (developed based on Caughlin's [2003] typology) was utilized to assess children, fathers, and mothers' family communication standard orientations. There were ten dimensions (*openness, expression of*

*affection, maintaining structural stability, emotional/instrumental support, politeness, mindreading, discipline, humor/sarcasm, regular routine interaction, and avoidance*; see Chapter 2, for the conceptualization and operationalization). Each dimension was measured using four or five items on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

To empirically verify that the FCS scale tapped the equivalent factors for both children and parents, measurement equivalence analyses were conducted (Meredith, 1993). The same set of items were used for the CFA modeling a given FCS dimension and the factor loadings were set to be equal across groups (i.e., children, fathers, and mothers), using Little, Slegers, and Card's (2006) non-arbitrary latent factor identification technique. See Table 3.1 for the bivariate correlations and reliabilities of FCS scale for the children, as well as the factor-equivalent model's fit index values; Table 3.2 shows the correlations and scale reliabilities for the parents.

Next, to identify unique configurations of family members' FCS orientation, latent profile analysis (LPA) was conducted using *Mplus* 4.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). LPA is akin to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in that both techniques use a set of observed variables to specify an unobserved factor; the difference between LPA and CFA is that the former models a categorical latent factor that, in this case, represents distinct FCS profiles.

LPA models are evaluated in light of multiple criteria, including statistical fit indices and conceptual interpretability of extracted profiles (see Vermunt & Magidson, 2002, for a review). In the current case, the sample-size adjusted BIC value—a relative fit index such that the lower the BIC, the better a model—dropped from 11452.45 to 9983.61 when a third profile was added. Modeling more profiles, however, did not improve the goodness-of-fit; the 4-profile and the 5-profile models' BIC values were 10400.95 and 10830.91, respectively. Further, the 3-profile model was most suitable in light of another index called entropy, which indicates how well a given LPA model classifies individuals. Entropy ranges from zero to 1.00 and a value of .80 or higher is

generally considered acceptable. The 3-profile model's entropy was .97, and all of the other examined models had lower entropy values (though they also marked values above .80). Finally, as described below, the three extracted profiles demonstrated clear interpretability. Hence, the decision was made to employ the 3-profile model in the current study.

Thus identified three profiles were almost identical in their characteristics to those found in the Chapter 2 study, indicating the generalizability of those profiles in the current population. The first profile characterized families whose members all exhibited strongly relationally oriented FCS patterns. The second profile was quite the opposite, such that FCS endorsement patterns of these family members outlined rather detached family communication orientation. Finally, the third profile indicated a combination of "relationship-focused" child and mother, and a detached father. Following the nomenclature developed in Chapter 2, these profiles were labeled, in turn, as *Open-Affectionate*, *Detached*, and *Mixed* (see Table 3.3 for parameter estimates).

*Experience of bullying.* Children's victimization experience was assessed retrospectively. First, respondents were provided with the definition of bullying based on Olweus (1993) and Smith (2004).<sup>14</sup> They were then asked to recall the most recent experience of bullying. The minimum length of the time since the last occurrence of bullying was less than two months ( $M = 10.2$  months;  $SD = 16.8$ ;  $Max = 56.5$ ), indicating the prevalence of bullying in not only grade schools but also middle schools and beyond (Chapell et al., 2004).

Respondents reported the frequency of specific experiences of victimization over three months or longer during the recalled period, using a questionnaire combining Mynard and Joseph's (2000) peer-victimization scale and Ybarra and Mitchell's (2004) online-bullying scale. Although this questionnaire originally had six dimensions, preliminary analyses revealed that some dimensions were empirically indistinguishable, and thus, the decision was made to merge those redundant dimensions. This resulted in four factors, each measured by four to six 7-point



items (0 = “Never”; 6 = “Almost Everyday”); namely, *physical bullying* (e.g., “Someone physically hurt you”;  $\alpha = .91$ ), *indirect bullying* (e.g., “Someone ridiculed you when you said something”;  $\alpha = .92$ ), *material harm* (e.g., “Someone broke your item intentionally”;  $\alpha = .76$ ), and *online bullying* (e.g., “Someone sent a nasty e-mail and/or text-message to you”;  $\alpha = .90$ ). This 4-dimensional model fit the data adequately (RMSEA = .05 and CFI = .98) and the four factors were moderately correlated with one another ( $r$ s ranging from .02 to .51; *Mdn r* = .16).

*Disclosure of bullied status.* Following the bullying questionnaire, children were asked whether they had disclosed those victimization experiences in a series of dichotomous questions (e.g., “Have you ever talked about those experiences to your father?”). Consistent with previous findings (e.g., Fekkes et al., 2005), it turned out that many victims did not disclose to their parents; whereas 69.2% disclosed to either or both of their parents (39.6% disclosed to both, 25.3% only to mother, and 4.3% only to father), over 30% did not talk about victimization to their parents. Further, inspection revealed that a considerable proportion of the victims disclosed to figures other than parents (e.g., best friend, teacher, etc.). Because individuals who found their family unresponsive might turn to such non-parental figures, the decision was made to broaden the scope of the current study and examine this phenomenon vis-à-vis disclosure to one’s parents.

To formally classify victims by their disclosure patterns, latent class analysis (LCA) was performed using *Mplus* 4.2. LCA is a specific version of LPA such that all indicators used in LCA are categorical; as such, LCA provides a useful tool to delineate hidden subgroups within the given data and classify individuals based on the prominent patterns of response variations (see Lanza, Flaherty, & Collins, 2003, for a review of LCA). Children’s response to the questions on whether they had disclosed to a select set of four figures (*father*, *mother*, *best friend*, and *teacher*) was used to specify their latent disclosure patterns.<sup>15</sup> This LCA pointed to a 3-class model. When a third class was added, *N*-adjusted BIC dropped from 1006.90 to 962.52; modeling a fourth class,

however, resulted in an increase up to 1031.23, indicating the optimality of the 3-class model. This model also marked entropy of .98, whereas its 2-class or 4-class counterparts' values were evidently lower (.86 and .81, respectively). Finally, all three classes showed clearly distinguishable and theoretically meaningful disclosure patterns.

The first class was characterized by high likelihoods to disclose to all figures except for teacher. This class was thus labeled as “*Parents and Best Friend*” (PBF) and included 99 individuals (38%). Individuals classified into the second class showed an interesting pattern such that they tended to disclose to their mother, best friend, and teacher, rather than father. As such, this class was named “*Mother, Best Friend, and Teacher*” (MBFT). There were 74 (28%) individuals classified as MBFT. Finally, the third class, labeled as “*Undisclosed*,” showed almost no inclination toward disclosure. The *Undisclosed* class included 88 individuals (34%).

*Perceived efficacy.* Children reported their efficacy perceptions with regard to disclosing about bullying to father and mother separately, using a modified version of Afifi, Morgan, et al.’s (2005) scale. Of note here is that the four efficacy factors were modeled as interrelated yet distinct factors. This decision was made on a conceptual basis. Although previous work by Afifi and his colleagues specified various efficacy factors as effect indicators driven by one unifying efficacy construct (cf. Bollen & Lennox, 1991), it is argued to be plausible that individuals have discrete efficacy perceptions simultaneously; for example, bullied victims might feel confident in explaining their victimized situation (high communication efficacy) but unsure of a given family member’s willingness to accommodate their disclosure (low target willingness) at the same time.

With four 5-point Likert-type items for each dimension, the questionnaire tapped *coping efficacy* (e.g., “I was quite sure what I should do if her/his reactions to my experiences were negative”;  $\alpha_{re: father} = .86$  and  $\alpha_{re: mother} = .91$ ), *communication efficacy* (e.g., “I was confident that I would be able to communicate with her/him about my experiences successfully”;  $\alpha_{re: father} = .87$

and  $\alpha_{\text{re: mother}} = .85$ ), *perceived target willingness* (e.g., “I was sure that, if we talked, s/he would listen to me carefully”;  $\alpha_{\text{re: father}} = .92$  and  $\alpha_{\text{re: mother}} = .93$ ), and *perceived target ability* (e.g., “I thought s/he might be able to do something if we talked”;  $\alpha_{\text{re: father}} = .90$  and  $\alpha_{\text{re: mother}} = .91$ ). The 4-factor CFA model for father-targeted efficacy perceptions fit the data well (CFI = .99 and RMSEA = .03), and so did the model for mother-targeted efficacy (CFI = 1.00 and RMSEA = .01). Consistent with the argument noted above, the four efficacy factors demonstrated quite reasonable distinctiveness vis-à-vis one another (*rs* ranging from .19 to .55; *Mdn r* = .38).

*Subjective well-being.* Children’s subjective well-being was assessed using eight 5-point Likert-type items adopted from the scales established by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) and Jones and Crandall (1986). Example items include, “I am very satisfied with how my life has turned out” and “Even if I could live my life all over again, I wouldn’t change any part of it” ( $\alpha = .94$ ). The measurement model fit the data well (CFI = .99 and RMSEA = .02).

### Results

#### *H1 & H2: FCS Profile → Efficacy Perceptions → Disclosure Pattern*

The first hypothesis of the current study predicted a positive association between bullied victims’ efficacy and their inclination toward disclosure, whereas H2 hypothesized that those efficacy perceptions would be determined by the FCS profile of the victims’ family (see Figure 3.1 for a conceptual summary). To test this model, a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis was performed using *Mplus* 4.2. To accommodate the categorical outcome (i.e., latent class of victims’ disclosure pattern) in the SEM framework and also account for missing data, the robust maximum likelihood estimation method with Monte Carlo numerical integration was used (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). FCS profile and victims’ disclosure pattern were modeled as dummy-coded variables (*Detached* profile and *Undisclosed* pattern were specified as the baseline category for each factor). Efficacy perceptions were specified as continuous latent factors using Bollen’s

(1989) latent-composite technique, in which an aggregate score, or a parcel, was computed for each factor; this parcel's factor loading was specified as 1.0 and the error variance as  $(1 - \alpha) \times s^2$ , where  $\alpha$  represents the scale reliability and  $s^2$  the variance of the computed parcel (see Matsunaga, 2008, for a discussion of the benefits and cautionary aspects of parceling in SEM).

This SEM analysis revealed a number of interesting associations among the constructs examined in the current study (see Table 3.5 for details of parameter estimates). First, FCS profile was systematically related to victims' efficacy perceptions. Children from *Open-Affectionate* families perceived significantly higher efficacy than their *Detached* counterparts in terms of all four factors (i.e., coping, communication, target willingness and ability) with regard to both father and mother. By contrast, *Mixed* children were indistinguishable from *Detached* in terms of father-targeted efficacy perceptions, whereas they did report higher efficacy with regard to their mother. The model as a whole demonstrated relatively small to moderate effects to account for the variance in bullied victims' efficacy perceptions (*adj. R*<sup>2</sup>s ranged from .08 to .26).

These efficacy perceptions, in turn, predicted victims' disclosure patterns. Both father- and mother-targeted efficacy perceptions were positively associated with the *Parents and Best Friend* (PBF) disclosure pattern over *Undisclosed*. On the other hand, victims' father-targeted efficacy perceptions did not help distinguish the victims who reported the *Mother, Best Friend, and Teacher* (MBFT) pattern from the *Undisclosed* individuals. Interestingly, victims' perceived target ability, with regard to both father and mother, had little effects on their disclosure patterns. In addition, it seemed noteworthy that the *Mixed* FCS profile showed a significant direct effect on the MBFT disclosure pattern, even after controlling for the effects of father- and mother-targeted efficacy perceptions. These results provided support for this study's H1 and H2, and, altogether, the eight factors of father- and mother-targeted efficacy perceptions account for about 20-25% of the variation in bullied victims' disclosure/non-disclosure patterns.

### *H3: Disclosure Effect on Bullied Victims' Mental Well-Being*

The third hypothesis stated that the victims who had disclosed about bullying to parents would have higher levels of mental well-being than those who had remained unvoiced, even after controlling for the variance associated with the degree of their victimization experiences. To test this hypothesis, a regression analysis was conducted using victims' disclosure/non-disclosure patterns as the predictor variable and their subjective well-being as the outcome variable; the four victimization factors (*physical bullying, indirect bullying, material harm, and online bullying*), as well as recall recency and four victimization-by-recall interactions, were included in the model as covariates. Given the relatively high scale reliabilities of the involved factors ( $\alpha = .76-.94$ ) and considering analysis parsimony, this observed-variable-based approach was deemed reasonable.

Results of the regression indicated that the three disclosure/non-disclosure patterns that were identified in the current study indeed accounted for the variance in bullied victims' well-being levels even after controlling for the effects of victimization reports, recall recency, and their interaction:  $\Delta F(2, 217) = 25.30, p < .001, \Delta R^2 = .16$ , overall adjusted  $R^2 = .29$ . More specifically, individuals with the PBF disclosure pattern had a significantly higher subjective well-being level than their *Undisclosed* counterparts ( $B = .74, SE = .11, p < .001, \text{partial } r = .39$ ), and so did MBFT individuals ( $B = .45, SE = .10, p < .001, \text{partial } r = .29$ ). Thus, H3 was supported.

### *Discussion*

The current study explored the psychological and structural mechanisms underlying bullied individuals' disclosure of their victimization experiences in order to gain insights into those victims' coping process. Toward this end, efficacy perceptions (Afifi & Weiner, 2004) and their family's orientation of communication standards (Caughlin, 2003; Matsunaga & Imahori, 2009) were highlighted as antecedent to those victims' disclosure decision-making. Impact of disclosure/non-disclosure patterns on post-bullying adjustment was also examined. The findings

are discussed in turn below with reference to the literature on bullied victims' coping, along with suggestions for future research to further extend the insights obtained in the current study.

*Psychological and Structural Mechanisms underlying Victims' Disclosure Dynamics*

The results of the current study revealed that bullied victims' disclosure/non-disclosure patterns are strongly shaped by their family's communicative orientation and the efficacy perceptions stemming from such family environment. More specifically, Child-father-mother triads' FCS profile was found to predict bullied victims' specific efficacy perceptions, which, in turn, differentiated those victims' likely disclosure/non-disclosure patterns (Table 3.5). Further, those disclosure patterns were statistically significantly associated with victims' mental well-being independently of the degree of their victimization experience and the recency of bullying.

*Effects of efficacy perceptions.* This study's findings suggest that not only do victims' efficacy perceptions operate as an underlying psychological mechanism of their disclosure, but also various efficacy factors exert distinctive effects on those disclosure/non-disclosure patterns. Whereas the first part of this finding per se—those who perceived confident in disclosing indeed engaged in disclosure—may not be greatly surprising, it nonetheless sheds light on one of the most frustrating paradoxes in the existing literature; that is, whereas disclosing one's victimized status has been found effective in coping with bullying and escaping from its iron claw, many victims dare not to undertake this promising strategy (Fekkes et al., 2005; Naylor et al., 2001). The current discovery of the linkage between efficacy and disclosure provides an initial step toward disentangling this paradox. Perhaps because victimization by bullying is a profoundly stigmatizing experience (Yamawaki, 2006), feeling of efficacy is an essential requirement for victims to overcome the fear of disapproval and engage in active disclosure.

Further, it is noteworthy that different efficacy factors were more or less distinctively related to victims' disclosure/non-disclosure patterns. Those unique effects indicate that the four

domain-specific efficacy perceptions examined in this study represent interrelated yet distinct psychological dynamics. It seems that, upon deciding whether to disclose their bullied experience to someone, victims mull over how such disclosure will unfold in various respects, including their coping, communication, and target efficacy. This intrapersonal simulation or mental rehearsal (cf. Honeycutt & Ford, 2001), in turn, determines how, if at all, the victims divulge their experience. Specifically, the results of the current analysis indicate that bullied individuals are likely to disclose to the extent that they feel: (a) they are able to cope with the consequence of disclosure, whatever it may be; (b) they are able to explain their experience intelligibly; and (c) the intended confidant will sincerely listen to their talk (Table 3.5).

In view of these patterns, it is interesting to note that, contrary to predictions, perceived target *ability* was largely unrelated to victims' disclosure (see Table 3.5). It appears peculiar as other efficacy perceptions, especially perceived target *willingness*, were robustly associated with disclosure. This apparently perplexing result may be explained by victims' expectancy. Yamawaki (2006) suggests that bullied individuals desperately need someone to stand by them as bullying gnaws victims' dignity and self-esteem (see also Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999), but they do not necessarily want others to actively intervene because it might result in getting them into further trouble. In fact, MacLead and Morris (1996) report, although anecdotally, that parents complaining to the school or confronting the bullies' parents, for example, might end up putting their children (i.e., victims) on spot and exacerbating the problem. These accounts explain the absence of the linkage between victims' perceived target ability and disclosure behavior. To illustrate, victims may not expect their confidants to help stop bullying, and thus, perceptions of those disclosure recipients' ability to intervene do not affect disclosure patterns. To test out this surmise, future studies should examine the type of support bullied victims desire and whether fulfillment of such expectancies indeed enhances effective coping.

*Effects of FCS profile.* Impact of the FCS profile marks another set of findings that merit discussion. Children from *Open-Affectionate* families had stronger efficacy perceptions relative to their *Detached* counterparts; similarly, those from *Mixed* families reported stronger mother-targeted efficacy, though their father-targeted perceptions were indistinguishable from *Detached*. In tandem with the linkage between efficacy and disclosure patterns noted above, these findings illuminate the Chapter 2 finding that the parents of *Detached* families tend to underestimate their children's victimization experience (i.e., victims from *Detached* families generally have been bullied more than their parents suspect). To illustrate, the children of *Open-Affectionate* families, and, to a lesser extent, those from *Mixed* families, have stronger efficacy vis-à-vis their *Detached* counterparts; such enhanced efficacy perceptions, in turn, help them divulge their victimized experience to parents. Thus, assuming that the parents who receive disclosure would have a better grasp of their children's victimization experience than those whose children remain undisclosed, the FCS profile → efficacy → disclosure path identified in this study accounts for why parents of *Open-Affectionate* and *Mixed* families generally estimate the degree to which their children have been bullied more accurately than those from *Detached* families.

In fact, an ad hoc analysis revealed that the total effects of FCS profiles on disclosure patterns were statistically significant ( $ps < .001$ , except for *Mixed* profile's effect on PBF) such that *Open-Affectionate* victims were about eight times more likely to show the *Parents and Best Friend* (PBF) disclosure pattern and 2.7 times more likely to show the *Mother, Best Friend, and Teacher* (MBFT) pattern. *Mixed* victims were 10.5 times more likely to show the MBFT pattern, though their PBF likelihood was indistinguishable from *Detached* (Odds Ratio = 1.07). These findings substantiate the importance of the role played by family in bullied victims' coping process, as they evidence that one of the few effective coping behavior—disclosure about bullying—is partially determined not only by victims' individual disposition but by their family members'



communicative orientations as well. This is argued to be an important finding because, as Smith (2000, 2004) noted, research on bullying long has focused on sociodemographic risk factors for individuals to become bullies and/or victims (e.g., Olweus, 1993) or on the impact of bullying on victims' well-being (e.g., Hawker & Boulton, 2000); on the other hand, the research on victims' coping process is still at its beginning phase and, particularly, how their surroundings such as parents can best help their post-bullying adjustment has caught researchers' attention only recently (Desforges with Abouchaar, 2003; Hunter & Borg, 2006; Yamawaki, 2006). Nonetheless, the current findings have shown a promising model of the research on interpersonal and communicative dynamics revolving around bullied victims' coping process.

There are several possible lines to further extend the current findings. One approach, which is perhaps the "logical next step," is to explore actual communicative characteristics of FCS profile, as well as their affective and cognitive correlates, to determine what communication nourishes or demolishes victims' efficacy perceptions. Identification of such efficacy-enhancing (and efficacy-impairing) communication would be particularly valuable for practitioners, such as teachers and school counselors, who deal with bullied victims and their family. Another venue of research that would fruitfully build on this study's findings is the notion of "collective efficacy" (e.g., Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; see Bandura, 2000, for a review). Research suggests that one's efficacy perception is influenced by that of her or his surroundings such that the members of highly efficacious group tend to feel strong efficacy. For example, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) found that local communities' overall determination to combat against crimes was associated with their individual members' efficacy for the respective social undertaking. Thus, future studies exploring how victims' efficacy is affected by their family members' perceptions vis-à-vis their FCS profile would be able to clarify the current findings and thereby illuminate some communicative-psychological dynamics that have been left unexplored in this study.

*Disclosure/Non-Disclosure Patterns and Their Associations with Victims' Well-Being*

LCA performed in the current study has identified three distinct disclosure and non-disclosure patterns. These results point to the complex nature of bullied victims' coping process. In particular, discovery of the *Mother, Best Friend, and Teacher* (MBFT) class indicates that victims' coping via disclosure may not necessarily progress linearly from closest and most intimate (e.g., parents) to less intimate (e.g., teacher), for those individuals selectively disclosed to their teachers but not to fathers. This finding, along with the discovery of the *Parents and Best Friend* (PBF) pattern, suggests that a "stage" model may be of limited utility in theorizing about bullied victims' coping process, as there seems to be no single set pattern or general schema which all victims follow upon selecting disclosure partners; rather, they adjust their coping maneuver according to the relational context in which they are situated. At the same time, it should be noted that this interpretation assumes the relationship with fathers is generally considered more intimate than that with teachers, which may not necessarily be the case (see, e.g., Mitchell-Copeland, Denham, & DeMulder, 1997; Schneider, Atkinson, & Tardif, 2001). To clarify this conundrum, future studies should pursue if bullied victims' disclosure behavior really follows a linearly expansive pattern through a longitudinal investigation.

Additionally, this relationship-centered perspective provides an explanation for the strong association between the MBFT disclosure pattern and the *Mixed* FCS profile. Fathers of the *Mixed* families showed noticeably high avoidance orientation (Table 3.3). It seems reasonable to posit that the victims of *Mixed* families are aware of this disengaged disposition of their father, and therefore, do not venture to disclose to him; further, perhaps to compensate the need for disclosure that is unfulfilled in their interactions with father, those from *Mixed* families turn to those they regularly meet at school (i.e., best friend and teacher). In relation to this surmise, it should be noted that the likelihood MBFT victims disclose to their mother is somewhat low (70%), whereas

mother is the most likely recipient of disclosure for their PBF counterparts (Table 3.4). Given the strong tie between MBFT and the *Mixed* FCS profile, this result suggests that *Mixed* fathers' detached orientation might even ripple over the general communication environment of their family and thereby hinder the child-mother interaction, even though both children and mothers in *Mixed* families have FCS orientations conducive to disclosure.

Such "ripple-over effects" may be best explained by family systems theory (Yerby, 1995), which posits that family is an integrated system consisting of various relational units and communication in one part of the family influences the functioning of another relational system within the same family. Further, this perspective suggests that bullied victims' coping is not merely an individual matter but relational process, and communication of and around the victims, including that which involves their family, is of unignorable impact. On this front, although the existing literature on bullying is mostly gathered in the fields such as psychopathology, sociology, and developmental/educational psychology (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Moriguchi, 2007; Olweus, 1993; Smith, 2004), the current findings are argued to have demonstrated theoretical utility of the perspective centering on communication and interpersonal relationship.

Finally, the results of the regression analysis have replicated the coping-enhancing effect of victims' disclosure (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). Specifically, *Undisclosed* victims had markedly lower subjective well-being scores than those showing disclosure-oriented patterns (PBF and MBFT). This result is in line with previous findings that not talking about being bullied leads victims to chronic rumination and desperation, severely harming their mental health (Yamawaki, 2006). It should be reminded that these results were obtained after controlling for the variance associated with the degree of victimization experiences and the recall recency, which are typically not taken into account in previous studies. Thus, not only do the current findings provide support for the notion of victims' disclosure as an

effective coping strategy but they also have shown the robustness of such effectiveness vis-à-vis severity and recency of one's bullying experience.

In terms of the comparison between PBF and MBFT, those showing the former pattern reported a higher level of well-being, which is consistent with Rigby and Barnes's (2002) contention that disclosure to school teacher may not always prove helpful. Another, perhaps complementary, interpretation for the less optimal well-being level of MBFT victims is that they could not fully entertain parental support because they did not disclose to their father. Future research should explore the dynamics surrounding MBFT individuals and their coping process to clarify these surmises. On the other hand, talking about one's bullied experience to parents and best friend has been consistently associated with an improved state of mind among victims (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Smith et al., 2004). This account explains the better-adjusted mental state of the PBF individuals, who have made use of support from both parents and best friend.

Taken together, these findings highlight the significance of friendship, as well as the child-parent relationship, in bullied victims' coping process. Note that the two disclosure patterns characterized by better adjustment (i.e., PBF and MBFT) both involved best friend as one of the highly likely recipients of disclosure (Table 3.4). Given the strong norm of unconditional support characteristic to friendship (Barbee, Rowatt, & Cunningham, 1998; Burleson, Samter, & Luccetti, 1992), it seems likely that bullied victims feel comfortable to turn to their best friend for social support. This perceived ease seems particularly crucial in the context of bullied victims' disclosure because, as noted repeatedly in this paper, victimization by bullying is strongly stigmatizing, and thus, disclosing one's bullied status renders them in a highly vulnerable position (Stockdale et al., 2002; Yamawaki, 2006). In such a circumstance, having someone whom one can trust as "best friend" would provide a safe haven, where they feel comfortable in seeking support without worrying over potential rejection and disapproval. Future research needs to elaborate on this point

and investigate how friendship norms held by victims are associated with their coping process, in general, and disclosure patterns, in particular.

### *Limitations and Concluding Remarks*

Prior to concluding this study, several limitations need to be noted. First, readers should be reminded of the retrospective and cross-sectional nature of the current study. Whereas the recency of reported victimization experience was taken into account in the test of H3, the possibility of distorted memory and other recall-related problems is a concern (see Schacter, 1997, for a review of memory distortion). In addition, although the current study's data were found consistent with the hypothesized model (Figure 3.1), the causal relationships among the constructs could not be determined due to the correlational and cross-sectional nature of the current study. This is in part inevitable because investigating the impact of bullying and its related phenomena, such as victims' disclosure, through an experimental approach poses a serious ethical challenge. Similarly, reliance on recall data was considered necessary to secure sufficient variances for the analysis; spotting bullying *flagrante delicto* is extremely hard, let alone systematically analyzing it in a large scale (Olweus, 1993; Smith, 2004). Nonetheless, to address these limitations and solidify the current findings, future studies should strive to gather longitudinal data, preferably in as immediate a way as possible in each data-collection wave.

Second, selection bias is an important limitation over the generalizability of this study's findings. Participants of the current study were identified through a selective screening process, and thus, the findings based on their reports may not fully generalize to larger populations. Researchers of future studies should cast a wider net for recruitment and examine if the current findings would be extendable to those who were not well represented in this study.

Finally, and in relation to the abovementioned selection procedure, limited sample size and diversity should be noted as a limitation. Analysis methods used in the current study, particularly

LCA/LPA and SEM, are large-sample techniques, and thus, their performance may have been compromised by a relatively small sample size. Regarding the SEM analysis, however, a power analysis based on MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara's (1996) algorithm indicated that the current data had sufficient statistical power. As for LCA/LPA, reliance on *N*-adjusted BIC is argued to have hedged the concern over the sample size. Lack of diversity is perhaps more serious; families examined in the current study were highly homogenous in terms of their demographic characteristics. Particularly, although previous research indicates that experiencing parents' divorce and/or growing up in a single-parent household might be risk factors for children to become victims of bullying (e.g., Berdondini & Smith, 1996; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999), predominance of first-marriage families made it impossible to examine the impact of divorce on victims' coping process. Again, future research should make efforts to collect data from a more diverse array of individuals and examine the generalizability of the current findings.

In spite of these limitations, the current study has obtained several intriguing findings through innovative approaches such as LCA/LPA and demonstrated a promising model of the research on bullied victims' coping process from a perspective centering on communication and interpersonal relationships. Whereas the existing literature on bullying mostly consists of either micro- or macro-level research focusing on involved parties' individual/psychological traits or sociological factors, the current findings point to the theoretical utility of the communication-centered perspective at the interpersonal level. Identification of the underlying structure of victims' disclosure, alongside the robustness of its positive effect on their mental well-being, epitomizes this significance of communication in bullied individuals' coping process. Future research should build on these findings and further explore the characteristics of the communication revolving around those victims vis-à-vis its impact on their coping process.

## References

- Afifi, W. A., Dillow, M. & Morse, C. (2004). Seeking information in relational contexts: A test of the theory of motivated information management. *Personal Relationships, 11*, 429-450.
- Afifi, W. A., Morgan, S. E., Stephenson, M., Morse, C., Harrison, T., Reichert, T., & Long, S. D. (2006). Examining the Decision to Talk with Family about Organ Donation: Applying the Theory of Motivated Information Management. *Communication Monographs, 73*, 188-215.
- Afifi, W. A. & Weiner, J. L. (2004). Toward a theory of motivated information management. *Communication Theory, 14*, 167-190.
- Afifi, W. A., & Weiner, J. L. (2006). Seeking information about sexual health: Applying the theory of motivated information management. *Human Communication Research, 32*, 35-57.
- Andreou, E. (2000). Bully/victim problems and their association with psychological constructs in 8- to 12-year-old Greek schoolchildren. *Aggressive Behavior, 26*, 49-56.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (2000). Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 9*, 75-78.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 1-26.
- Barbee, A. P., Rowatt, T. L., & Cunningham, M. R. (1998). When a friend is in need: Feelings about seeking, giving, and receiving social support. In P. A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion: Research, theory, applications, and contexts* (pp. 281-301). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 11*, 56-95.

- Benight, C. C., Antoni, M. H., Kilbourn, K., Ironson, G., Kumar, M. A., Fletcher, M. A., et al. (1997). Coping efficacy buffers psychological and physiological disturbances in HIV+ men following a natural disaster. *Health Psychology, 16*, 248-255.
- Berdondini, L., & Smith, P. K. (1996). Cohesion and power in the families of children involved in bully/victim problems at school. *Journal of Family Therapy, 18*, 99-102.
- Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural equations with latent variables*. New York: Wiley.
- Bollen, K., & Lennox, R. (1991). Conventional wisdom on measurement: A structural equation perspective. *Psychological Bulletin, 110*, 305-314.
- Bond, L., Carlin, J. B., Thomas, L., Rubin, K., & Patton, G. (2001). Does bullying cause emotional problems? A prospective study of young teenagers. *British Medical Journal, 323*, 480-484.
- Boulton, M., Trueman, M., Chau, C., Whitehand, C., & Amatya, K. (1999). Concurrent and longitudinal links between friendship and peer victimization: Implications for befriending interventions. *Journal of Adolescence, 22*, 461-466.
- Burleson, B. R., Samter, W., & Luccetti, A. E. (1992). Similarity in communication values as a predictor of friendship choices: Studies of friends and best friends. *Southern Communication Journal, 57*, 260-276.
- Caughlin, J. P. (2003). Family communication standards: What counts as excellent family communication and how are such standards associated with family satisfaction? *Human Communication Research, 29*, 5-40.
- Chapell, M., Casey, D., De la Cruz, C., Ferrell, J., Forman, J., Kipkin, R., et al. (2004). Bullying in college by students and teachers. *Adolescence, 153*, 53-64.
- Crick, N. R., & Dodge, K. A. (1994). A review and reformulation of social-information-processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, 115*, 74-101.



- Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin, 113*, 487-496.
- Desforges, C., with Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review*. Research report (RR433) for the Department for Education and Skills. London: Queen's Printer.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71-75.
- Dumont, M., & Provost, M. A. (1999). Resilience in adolescence: Protective role of social support, coping strategies, self-esteem, and social activities on experience of stress and depression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28*, 343-363.
- Enders, C. K., & Bandalos, D. L. (2001). The relative performance of full information maximum likelihood estimation for missing data in structural equation models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 8*, 430-457.
- Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? *School Psychology Review, 32*, 365-383.
- Fekkes, M., Pijpers, F. I. M., & Verloove-Vanhorick, S. P. (2005). Bullying: Who does what, when and where? Involvement of children, teachers and parents in bullying behavior. *Health Education Research, 20*, 81-91.
- Feltz, D. L., & Lirgg, C. D. (1998). Perceived team and player efficacy in hockey. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 557-564.
- Glendinning, P. M. (2001). Workplace bullying: Curing the cancer of the American workplace. *Public Personal Management, 30*, 269-286.
- Hale, J. L., & Trumbetta, S. L. (1996). Women's self-efficacy and sexually transmitted disease preventive behaviors. *Research in Nursing and Health, 19*, 101-110.

- Hawker, D. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 41*, 441-455.
- Honeycutt, J. M., & Ford, S. G. (2001). Mental imagery and intrapersonal communication: A review of research on imagined interactions (IIs) and current developments. *Communication yearbook 25* (pp. 315-345). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*, 1-55.
- Hunter, S. C., & Borg, M. G. (2006). The influence of emotional reaction on help seeking by victims of school bullying. *Educational Psychology, 26*, 813-826.
- Hunter, S. C., Merchan, J. M., & Ortega, R. (2004). The long-term effects of coping strategy use in victims of bullying. *Spanish Journal of Psychology, 7*, 3-12.
- Johnson, J. D. (1997). *Cancer-centered information seeking*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Jones, A., & Crandall, R. (1986). Validation of a short index of self-actualization. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 12*, 63-73.
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Rimpela, M., Marttunen, M., Rimpela, A., & Rantanen, P. (1999). Bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation in Finnish adolescents: School survey. *British medical Journal, 319*, 348-351.
- Kochenderfer, B. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). Victimized children's responses to peers' aggression: Behaviors associated with reduced versus continued victimization. *Development and Psychopathology, 9*, 59-73.
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., & Skinner, K. (2002). Children's coping strategies: Moderators of the effects of peer victimization? *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 267-278.

- Lanza, S. T., Flaherty, B. P., & Collins, L. M. (2003). Latent class and latent transition models. In J. A. Schinka & W. F. Velicer (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology: Vol. 2. Research methods in psychology* (pp. 663–685). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Little, T. D., Slegers, D. W., & Card, N. A. (2006). A non-arbitrary method of identifying and scaling latent variables in SEM and MACS models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 13*, 59-72.
- MacCallum, R. C., Browne, M. W., & Sugawara, H. M. (1996). Power analysis and determination of sample size for covariance structure modeling. *Psychological Methods, 1*, 130-149.
- MacLead, M., & Morris, M. (1996). *Why me? Children talk to ChildLine about bullying*. London: ChildLine.
- Maddux, J. E. (Ed.). (1995). *Self-efficacy, adaptation, and adjustment: Theory, research, and application*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Marsh, H. W., Hau, K.-T., & Wen, Z. (2004). In search of golden rules: Comment on hypothesis-testing approaches to setting cutoff values for fit indexes and dangers in overgeneralizing Hu and Bentler's (1999) findings. *Structural Equation Modeling, 11*, 320-341.
- Matsunaga, M. (2008). Item parceling in structural equation modeling: A primer. *Communication Methods and Measures, 2*, 260-293.
- Matsunaga, M. & Imahori, T. T. (2009). Profiling family communication standards: A U.S.-Japan comparison. *Communication Research, 36*, 3-31.
- Meredith, W. (1993). Measurement invariance, factor analysis and factorial invariance. *Psychometrika, 58*, 525-543.
- Mitchell-Copeland, J., Denham, S. A., & DeMulder, E. K. (1997). Q-sort assessment of child-teacher attachment relationships and social competence in the preschool. *Early Education & Development, 8*, 27-39.
- Moriguchi, A. (2007). *Ijime no kouzou* [Structure of bullying]. Tokyo: Shincho-sha.

- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (2007). *Mplus user's guide* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Muthén & Muthén.
- Mynard, H., & Joseph, S. (2000). Development of the multidimensional peer-victimization scale. *Aggressive Behavior, 26*, 169-178.
- Nansel, T. R., Craig, W., Overpeck, M. D., Saluja, G., Ruan, W. J., & the health Behaviour in School-aged Children Bullying Analyses Working Group. (2004). Cross-national consistency in the relationship between bullying behaviors and psychosocial adjustment. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 158*, 730-736.
- Naylor, P., Cowie, H., & del Rey, R. (2001). Coping strategies of secondary school children in response to being bullied. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry Review, 6*, 114-120.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know what we can do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Petronio, S. (2002). *Boundaries of private disclosure*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Rigby, K., & Barnes, A. (2002). To tell or not to tell: The victimised student's dilemma. *Youth Studies in Australia, 21*, 33-36.
- Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crimes: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science, 277*, 918-924.
- Schacter, D. L. (Ed.). (1997). *Memory distortion: How minds, brains, and societies reconstruct the past*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schafer, J. L., & Graham, J. W. (2002). Missing data: Our view of the state of the art. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 147-177.
- Schneider, B. H., Atkinson, L., & Tardif, C. (2001). Child-parent attachment and children's peer relations: A quantitative review. *Developmental Psychology, 37*, 86-100.
- Smith, P. K. (2000). *Bullying: Don't suffer in silence—An anti-bullying pack for schools* (2nd ed.). London: HMSO.

- Smith, P. K. (2004). Bullying: Recent developments. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 9*, 98-103.
- Smith, P. K., Talamelli, L., Cowie, H., Naylor, P., & Chauhan, P. (2004). Profiles of non-victims, escaped victims, continuing victims and new victims of school bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 565-581.
- Stockdale, M. S., Hangaduambo, S., Duys, D., Larson, K., & Sarvela, P. D. (2002). Rural elementary students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of bullying. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 26*, 266-277.
- Vermunt, J. K., & Magidson, J. (2002). Latent class cluster analysis. In J. A. Hagenaars & A. L. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Applied latent class analysis* (pp. 89-106). New York: CUP.
- Yamawaki, Y. (2006). *Kyoushitsu no akuma: Mienai "Ijime" wo kaiketsu surutameni* [Evils in the classroom: To resolve invisible "bullying"]. Tokyo: Potpourri.
- Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2004). Youth engaging in online harassment: Associations with caregiver-child relationships, Internet use, and personal characteristics. *Journal of Adolescence, 27*, 319-336.
- Yerby, J. (1995). Family systems theory reconsidered: Integrating social construction theory and dialectical process. *Communication Theory, 5*, 339-365.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>10</sup> For example, Bandura (2000) discusses a group-based notion of collective efficacy (for empirical applications of collective efficacy, see Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Andreau (2004) has scrutinized the impact of grade-school children's efficacy beliefs for assertion, aggression, and learning and performance on bullying-related problems.

<sup>11</sup> Although Chapter 2 took a similar approach by incorporating one's victimization scores as covariates in the analysis, his study focused on child-parent discrepancy on bullying, rather than the impact of disclosure per se.

<sup>12</sup> This preliminary survey was conducted as part of the respective course's subject-pool protocol and all enrolled students were required to take it. A total of 3,600 students took the preliminary survey during the semesters over which the current study was carried out.

<sup>13</sup> Any students whose parents were alleged to be either unwilling or unable to participate were not recruited for the current study.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 2 for the definition statement of bullying used in this study.

<sup>15</sup> Those figures were selected on the basis of previous findings on the most likely recipient of bullied victims' disclosure (e.g., Naylor et al., 2002; Smith, 2000, 2004). In addition, other figures, such as romantic partner or school counselor, were too infrequent (less than 1% answered "Yes") to be utilized in the subsequent analyses on bullied victims' disclosure patterns.

Table 3.1

*Bivariate Correlations, Reliabilities, and Equivalent CFA Model Fit of the FCS Dimensions for Young-Adult Children*

FCS Dimension	OPN	EOA	MSS	EIS	PLT	MR	DCP	HS	RRI	AV
<i>Openness</i> (OPN)	.89									
<i>Expression of affection</i> (EOA)	.86*	.87								
<i>Maintaining structural stability</i> (MSS)	.32*	.29*	.87							
<i>Emotional/instrumental support</i> (EIS)	.49*	.65*	.22*	.84						
<i>Politeness</i> (PLT)	.61*	.64*	.34*	.45*	.83					
<i>Mindreading</i> (MR)	-.24*	.25*	.43*	.36*	.63*	.91				
<i>Discipline</i> (DCP)	.46*	.42*	.63*	.24*	.49*	.51*	.90			
<i>Humor/sarcasm</i> (HS)	.20*	.25*	.38*	.36*	.25*	.44*	.55*	.88		
<i>Regular routine interaction</i> (RRI)	.51*	.57*	.30*	.29*	.66*	.47*	.50*	.26*	.94	
<i>Avoidance</i> (AV)	.04	-.10	-.08	.11	.35*	.22*	.04	.16*	.24*	.90
Equivalent CFA Model Fit										
CFI	.941	.977	.933	.982	.965	.947	.962	.968	.970	.945
RMSEA	.068	<.001	.070	.030	.071	.069	.053	.049	.050	.053

\*  $p < .05$ . Note. Diagonal elements are the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients.

Table 3.2

*Bivariate Correlations and Reliabilities of the FCS Dimensions for Parents*

FCS Dimension	OPN	EOA	MSS	EIS	PLT	MR	DCP	HS	RRI	AV
<i>Openness (OPN)</i>	.86/.87	.63*	.50*	.53*	.50*	-.26*	.49*	.34*	.47*	-.20*
<i>Expression of affection (EOA)</i>	.33*	.88/.83	.57*	.62*	.61*	.34*	.36*	.39*	.27*	.07
<i>Maintaining structural stability (MSS)</i>	.05	.33*	.90/.77	.47*	.60*	.61*	.69*	.52*	.52*	.33*
<i>Emotional/instrumental support (EIS)</i>	.50*	.66*	.31*	.85/.87	.39*	.46*	.45*	.36*	.42*	.09
<i>Politeness (PLT)</i>	.42*	.42*	.22*	.59*	.76/.80	.44*	.48*	.30*	.38*	.12
<i>Mindreading (MR)</i>	-.27*	.02	.63*	.37*	.43*	.94/.75	.47*	.39*	.52*	.36*
<i>Discipline (DCP)</i>	.31*	.42*	.71*	.40*	.45*	.53*	.88/.91	.56*	.62*	.54*
<i>Humor/sarcasm (HS)</i>	.09	.19*	.45*	.13	.14	.38*	.49*	.88/.88	.37*	.62*
<i>Regular routine interaction (RRI)</i>	.13	.47*	.51*	.28*	.27*	.25*	.59*	.59*	.82/.71	.49*
<i>Avoidance (AV)</i>	-.04	-.16*	.09	.34*	.13	.35*	.14	.34*	.35*	.88/.93

\*  $p < .05$ . Note. Diagonal elements are the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for fathers (left) and mothers (right). Values in the lower off-diagonal triangle are for fathers and those in the upper triangle are for mothers.



Table 3.3

*Full-Information Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the Three Family-Level FCS Profiles*

FCS Dimension	Family-Level FCS Profile								
	<i>Open-Affectionate</i>			<i>Detached</i>			<i>Mixed</i>		
	<i>(n = 131; 50.2%)</i>			<i>(n = 74; 28.3%)</i>			<i>(n = 56; 21.5%)</i>		
	Child	Father	Mother	Child	Father	Mother	Child	Father	Mother
<i>Openness</i>	4.66	4.72	4.25	3.61	3.63	3.59	4.23	4.01	4.15
<i>Expression of Affection</i>	4.85	4.56	4.53	3.66	3.54	3.37	4.21	3.96	4.09
<i>Maintaining Structural Stability</i>	3.25	4.18	4.25	3.95	3.44	4.48	3.64	3.06	3.83
<i>Emotional/Instrumental Support</i>	4.43	4.44	4.75	2.83	3.42	3.51	4.91	3.51	4.43
<i>Politeness</i>	3.37	3.70	4.45	3.45	4.65	4.27	3.70	3.89	3.85
<i>Mindreading</i>	3.97	3.49	3.92	3.35	3.84	3.10	4.28	3.94	3.64
<i>Discipline</i>	3.39	3.69	4.71	3.21	4.41	4.24	3.50	2.80	4.24
<i>Humor/Sarcasm</i>	3.78	3.29	3.82	4.89	4.60	3.96	4.25	3.79	4.42
<i>Regular Routine Interaction</i>	4.36	3.76	4.24	3.67	4.26	4.71	4.13	3.40	3.82
<i>Avoidance</i>	2.70	3.39	3.44	4.38	4.47	4.51	3.05	4.15	2.81

Note. All FCS dimensions were measured on a 5-point scale; higher scores indicate stronger endorsement of the respective dimension.

Table 3.4

*Full-Information Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the Disclosure LCA Model*

Parameter	Disclosure Pattern Latent Class		
	<i>Parents and Best Friend</i>	<i>Mother, Best Friend, and Teacher</i>	<i>Undisclosed</i>
Disclosure Likelihood – %			
<i>Disclose to Father</i>	.918 <sup>a</sup>	.000 <sup>b</sup>	.050 <sup>b</sup>
<i>Disclose to Mother</i>	1.000 <sup>a</sup>	.704 <sup>b</sup>	.108 <sup>c</sup>
<i>Disclose to Best Friend</i>	.790 <sup>a</sup>	1.000 <sup>b</sup>	.000 <sup>c</sup>
<i>Disclose to Teacher</i>	.147 <sup>a</sup>	.817 <sup>b</sup>	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Prevalence – <i>n</i> (%)	99 (37.9)	74 (28.4)	88 (33.7)

Note. Values superscripted by the same alphabet letter are statistically indistinguishable across classes ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

Table 3.5

*Robust Maximum-Likelihood Parameter Estimates of the FCS → Efficacy → Disclosure Model*

Parameter	<i>Unstd. (SE)</i>	<i>Std.</i>	Parameter	<i>Unstd. (SE)</i>	<i>Std.</i>
Effect on Coping Efficacy re: Father			Effect on Coping Efficacy re: Mother		
<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.80*** (.11)	.47	<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.76*** (.11)	.53
<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	-0.13 (.16)	-.06	<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	0.38** (.14)	.22
Effect on Comm. Efficacy re: Father			Effect on Comm. Efficacy re: Mother		
<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.84*** (.12)	.51	<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.80*** (.11)	.57
<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	0.31* (.15)	.14	<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	0.55*** (.14)	.32
Effect on Target Willingness re: Father			Effect on Target Willingness re: Mother		
<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.84*** (.13)	.51	<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.91*** (.13)	.56
<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	0.19 (.16)	.09	<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	0.42** (.16)	.21
Effect on Target Ability re: Father			Effect on Target Ability re: Mather		
<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	1.17*** (.13)	.62	<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.69*** (.17)	.33
<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	0.14 (.18)	.06	<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	0.53** (.20)	.21

(Continued)

Table 3.5 (Continued)

Parameter	Unstd. (SE)	OR	Parameter	Unstd. (SE)	OR
Effect on PBF ( <i>Adj. R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .21)			Effect on MBFT ( <i>Adj. R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .24)		
<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	-0.04 (.59)	0.96	<i>Open-Affectionate</i> FCS Profile	0.57 (.64)	1.77
<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	-0.69 (.61)	0.50	<i>Mixed</i> FCS Profile	2.13*** (.59)	8.41
Coping Efficacy re: Father	0.86** (.31)	2.37	Coping Efficacy re: Father	-0.40 (.28)	0.67
Comm. Efficacy re: Father	0.53* (.26)	1.74	Comm. Efficacy re: Father	-0.17 (.29)	0.84
Target Willingness re: Father	1.12** (.39)	3.07	Target Willingness re: Father	0.75* (.30)	2.97
Target Ability re: Father	0.22 (.25)	1.25	Target Ability re: Father	0.05 (.25)	1.05
Coping Efficacy re: Mather	0.90** (.33)	2.51	Coping Efficacy re: Mather	1.54*** (.38)	4.66
Comm. Efficacy re: Mather	1.08*** (.38)	2.98	Comm. Efficacy re: Mather	0.79* (.37)	3.00
Target Willingness re: Mather	1.54*** (.31)	4.66	Target Willingness re: Mather	1.09*** (.34)	3.17
Target Ability re: Mather	0.33 (.18)	1.39	Target Ability re: Mather	0.55* (.24)	1.74

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Note. Unstd. = Unstandardized Estimate; SE = Standard Error; Std. = Completely Standardized

Estimate; OR = Odds Ratio. PBF = *Parents and Best Friend* Disclosure Class; MBFT = *Mother, Best Friend, and Teacher* Disclosure

Class. *Detached* FCS profile and *Undisclosed* disclosure class were specified as the baseline categories.

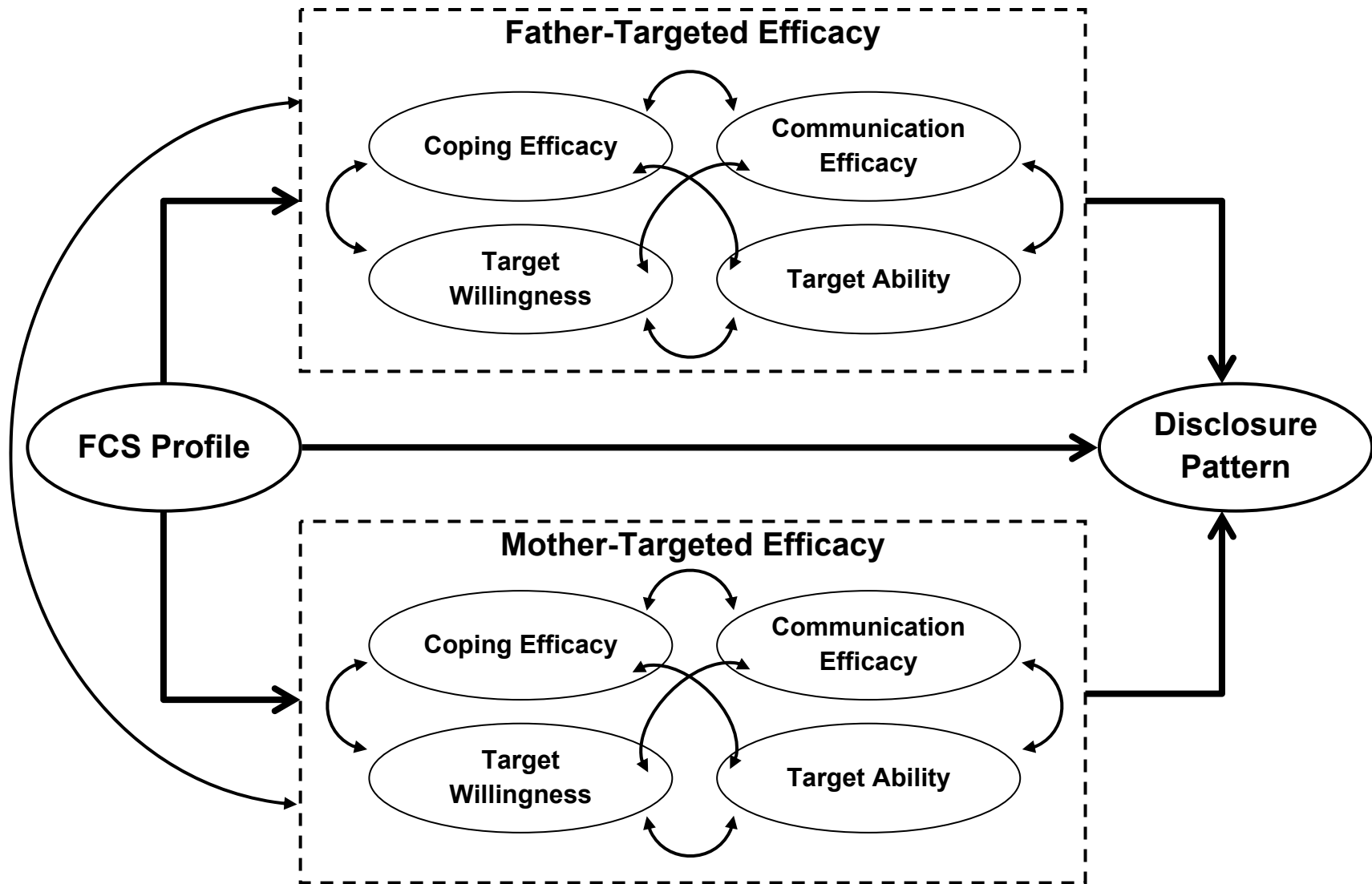


Figure 3.1. Conceptual Model of the FCS → Efficacy → Disclosure Mediation. Arrow-headed paths indicate postulated causal relationships. Doubly-arrow-headed arcs indicate inter-factor correlations.

## Chapter 4

### A Japan-U.S. Cross-Cultural Test of a Mediational Model of Bullied Victims' Evaluation of Received Support and Post-Bullying Adaptation

### Abstract

The current study addresses bullied individuals' coping through disclosing about their experience of victimization and receiving social support. Although disclosing one's victimized status in seeking support is known to provide an effective coping strategy, what sort of social support is most likely to enhance victims' post-bullying adjustment has yet to be clarified. To explore this support-related aspects of the coping process for bullied victims, an appraisal-based mediational model of social support and adaptation was tested using structural equation modeling analyses with the data collected from Japan ( $n = 148$ ) and the United States ( $n = 192$ ). The results indicated that emotional support was perceived most favorably by victims and this positive perception, in turn, enhanced their subsequent proclivity toward subsequent disclosure and also long-term well-being. At the same time, other types of support were found to be less effective or even deteriorative in terms of the victims' adaptation. In addition, these dynamics of supportive communication for bullied victims showed both similarities and differences between Japan and the U.S. These findings were discussed with reference to the research on bullying, supportive communication, and cross-cultural variations in value orientation.

*Key Words:* Bullying, Disclosure, Individualism-Collectivism, Japan-U.S. Cross-Cultural Comparison, Supportive Communication

Imagine one day your son returns home, apparently distressed, and you see bruises. His eyes are about to reach the point of flooding tears, his lips tightly fastened. Concerned, you ask him what happened. Despite initial denial of any happenstance, he eventually admits that he has been beaten up by peers in the class. Or, imagine your best friend discloses to you that she has been receiving indescribably malicious remarks from mean girls. In both cases, you are hearing a bitter truth; that these people are being bullied. Now, the question is, how can you help them?

Systematic research on bullying has a relatively short history and there are a number of unexplored issues. What are the effective ways to support bullied victims is one such unexplored question. The existing body of research does show that victims' disclosure in seeking support is central to successful coping (e.g., Hunter & Borg, 2006; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002); little is known, however, beyond this general conclusion. To obtain more specific insights that inform research and practice, a study is needed to determine how the recipient of disclosure should respond to effectively support victims. Given the dire consequences of bullying on victims' well-being (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), which could even drive them to committing suicide (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Morita, 2001), exploring the working mechanisms of social support for bullied victims is of an urgent need.

To undertake this challenge, this study explores the underlying structure and outcomes of supportive communication for bullied victims. Drawing on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) appraisal-based theory of social support, a mediational model of supportive communication and bullied victims' adaptation process is developed and tested. Further, to shed light on this globally ubiquitous problem of bullying (Smith et al., 1999) from a cultural perspective, two national cultures where bullying is a prominent social problem—Japan and the United States—are compared to illuminate similarities and differences in the underlying mechanisms of supportive communication, whose cultural dimension is still largely unknown (Burleson, 2003).



To contextualize these structural components of the present paper, relevant literature is reviewed in turn below. First, conceptualization of bullying and related previous findings are presented. Second, the working mechanisms of an important coping strategy for bullied victims—disclosure about victimization in seeking support from others—are scrutinized from the viewpoint of supportive communication (Burlison & MacGeorge, 2002), highlighting the support-appraisal-adaptation mediational process (Haley, Levine, Brown, & Bartolucci, 1987; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Third, the literature is reviewed that suggests potential moderation effects by culture on the process of supportive communication and bullied victims' adaptation with reference of the notion of individualism-collectivism (Hofstede, 2003).

### *Bullying*

#### *Conceptualizing the Most Unkindest Cut of All: What is Bullying?*

*Bullying* refers to a phenomenon identified by three key characteristics: *intentional aggressiveness, recurrence over time, and imbalance of the power between bullies and victims* (Olweus, 1993). First, bullying involves aggressiveness or harm-doing that is deliberately enacted by an individual or a group of individuals against the target (i.e., victim). Therefore, although some incidental mishap could be certainly harmful, they do not necessarily constitute bullying as long as the harmdoer does not intentionally carry out the conduct.

Second, bullying persists over a prolonged period; generally, intentional harm-doing lasting over three months or longer is considered bullying in the literature (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). This condition helps distinguish bullying from similar constructs such as violence, which is an episodic infliction of hostility and does not count as bullying unless it keeps re-occurring.

Third, the bully-victim relationship is characterized by asymmetry of power such that victims can exert minimal, if any, influence on the behaviors of bullies, who, in contrast, hold sway over the victims' mental and physical well-being or even their very life (Hawker & Boulton,

2000; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999). In other words, when two equally powerful individuals engaged in aggressive behavior and fought against each other, it does not constitute bullying. An important implication of this power imbalance is that victims are often unable to effectively defend themselves on their own (Olweus, 1993; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999).

This last key characteristic of bullied victims' inability to defend themselves by their own measure naturally raises a question: What *is* the effective coping strategy for bullied victims? (See, e.g., Salmivalli, Karhunen, & Lagerspetz, 1996.) It is to those findings on the effective coping strategies for bullied victims that the current review now turns.

*Coping with Bullying: What is the Effective Way to Deal with the Crisis?*

Recent studies suggest that, whereas bullied individuals may undertake a range of strategies in an attempt to deal with their crisis, disclosing their victimized status in seeking support provides the most effective coping strategy (Hunter, Merchan, & Ortega, 2004; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey, 2001). In contrast, according to researchers such as Garbarino and deLara (2002) and Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner (2002), other strategies such as direct confrontation are less effective or even deteriorative.

For example, Kochenderfer and Ladd (1997) found that, among the strategies examined in their study, disclosure was most likely to help victims escape their predicament. Conversely, fighting back or ignoring bullies was typically unlikely to extinguish bullying; to the contrary, those behaviors tended to exacerbate the situation. Another study has shown that active problem-solving approach (e.g., change one's behavior to work out the relationship with bullies or directly asking bullies to stop) actually worsened the situation for bullied children, whereas seeking social support was effective, particularly for girls (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Smith and colleagues replicated these findings through their longitudinal study documenting that the victims who have told someone about their crisis are more likely to escape from the victimized state than

their counterparts who did not disclose (Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, 2004). In a related vein, Naylor and Cowie (1999) reported that implementing a peer support system to encourage victims' disclosure is found by both students and teachers as particularly effective at secondary schools as well as colleges (see also Boulton, Trueman, Chau, Whitehand, & Amatya, 1999; Ma, 2002; Smith, 2000).

In addition, disclosure has been shown to assuage the damage induced by bullying. Research suggests that, even if crisis disclosure might not result in the immediate resolution of victims' predicament, telling someone about their being bullied reduces the stress and minimizes other negative consequences of bullying (e.g., Dumont & Provost, 1999). Hunter and colleagues found that bullied students who had revealed their crisis to family members, friends, and/or teachers were more emotionally satisfied with their life experiences than those who did not disclose (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Hunter et al., 2004; see also Smith et al., 2004).

Taken together, these findings suggest that disclosure is an important coping strategy for bullied victims. At the same time, there still remain a number of issues that need to be clarified. Among those, the current study focuses on two major questions left unanswered in the existing literature. First, how does bullied victims' disclosure work to alleviate their stress and, second, what role does culture play? Put in more operational terms: (a) what are the relevant factors, and the structural relationships among them, which account for the positive impact of victims' disclosure on their post-bullying adjustment; and (b) is there any moderation effect by culture on any part of this process? These key questions are further elaborated below.

#### *Underlying Mechanisms of Disclosure's Positive Effects*

The findings reviewed in the preceding section on the positive effects of disclosure are in line with the literature that shows self-disclosure, in general, and expressing negative experiences, in particular, ameliorate the mental and physical state of sufferers (Lyubomirsky, Sousa, &

Dickerhoof, 2006; see Pennebaker, 1997, for a review). The classic research program led by Pennebaker has convincingly demonstrated that self-disclosure, particularly those concerning negative experiences, improves one's mental and physical well-being (e.g., Pennebaker, Barger, & Tiebout, 1989; Spera, Buhrfeind, & Pennebaker, 1994). Recently, using a hormone-based bio-physiological methodology, Floyd and his associates found that expressing feelings in verbal forms not only reduced stress but also enhanced one's recovery from the distressed state of mind (Floyd, Mikkelson, Hesse, & Pauley, 2007; Floyd, Mikkelson, Tafoya, et al., 2007). The question remains, however, as to *why* such disclosure works to help sufferers.

#### *Appraisal as the Working Process of Social Support*

To explore the underlying mechanism of the association of disclosure with improvement in bullied victims' post-bullying adjustment, the current study draws on appraisal theory of social support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; see Hunter & Boyle, 2004, for an application of appraisal theory to bullied victims' coping). It is the way in which individuals appraise a given event (e.g., bullying), rather than the event itself, that determines its impact. According to this theory, social support assuages stress to the extent that it helps individuals reappraise the negative event in question and reinterpret it in a less distressful manner. Finding meaningful implications for one's life or reestablishing the hope that the hardship will soon end are two examples that readily come to mind (Albrecht & Adelman, 1984; Langford, Bowsher, Maloney, & Lillis, 1997).

Burleson and MacGeorge (2002) suggest that this appraisal process is crucial for social support to work because social behavior does not hold inherent meanings and, therefore, some behaviors, even if enacted with goodwill, may not be perceived as supportive by the recipient. In fact, a number of studies have shown that *perceived* support (i.e., perceptions about the provided support) accounts for more variance in mental and physical health outcomes than does *delivered* support (e.g., Antonucci & Israel, 1986; Barbee, Rowatt, & Cunningham, 1998; Wills & Shinar,

2000; for reviews, see Cunningham & Barbee, 2000; Rook & Underwood, 2000). Recapitulating these lines of findings, Burleson and Goldsmith (1998) posit that social support works to alleviate stress through a mediational process that reflects the message recipients' perceptions of the given supportive interaction (see also Burleson, 2002; Burleson & Gilstrap, 2002).

Given the relatively unexplored state of the knowledge, the current study ventures to gauge this notion of support recipients' perception by examining two broad constructs—evaluation of enacted support (Goldsmith, McDermott, & Alexander, 2000) and communication satisfaction (Hecht, 1978). These two factors are highlighted to sketch out how bullied victims' perceptions of the support solicited by their disclosure would impact their post-bullying adjustment, and thereby identify effective communication strategies to enhance their coping process. *Evaluation of enacted support* (EES) is conceptualized as one's general perception regarding the quality of supportive behaviors enacted by the interactional counterpart (see Goldsmith et al., 2000). As such, EES varies along the positive-negative continuum. More generally, *Communication satisfaction* purports to capture the positive affect perceived when given communicative exchanges meet individuals' expectations and internal standards (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004; Hecht, 1978). Albeit apparently similar, communication satisfaction represents one's perceptions of the overall interaction, whereas EES is more specifically about the support messages provided therein. Thus, those two constructs are considered distinct and each of them is argued to represent a unique aspect of bullied victims' perceptions.

#### *Support-Appraisal-Adaptation Linkage: A Sequential Mediational Process*

The first step of the mediational process postulated by the appraisal-based theory of social support (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) is that individuals who receive support appraise those messages. Thus, with the two constructs representing support recipients' perceptions noted above, the following hypothesis is posed:

H1: Social support enacted in response to bullied individuals' disclosure about their victimization experiences generates those victims' positive evaluation of the enacted support behaviors and also increases their communication satisfaction.

It should be noted that social support is a multifaceted construct, under which multiple interrelated and yet distinctive sub-factors are nested (House, 1981). To reconstruct this complexity, the current study utilizes part of Xu and Burleson's (2001) social support typology, which includes emotional support, esteem support, and network support.<sup>16</sup> The first type of support, *emotional support*, has been the main focus of most previous social support research (see, e.g., Cutrona, 1996); emotional support is referred to a series of behaviors that convey affection, concern, and empathy (Xu & Burleson, 2001). *Esteem support* represents expressions of respect and confirmation of personal value toward the support recipient. Finally, *network support* is referred to as provision of social resources (e.g., introducing experts for the problem or potential confidants). Because different types of support would generate different appraisals, it seems reasonable to expect that the support-appraisal associations would vary by the type of support enacted in a given interaction. This surmise leads to the following research question:

RQ1: How would the three types of support—emotional, esteem, and network support—differ in their associations with the recipients' (i.e., bullied victims') evaluation of enacted support and communication satisfaction?

Second, according to the appraisal theory of social support (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), thus generated perceptions via appraisal of enacted support, in turn, should account for the variance in victims' post-bullying adjustment. On this front, a research agenda that is of significant import with regard to bullied individuals' coping process is how to encourage them to divulge their victimization experience and seek support widely. Despite the promising findings associated with disclosure, not many victims reveal their bullied status, even to

their close surroundings. Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) found that more than 50% and 30% of victimized children in the Netherlands do not talk about bullying to their teachers and parents, respectively. Similar patterns are reported in Australia (Rigby & Barnes, 2002), England (Smith & Shu, 2000), Japan (Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999; Nesdale & Naito, 2005), and the United States (Nansel, Haynie, & Simons-Morton, 2003). Thus, identifying ways to encourage victims to disclose their crisis is considered one of the most important agendas for practitioners dealing with bullying problems (Olweus, 1993; Smith, 2000).

With this exigency in mind, the current study focuses on bullied victims' willingness and comfortableness to engage in crisis disclosure after the supportive interaction. Receiving quality support should help victims see the benefit of crisis disclosure and thereby encourage them to actively seek help in the future. Thus, the second hypothesis is set forth:

- H2: Evaluation of enacted support and communication satisfaction are positively associated with the support recipients' perceptions of willingness and comfortableness for subsequent disclosure about their victimized status.

Finally, the current study examines various support strategies' impact on victimized individuals' post-bullying adjustment by quantitatively evaluating such support's effects mediated through the appraisal factors highlighted in the aforementioned hypotheses (i.e., evaluation of enacted support, communication satisfaction, and perceived willingness and comfortableness for subsequent disclosure). This additional analysis is argued to be of both theoretical and practical interests. Theoretically, it will provide evidence to support or question a seemingly promising theory to explain bullied victims' coping process, namely appraisal theory of social support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Practically, estimates of such indirect effects help identify specific support strategies that are effective to facilitate victims' constructive coping. To obtain these insights, the following hypothesis is examined in the current study:

- H3: Social support indirectly enhances bullied victims' post-bullying adjustment through the mediation process in which evaluation of enacted support and communication satisfaction, as well as the perceived willingness and comfortableness for subsequent disclosure, together enhance their well-being.

Figure 4.1 visually summarizes these research hypotheses. How this model, hereafter referred to as the Mediation Model of Appraisal, Social Support, and Adaptation (MASA), would operate across cultures provides the second key question examined in the current study.

#### *Role of Culture in Crisis Disclosure*

Culture is a fluid and yet stable system organizing both explicit and implicit meanings of communicative symbols (Hofstede, 2003; see Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, & Lindsley, 2006, for a review). As such, culture is essentially inseparable from one's communication, and therefore, it seems reasonable to posit that bullied victims' coping process vis-à-vis the social support provided by their surroundings should be studied with reference to those individuals' cultural backgrounds. The role of culture in bullying dynamics is, however, generally unmapped in the literature. Although a number of international studies have been conducted in the past (Eslea et al., 2004; Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006; Nansel et al., 2004; see Smith et al., 1999, for a review of bullying research in various countries), they are mostly descriptive and studies testing theoretically-grounded predictions are rare (see Nesdale & Naito, 2005, for an exception).

Nonetheless, the literature appears to provide sufficient evidence to suggest that not only individuals' experiences of bullying but also their reaction to it should differ across cultures. In particular, Morita (2001) argues that bullying in Japan is unique in that, whereas it is dishearteningly widespread and ubiquitous, victimization by bullying is strongly stigmatized and victims often report high levels of fear for their predicament to be known by others (see also Morita et al., 1999; Toda, 1997, 2001). Kanetsuna et al. (2006) point out that Japanese individuals'



reluctance to disclose their victimized status may be attributed to their fear of losing face, or positive social identity, because of the stigma engraved on bullying. Specifically, those researchers note that the collectivistic orientation of the Japanese culture is the crucial part of the process, because having a “unique” feature (e.g., being bullied) in such cultures may cause the exclusion from one’s in-group and, consequently, victims tend to choose concealment rather than divulgence (Nesdale & Naito, 2005). It is therefore expected that, in such collectivistic cultures as Japan, certain supportive behaviors that may result in the unwanted leakage of the information about one’s bullied status would be particularly negatively perceived.

By contrast, the U.S. is arguably one of the most individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1998; but see also Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). Notably, scholars such as Bochner (1982) have pointed out that the U.S. culture has a strong orientation toward openness because, to forge trust among individuals, its members prefer to explicitly scrutinize and work out the given situation, rather than drawing on unstated meanings of the context and wait for a solution to emerge naturally. Further, in a line that seems to be informative for this study’s focus, Burleson and Mortenson (2003) note: “within the United States, a person’s distressed emotional state is commonly viewed as something to be examined, shared, and explicitly explored in discourse” (p. 210). In such a culture, individuals might not necessarily abhor sharing the information about their problem (e.g., victimization by bullying) as far as benefits of doing so will overtake the cost of social embarrassment and vulnerability.

At the same time, the literature on information and privacy management suggests that many U.S. Americans do conceal information out of their concerns for self-protection and information security (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Petronio, 2002). Whether this general tendency shows theoretically meaningful variability across cultures in the context of social support enacted in response to bullied individuals’ disclosure, however, has yet to be explored because most

previous studies on information management are conducted in the U.S. with predominantly Caucasian samples (e.g., Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Petronio, 2002) and those on bullied victims' coping do not specifically examine the differential impacts of distinct support strategies (e.g., Hunter & Borg, 2006). Nonetheless, the above review of literature seems to indicate that certain strategies, particularly those concerning the information about bullied individuals' victimized status, may be perceived differently across cultures. On the other hand, it should be noted that the literature on social support suggests that some support strategies are considered effective in individualistic and collectivistic cultures alike (see Burlison, 2003; Burlison & Mortenson, 2003). Taken together, these findings and conjectures drawn from the existing literature appear to warrant an examination of the cross-cultural similarities and differences in bullied victims' perceptions of various social support strategies, but they are not concrete enough to derive a specific prediction. Thus, the current study juxtaposes the data gathered from a collectivistic culture (i.e., Japan) and those from the U.S., and examines if a model formulated through its hypotheses (Figure 4.1) operates differently across those two cultures. Formally stated:

RQ2: How, if at all, do the direct and indirect effects of social support vary across Japan and the United States, in regard to the recipients' perceptions of enacted support, proclivity toward subsequent disclosure, and long-term subjective well-being?

### *Method*

#### *Participants*

The sample for the current study were 148 and 192 college students and recent graduates from a mid-sized southwestern university in Japan and a large northeastern university in the U.S., respectively. The Japanese sample included more females ( $n = 81$ ; 54.7%) than males, whereas the U.S. sample had more males ( $n = 98$ ; 53.6%) than females. The mean age for the Japanese sample was 20.85 years ( $SD = 2.78$ ) and that for the U.S. was 19.99 (1.44). Among the Japanese sample,

143 (96.6%) were of Japanese heritage, whereas five (3.4%) identified themselves as Japan-Residing Koreans. The majority of the U.S. sample identified themselves as Caucasian/White ( $n = 151$ ; 82.5%); the U.S. sample also included seven African Americans (3.8%), 12 Asian Americans (6.6%), six Latina/o or Hispanic (3.3%), and seven Mixed (3.8%).

With regard to the family background of the samples, the parents of most Japanese samples were either high school (for fathers,  $n = 60$ , or 41.1%; for mothers,  $n = 54$ , or 37.2%) or college graduates (for fathers,  $n = 71$ , or 48.6%; for mothers,  $n = 49$ , or 33.8%). In contrast, the educational attainment of the parents of the U.S. sample varied quite evenly from high school graduate to beyond college. Median family income was ¥5,000,000-¥8,000,000 and \$100,000-\$125,000 for the Japanese and the U.S. samples, respectively.

### *Procedures*

The Japanese participants were recruited from various courses taught at the respective institution and also via a snowball sampling method (Hendricks & Blanken, 1992) implemented to reach recent (i.e., within three years) graduates.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. participants were recruited from a public-speaking course offered to all majors. Participants took an anonymous online survey. The survey contents for the Japanese were identical to those for the U.S. counterparts except that the former was presented in Japanese whereas the latter was in English. The translation validity was established using the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970). Item missing rate was less than 2% for all scales used; those missing responses were accommodated using the full-information maximum-likelihood method in the measurement and main analyses (Enders & Bandalos, 2001).

All but the Japanese participants who were recent college graduates received partial course credit (regardless of whether they were selected for this study; see below). To establish the response authenticity of the online data, 10% of the participants were randomly selected and contacted via e-mail. They all verified that they had completed the survey by themselves.<sup>18</sup>

The current study was part of a larger research project and the survey included a number of measurement scales that are not reported in this study report. At one part of the survey, the participants reported their past experiences of victimization by bullying, followed by a question asking whether they had disclosed those experiences to someone. Only those who had disclosed their victimization experience were selected for this study. Interestingly, recency of the recalled memories of bullied experiences and the following crisis disclosure was quite short, although there was expectedly a large variance ( $M = 24.17$  months,  $SD = 44.47$ ); this relatively short recency of recall suggested that bullying happened even in junior/senior years in high school or even at college (Chapell et al., 2004). The relationship type of the person to whom the participants had disclosed their victimization experiences included best friend ( $n = 145$ ; 44.1%), father ( $n = 12$ ; 3.6%), mother ( $n = 99$ ; 30.1%), sibling ( $n = 24$ ; 7.3%), classmate ( $n = 22$ ; 6.7%), teacher ( $n = 7$ ; 2.1%), and others such as a romantic partner or therapist ( $n = 20$ ; 6.1%).

#### *Measurement Instruments*

See Table 4.1 for descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and scale reliabilities of the constructs examined in the current study. All assessments, except for the evaluation of enacted support and the willingness and comfortableness for crisis disclosure, were made on a scale of zero to 100, where the former indicated the absolute absence and the latter the perfect presence or endorsement of the relevant construct. This decision was made as per the suggestion made by Cox (1980), who suggested the more points on a scale, the better the measurement accuracy, especially when the phenomenon under study is complex and a large between-individual variance is expected.

To establish each instrument's unidimensionality and cross-cultural factor equivalence between Japan and the U.S., they were subjected to multi-group confirmatory factor analyses in which factor loadings of the items were constrained to be equal across cultures using Little, Slegers, and Card's (2006) non-arbitrary factor-identification technique (see Meredith, 1993, for a

review of factor equivalence). Drawing on Little's (2000) modeling rationale, those invariant models were considered reasonable approximation of the data's factor structure when their fit was acceptable in the light of Hu and Bentler's (1999) general guideline of a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)  $\leq .08$  and a comparative fit index (CFI)  $\geq .95$ . The modeling rationale was preferred in evaluating a model fit over the conventional approach based on the chi-square difference test, which might be overly sensitive, especially with a relatively large sample size; in such cases, even a theoretically trivial deviation from the data could result in the rejection of the model under study (see González-Romá & Hernández, 2006; Little, 2000).

*Social support received in response to disclosure.* After the question asking about the disclosure of one's victimization experience to someone, respondents were asked to recall the very first occasion of this disclosure. Then, they were presented with Xu and Burleson's (2001) social support scale, which included emotional support (e.g., "*Expressing care and concern for you.*"), esteem support (e.g., "*Telling you that you would still be a good person even when you were facing a problem.*"), and network support (e.g., "*Helping you find the people who could assist you.*"), and reported the degree to which they received each type of support. Consistent with previous findings (Burleson & Mortenson, 2003; Xu & Burleson, 2001), these three factors demonstrated sufficient distinctiveness (*rs* ranging from .01 to .63). The 3-factor cross-cultural invariant model fit the data reasonably: Satorra-Bentler-adjusted (SB)  $\chi^2$  (137) = 215.03,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .06 (90% confidence interval [CI] = .05-.08); CFI = .97.

*Evaluation of enacted support.* Participants' evaluation of the enacted support in the recalled interaction was assessed using Goldsmith et al.'s (2000) evaluation of enacted support scale. Participants were asked to rate the support they had received on a 7-point semantic-differential scale (e.g., "*supportive-unsupportive*"). Although the original scale was designed as a multidimensional measure consisting of three interrelated sub-factors (problem-solving utility,

relational assurance, and emotional awareness; Goldsmith et al., 2000), preliminary analyses revealed that those sub-factors were highly positively correlated with one another (all inter-factor correlations were above .90); accordingly, the decision was made to merge them together and model one general latent factor representing one's overall evaluation of the delivered support. This 1-factor model fit the data reasonably across cultures with equality constraints on the factor loadings:  $SB \chi^2(63) = 101.65, p < .01$ ; RMSEA = .07 (90% CI = .04-.09); CFI = .99.

*Communication satisfaction.* Respondents' communication satisfaction with the recalled interaction was measured using Hecht's (1978) communication satisfaction scale. To reduce the number of items within the survey and thereby alleviate the participants' fatigue, a shortened version of the scale containing a select set of items was used (e.g., "*I was very satisfied with my conversation with her/him.*"). The 1-factor cross-cultural invariant model fit the data well:  $SB \chi^2(3) = 2.60, p = .46$ ; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI = .00-.14); CFI = .99.

*Willingness and comfortableness for crisis disclosure.* The degree to which participants had felt willing and comfortable to disclose their victimization experience to others after the recalled interaction was assessed by two single-item measures. Specifically, they were asked to report the perceived willingness/comfortableness for crisis disclosure after the following prompt:

*If the amount of willingness [or comfortableness] to talk about your experience you had BEFORE the interaction [where they had received support] was 100 units, and the amount where you would not feel like talking at all was 0 units, how much willingness [or comfortableness] did you feel for talking about your experience AFTER the interaction?*

Before participants rated the perceived willingness and comfortableness for crisis disclosure, they were presented with carefully crafted walk-through instructions; those instructions contained example questions to familiarize participants with this response option (see Dinauer & Fink, 2005, for an example of this amount-based measurement approach).

*Subjective well-being.* Participants' subjective well-being was measured using items used by Diener Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) and Jones and Crandall (1986). Example items included "In most ways my life is close to my ideal," and "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out." These items have demonstrated good reliability and validity, as well as cross-cultural performance, as the measure of general well-being (see, e.g., Matsunaga & Imahori, 2009; Ryan et al., 1999). The 1-factor cross-cultural invariant model fit the data acceptably: SB  $\chi^2$  (24) = 43.65,  $p < .01$ ; RMSEA = .08 (90% CI = .04-.11); CFI = .98.

## Results

### *Preliminary Analyses*

Prior to the main analysis, a series of preliminary analyses were performed to obtain the background information of the current data set. First, Japanese and the U.S. Americans were found to have disclosed their victimization experiences to different relational figures:  $\chi^2$  (6) = 34.29,  $p < .001$ . A series of post hoc analyses suggested that Japanese were more likely to disclose to their mother ( $\chi^2$  [1] = 6.51,  $p = .01$ ), classmate ( $\chi^2$  [1] = 12.08,  $p < .001$ ), and teacher ( $\chi^2$  [1] = 5.63,  $p = .02$ ); on the other hand, Americans had disclosed more to their best friend ( $\chi^2$  [1] = 11.12,  $p < .001$ ) and sibling ( $\chi^2$  [1] = 6.79,  $p = .01$ ). There were no statistical significance with regard to the likelihood of crisis disclosure to father ( $\chi^2$  [1] = 0.38,  $p = .54$ ).

Because the participants had disclosed to various relational figures, the difference among those relationship types in delivered support was examined. A factorial MANOVA indicated, however, the amounts of support did not differ by relationship (Wilks'  $\Lambda = .95$ ,  $F$  [18, 812] = 0.84,  $p = .65$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ) nor by the relationship-by-culture interaction (Wilks'  $\Lambda = .94$ ,  $F$  [18, 812] = 0.98,  $p = .49$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ). At the same time, those amounts of support did differ by culture (Wilks'  $\Lambda = .92$ ,  $F$  [3, 272] = 8.23,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ). Post hoc ANOVAs revealed that, on all three support types, the U.S. Americans reported more receipt than Japanese (Table 4.1): for emotional support,  $F$  (1,

274) = 7.17,  $p < .01$ ; for esteem support,  $F(1, 274) = 10.39$ ,  $p = .001$ ; and for network support,  $F(1, 274) = 21.21$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, the decision was made to merge data across relational figures for crisis disclosure while sustaining the Japan-U.S. cross-cultural comparison framework.

Interestingly, despite these differences, Japanese did not necessarily appraise their interaction in a less positive light: The results of a one-way MANOVA indicated that Japanese and the U.S. Americans did not differ in regards to evaluation of enacted support and communication satisfaction (Wilks'  $\Lambda = 1.00$ ,  $F[2, 282] = 0.57$ ,  $p = .57$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ ).

#### *Main Analyses: A Cross-Cultural Test of the MASA*

To test the proposed model (MASA) and explore the research questions of the current study, a structural equation modeling analysis with a series of nested-model comparison tests was performed using LISREL 8.80. In specifying the model, Bollen's (1989) latent-composite approach was employed. First, the scale composite score was computed for each construct used in the model. This composite score was used as the sole indicator of a given latent factor; its factor loading was fixed to 1.0 and the error variance was fixed to  $(1 - \alpha) \times s^2$ , where  $\alpha$  and  $s^2$  indicate the scale reliability and the observed variance of the composite score, respectively. The perceived willingness and comfortableness for crisis disclosure were modeled as the observed variables because they were assessed by the single-item measures.

Following Preacher and Hayes's (2008) suggestion for testing mediation effects, both the mediators (i.e., evaluation of enacted support and communication satisfaction) and outcome factors (i.e., willingness and comfortableness for crisis disclosure) were specified as interrelated. Recency of recalled memories, parents' educational attainment, and family income were centered at the respective grand means for each culture and included in the model as covariates.<sup>19</sup>

The model fit well for both the Japanese and the U.S. data (Figure 4.2): for Japanese,  $SB \chi^2(9) = 6.93$ ,  $p = .65$ ; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI = .00-.03); CFI = .98; for the U.S.,  $SB \chi^2(9) = 6.02$ ,  $p$



= .74; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI = .00-.03); CFI = 1.00. Specific results are reported in turn below with reference to this study's research questions and hypotheses.

*H1 & RQ1: Support-Appraisal Linkage.* The first hypothesis posited that receiving social support would generate the recipients' appraisal process. Further, the first research question asked if this support-appraisal linkage would vary by the type of support. The results suggested that emotional support was by far the most influential factor on the support recipients' appraisal (see Figure 4.2). For both cultural groups, emotional support was strongly positively associated with evaluation of enacted support (EES;  $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = .60, p < .001$ ;  $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .57, p < .001$ ) and communication satisfaction ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = .42, p < .001$ ;  $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .56, p < .001$ ).

The results regarding the other two types of support were less clear, however. Esteem support was negatively associated with EES for Japanese ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = -.18, p < .05$ ) but it did not show a significant association for the U.S. ( $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .09, p = .28$ ). The opposite pattern was found for communication satisfaction: for Japanese, esteem support had a positive but non-significant association ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = .16, p = .11$ ); for the U.S., it had a negative association ( $\beta_{\text{USA}} = -.21, p < .05$ ). Finally, network support was not significantly associated with EES for both cultural groups ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = .07, p = .49$ ;  $\beta_{\text{USA}} = -.09, p = .28$ ). However, interestingly, network support was strongly negatively associated with communication satisfaction for Japanese ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = -.51, p < .001$ ). The association between network support and communication satisfaction was not significant for the U.S. ( $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .07, p = .34$ ). These results were interpreted as partial support for H1, whereas their complex patterns pointed to the need for further clarification of the support-appraisal linkage.

*H2: Effects of positive appraisals on the motivation for crisis disclosure.* The second hypothesis predicted that positive appraisals of delivered support would enhance the support recipients' willingness and comfortableness to disclose their victimization experiences in the future. The results of the SEM suggested that this prediction was supported for both Japanese and

the U.S. More specifically, evaluation of enacted support demonstrated positive associations with both the willingness ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = .29, p < .01$ ;  $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .29, p < .05$ ) and comfortableness for crisis disclosure ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = .45, p < .001$ ;  $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .23, p < .05$ ). Although communication satisfaction mostly did not show the expected associations (see Figure 4.2), it did have a positive effect on the comfortableness for the U.S. ( $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .22, p < .05$ ). Thus, H2 was largely supported.

*H3: Effects of the support-appraisal process on subjective well-being.* The third hypothesis posited that social support would improve the victims' subjective well-being via mediation by appraisal factors as well as the enhanced proclivity toward disclosure. To test this mediational hypothesis, the indirect effects of support factors were examined. This inspection revealed that emotional support significantly enhanced the recipients' well-being ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = .47, p < .001$ ;  $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .33, p < .001$ ). The indirect effect of esteem support on subjective well-being was not statistically significant ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = -.02, p = .71$ ;  $\beta_{\text{USA}} = -.08, p = .30$ ). Network support led to a quite considerable decline in subjective well-being for Japanese ( $\beta_{\text{JPN}} = -.24, p < .01$ ), whereas it did not have a significant effect on well-being for the U.S. Americans ( $\beta_{\text{USA}} = .04, p = .64$ ). Thus, consistent with the findings for tests of H1, H3 was supported only for emotional support.

*RQ2: Cross-cultural moderation of support-appraisal-adaptation process.* Finally, the second research question asked whether these mechanisms of support, appraisal, and subsequent adaptation would differ across the two national cultures examined in this study. To formally explore this question, a series of nested-model comparison tests were conducted where a given path was constrained to be equal across groups and the computed chi-square value was examined. A significant chi-square value would indicate that the respective path should differ significantly between the two cultures (Kline, 2005; see also Byrne, 1998, pp. 259-302).

In regards to the support-appraisal linkage, emotional support's effects were statistically indistinguishable across cultures, whereas the associations involving the other two types of support

differed significantly between Japanese and the U.S. Americans (Figure 4.2). Most notably, network support substantially harmed communication satisfaction for Japanese whereas it largely unrelated to the U.S. Americans' satisfaction perceptions:  $\chi^2(1) = 13.54, p < .001$ .

As for the appraisal-adaptation linkage, it seemed that evaluation of enacted support was important for both Japanese and the U.S. American support recipients to perceive willingness and comfortableness to disclose their victimized experience in the future (Figure 4.2). The role of communication satisfaction was less prominent, although it did exert certain effects to help the U.S. Americans feel comfortable:  $\chi^2(1) = 5.23, p = .02$ . Regarding the effects on subjective well-being, the only statistically significant difference between Japanese and the U.S. Americans was the path running from the perceived comfortableness:  $\chi^2(1) = 4.09, p = .04$ .

Reflecting these cross-cultural similarities and differences in the operation of the support-appraisal-adaptation mechanism, the mediated effects of social support on the recipients' subjective well-being also showed equivalence and discrepancy. These cross-cultural moderation effects were examined using *z*-score discrepancies (see MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). The results suggested that the indirect effects of esteem support were statistically equivalent ( $z = 0.45, p = .65$ ), whereas the effects of emotional support and network support were significantly different across cultures; emotional support improved Japanese recipients' well-being more than it did the U.S. Americans' ( $z = 2.20, p = .03$ ), whereas network support resulted in a decline in the Japanese individuals' well-being but not for the U.S. individuals ( $z = 3.86, p < .001$ ).

### *Discussion*

The current research drew on the appraisal-based theory of social support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and explored the working mechanism of supportive communication for bullied victims from a cross-cultural perspective. More specifically, this study predicted that the social support enacted in response to bullied victims' disclosure would generate their appraisal of those

supportive messages, which, in turn, encourage those victims to disclose more widely and also enhance their post-bullying adjustment. SEM revealed complex but theoretically meaningful relationships among the examined factors, yielding evidence for the validity of the Mediational Model of Appraisal, Social Support, and Adaptation (MASA) proposed in this study. Further, the Japan-U.S. comparison has illuminated intriguing differences, as well as commonalities, between those two national cultures with regard to the operation of MASA. These findings are discussed in turn below with reference to previous research on bullying and supportive communication.

*Working Mechanism of Crisis Disclosure: Support-Appraisal-Adaption Linkage*

Perhaps the most important contribution of the current study is the identification of an operational mechanism that accounts for the positive effects of crisis disclosure. Although disclosing one's victimized status is known to provide an effective strategy for sufferers of bullying, the theoretical underpinnings of such coping processes have been left unexplored (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Smith et al., 2004). MASA posits that social support generates recipients' appraisals, which, in turn, enhance their coping process. This mediational hypothesis found support from the current SEM analyses (Figure 4.2). This finding is important because it illuminates the benefit of support that otherwise might be overlooked. For example, for Japanese bullied victims, support did not show apparently perceptible associations with subjective well-being at the bivariate correlation level (Table 4.1). Those delivered support behaviors, however, actually enhanced victims' well-being once they were appraised positively and thereby enhanced the victims' willingness and comfortableness to engage in further disclosure.

*Complexities in support-appraisal linkage.* At the same time, the results of the SEM analyses revealed differences in the outcomes by the type of support. On one hand, emotional support has demonstrated strong and positive effects on both recipients' appraisals and their subsequent adaptation. This finding is consistent with the literature on social support, which has

shown that sensible support for one's emotion is positively associated with a variety of affective, cognitive, and health outcomes (Burlison & MacGeorge, 2002; Cunningham & Barbee, 2000).

On the other hand, other types of support did not prove effective. This study's findings indicate that esteem support has weak and negative or, possibly, unrelated to victims' adaptation outcomes; in addition, for Japanese, network support was found to lead to a significant decline in their well-being. From the viewpoint of MASA, these findings point to the question on why those support behaviors were not found supportive by the recipients (Figure 4.2).

One possibility is that some support behaviors may be face-threatening for victims (see Ting-Toomey, 2005, for a review of face). This seems especially true for network support, whose function is to connect recipients to third parties; as such, it requires victims to disclose bullied experience yet again after their initial crisis disclosure, which presumably has taken considerable courage in the first place (Toda, 1997). As for esteem support, perhaps its intended message (i.e., supplementing one's self-esteem) may sound devoid of "candor" to the ears of bullied victims, whose self-esteem already is severely harmed by bullying (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Hawker & Boulton, 2000); as a result, esteem support may be considered vain and unsupportive of face.

To test this surmise, an ad hoc analysis was performed using victims' self- and other-face concerns (Ting-Toomey, 2005). The former refers to the degree to which individuals are worried about losing the positive social identity of themselves (e.g., "*I was concerned with protecting my self-image*";  $\alpha = .94$ ), whereas the latter refers to one's concerns not to damage their interactant's positive social image (e.g., "*I was concerned with not making her/him feel awkward*";  $\alpha = .89$ ). These two concerns were assessed using Oetzel and Ting-Toomey's (2003) scale. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was run using the three types of support, victims' self- and other-face concerns, and all support-by-face 2-way interaction terms, as the predictors of evaluation of enacted support and communication satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> If face concern was indeed an intervening

factor, such moderation should be detected by those interaction effects. None of the support-by-face interactions involving esteem or network support, however, was significant ( $ps = .26-.70$ ). Thus, this face-based account, if theoretically plausible, did not find empirical support. At the same time, further inspection indicated that, interestingly, the network support  $\times$  self-face and network support  $\times$  other-face interaction effects approached statistical significance for Japanese victims ( $ps = .08$  and  $.10$ , respectively), but not for the U.S. Americans. Although admittedly inconclusive, these results seem to warrant a more focused investigation exploring the role of face concerns in the process through which bullied victims evaluate the received social support.

A second possible reason for the apparently paradoxical nil to negative effects of esteem and network support is the mismatch between enacted support behaviors and victims' desired goals (Belle, 1982; Burlison & Goldsmith, 1998). Caughlin (2003) found that the discrepancy between enacted versus desired support was negatively associated with one's satisfaction. Thus, the support-evaluation path may be moderated by the type of support the victims desire. A third possibility is that victims feared potential leakage of their victimized status to unknown third parties (Kanetsuna et al., 2006). This seems to explain why network support had particularly negative effects for Japanese, who were more likely than the U.S. Americans to disclose to their classmates or teachers. Probably the truth lies in a combination of all these accounts (including face) and other factors not considered here; future research needs to explore those possibilities systematically to further map out the working mechanism of social support for bullied victims.

*Appraisal to adaptation: A road to effective coping.* In comparison with complexity of the support-appraisal link discussed just above, the appraisal's effects on subsequent adaptation of the support recipients are much clearer and, moreover, encouraging. In particular, the positive association between evaluation of enacted support and recipients' willingness/comfortableness for subsequent disclosure is important for practitioners. As discussed earlier, one frustrating caveat of

the existing body of bullying literature is that, despite the evidence of crisis disclosure's effectiveness as a coping strategy, little is known on how to motivate victims to disclose their crisis (Rigby & Barnes, 2002; Smith, 2000). This study is one of the few that have explored and illuminated the path leading to such motivations from victims' perspective (see also Boulton et al., 1999; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Hunter & Borg, 2006). The current findings suggest that practitioners should educate victims' peers and family that, if they ever are disclosed by victims about bullying, they should patiently listen to the victims' talk and show sympathy, rather than try to give advice for solution or connect them to third parties such as counselors.

Further, it should be noted that the linkage of Japanese victims' willingness and comfortableness for disclosure with their subjective well-being provide a replication of the array of findings that demonstrate positive effects of crisis disclosure (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Skinner, 2002; Naylor et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2004). Those effects of motivations for crisis disclosure on one's well-being were, however, not detected among the U.S. Americans. Such cross-cultural variations in bullying dynamics are discussed next.

#### *Bullying and Victims' Coping on Cultural Dimensions*

The present study found a number of similarities and differences across Japan and the U.S. with regard to the underlying dynamics of supportive communication for bullied victims. As to the commonality between those two national cultures, it should be stressed that emotional support proved effective in both cultures. For both Japanese and the U.S. victims alike, receiving emotional support enhanced their willingness and comfortableness for crisis disclosure and, ultimately, improved their long-term subjective well-being (Figure 4.2). This finding is in line with previous studies that indicate the generalizability of the positive effects of social support across cultures (Goodwin & Plaza, 2000; Xu & Burleson, 2001). With regard to bullying, because the experience of victimization is so distressing and harmful to one's mental well-being

(Garbarino & deLara, 2002; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999), cure for the wounded heart might be indispensably important for the bullied victims (Smith & Shu, 2000).

At the same time, the cross-cultural differences discovered in the current study deserve elaboration. First, network support significantly decreased Japanese victims' communication satisfaction, whereas its effect was negligible for the U.S. counterparts (Figure 4.2). Nesdale and Naito (2005) suggested that bullying in Japan should be scrutinized in light of the culture's characteristic collectivism (Hofstede, 2003). In typical Japanese communities, social mobility is low and people do not usually move as frequently as in the U.S. (Fukutake & Dore, 1989); as a result, community members form tightly knitted networks, and therefore, bullies and victims often have a number of acquaintances and friends in common (Morita, 2001; Toda, 2001). This collectivistic character of the Japanese society seems to provide an account for the negative impact of network support found for Japanese victims. In such a closely meshed society as typical Japanese communities, the likelihood of the information leakage through grapevine is considerable and the victims who are offered to introduce a third party may find such "help" rather undesirable; consequently, they perceive the interaction as unsatisfactory. To examine this speculation, future research needs to trace the structure of social network surrounding bullies and victims vis-à-vis supportive communication instigated by crisis disclosure and victims' appraisal.

In addition, it seems noteworthy that Japanese victims' long-term subjective well-being was predicted by all appraisal and motivation factors, whereas that of the U.S. Americans was only associated with communication satisfaction. In the light of Morita (2001) and Kanetsuna et al.'s (2006) argument that bullying in Japan is highly stigmatizing and sufferers fear their victimized status to be known, finding quality support should be a rough journey indeed for Japanese victims. Such difficulty to locate support, in turn, might make it especially precious and valuable for them once they get hold of support. Similarly, perhaps because talking about bullying is so hard in the



Japanese society where victimization is severely stigmatized, enhanced motivations for crisis disclosure may exert particularly positive effects.

Another account for the Japan-U.S. difference in victims' appraisal and motivation factors' effects on their well-being is based on the combination of Hofstede's (2003) theory of cultural dimensions and the aforementioned insights into the structure of the Japanese society (Fukutake & Dore, 1989; Morita, 2001). Hofstede suggests that different cultures have different "time orientations": Japan is said to be future-oriented whereas the U.S. is strongly present-oriented. Together with the tight and immobile structure of the Japanese society, this cultural orientation would make Japanese victims envisage, falsely or otherwise, enduring agony of bullying into a far future more vividly than their U.S. counterparts, who, in contrast, may find a hope of escape more likely because their society is highly mobile and each change in one's social networks provides a potential doorway out of victimization by bullying (Smith, 2000).

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

There are a few limitations in the current research. First, the recall-based approach taken in this study should be noted as a major caveat. However, it also should be noted that bullying is known to gnaw victims' well-being over a long period (e.g., Smith et al., 2004); in addition, the memories recalled by participants were relatively recent, indicating high fidelity of their reports. Moreover, the fact that the recalled support demonstrated significant effects on the participants' well-being should not be unduly discounted. Nonetheless, future research should make efforts to explore how supportive communication works for bullied victims in a more immediate fashion.

Second, whereas the current study focused on victims' appraisal of enacted support, their appraisal of victimization experience was not examined. Supportive communication works to the extent it helps individuals reappraise the event in question (Burlison & MacGeorge, 2002). With regard to this study's findings, it seems plausible that perceiving quality support, as well as the

receipt of support per se, might help victims recast the experience of bullying in a more positive light and enhance their subsequent adaptation. In tandem with the notion of interaction between enacted versus desired support, this consideration on the appraisal of victimization by bullying expands the framework of MASA proposed in the present study (Figure 4.3). This expanded model provides a set of heuristics for future studies to build upon the current findings.

Third, the current research is far from complete to parameterize the impact of culture on bullied victims' coping process through the receipt of support and the appraisals made thereupon. This study compared the data collected from Japan and the U.S. for: (a) those two national cultures have long been investigated as example cases of cultural collectivism and individualism, respectively (Hofstede, 2003); and (b) scholars such as Morita (2001) pointed out that the bullying phenomenon in Japan, or *ijime*, unfold differently than in many countries where the majority of the bullying research has been undertaken (e.g., the U.S.). In fact, as expected, the comparison of these two cultures revealed interesting similarities and differences, indicating that culture plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of a given support strategy. Nonetheless, future research should strive for more sophisticated conceptualization and operationalization of "culture" by moving beyond simple equating nationality and cultural membership.

Finally, as a concluding remark, some implications of the current findings should be discussed. Most important, this study has demonstrated that not all supportive behaviors are effective; in fact, some behavior can even be deteriorative. At the same time, the strong, positive, and cross-culturally consistent effect found for emotional support is encouraging. Extending these findings should shed light on the underlying mechanism of supportive communication and help identify the effective ways to help victims who are caught in the iron claw of bullying.

## References

- Afifi, W. A., & Guerrero, L. K. (2000). Motivations underlying topic avoidance in close relationships. In S. Petronio (Ed.), *Balancing the secrets of private disclosures* (pp. 165-180). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Albrecht, T. L., & Adelman, M. B. (1984). Social support and life stress: New directions for communication researchers. *Human Communication Research, 11*, 3-32.
- Antonucci, T. C., & Israel, B. A. (1986). Veridicality of social support: A comparison of principal and network members' responses. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 54*, 432-437.
- Baldwin, J. R., Faulkner, S. L., Hecht, M. L., & Lindsley, S. L. (Eds.). (2006). *Redefining culture: Perspectives across disciplines*. Mahwah, NJ: NEA.
- Barbee, A. P., Rowatt, T. L., & Cunningham, M. R. (1998). When a friend is in need: Feelings about seeking, giving, and receiving social support. In P. A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion: Research, theory, applications, and contexts* (pp. 281-301). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Belle, D. (1982). The stress of caring: Women as providers of social support. In Goldberger & S. Bresnitz (Eds.), *Handbook of stress: Theoretical and clinical aspects* (pp. 496-505). New York: Free Press.
- Bochner, A. P. (1982). On the efficacy of openness in close relationships. In M. Burgoon (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 5* (pp. 109-124). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural equations with latent variables*. New York: Wiley.
- Boulton, M., Trueman, M., Chau, C., Whitehand, C., & Amatya, K. (1999). Concurrent and longitudinal links between friendship and peer victimization: Implications for befriending interventions. *Journal of Adolescence, 22*, 461-466.

- Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 1*, 185-216.
- Burleson, B. R. (2002). Psychological mediators of sex differences in emotional support: A reflection on the mosaic. *Communication Reports, 15*, 71-79.
- Burleson, B. R. (2003). The experience and effects of emotional support: What the study of cultural and gender differences can tell us about close relationships, emotion, and interpersonal communication. *Personal Relationships, 10*, 1-23.
- Burleson, B. R., & Gilstrap, C. M. (2002). Explaining sex differences in interaction goals in support situations: Some mediating effects of expressibility and instrumentality. *Communication Reports, 15*, 43-55.
- Burleson, B. R., & Goldsmith, D. J. (1998). How the comforting process works: Alleviating emotional distress through conversationally induced reappraisals. In P. A. Andersen & L. K. Guerrero (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and emotion: Research, theory, applications, and contexts* (pp. 245-280). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Burleson, B. R., & MacGeorge, E. L. (2002). Supportive communication. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (3rd ed., pp. 374-424). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Burleson, B. R., & Mortenson, S. R. (2003). Explaining cultural differences in evaluations of emotional support behaviors: Exploring the mediating influences of value systems and interaction goals. *Communication Research, 30*, 113-146.
- Byrne, B. M. (1998). *Structural equation modeling with LISREL, PRELIS, and SIMPLIS: Basic concepts, applications, and programming*. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

- Caughlin, J. P. (2003). Family communication standards: What counts as excellent family communication and how are such standards associated with family satisfaction? *Human Communication Research, 29*, 5-40.
- Chapell, M., Casey, D., De la Cruz, C., Ferrell, J., Forman, J., Kipkin, R., et al. (2004). Bullying in college by students and teachers. *Adolescence, 153*, 53-64.
- Cox, E. P., III. (1980). The optimal number of response alternatives for a scale: A review. *Journal of Marketing Research, 17*, 407-422.
- Cunningham, M. R., & Barbee, A. P. (2000). Social support. In C. Hendrick & S. S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 272-285). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cutrona, C. E. (1996). *Social support in couples*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71-75.
- Dinauer, L. D., & Fink, E. L. (2005). Interattitude structure and attitude dynamics: A comparison of the hierarchical and Galileo spatial-linkage models. *Human Communication Research, 31*, 1-32.
- Dumont, M., & Provost, M. A. (1999). Resilience in adolescence: Protective role of social support, coping strategies, self-esteem, and social activities on experience of stress and depression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28*, 343-363.
- Enders, C. K., & Bandalos, D. L. (2001). The relative performance of full information maximum likelihood estimation for missing data in structural equation models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 8*, 430-457.
- Eslea, M., Menesini, E., Morita, Y., O'Moore, M., Mora-Merchán, J. A., Pereira, B., Smith, P. K., & Wenxin, Z. (2004). Friendship and loneliness among bullies and victims: Data from seven countries. *Aggressive Behavior, 30*, 71-83.

- Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? *School Psychology Review, 32*, 365-383.
- Fekkes, M., Pijpers, F. I. M., & Verloove-Vanhorick, S. P. (2005). Bullying: Who does what, when and where? Involvement of children, teachers and parents in bullying behavior. *Health Education Research, 20*, 81-91.
- Floyd, K., Mikkelsen, A. C., Hesse, C., & Pauley, P. M. (2007). Affectionate writing reduces total cholesterol: Two randomized, controlled trials. *Human Communication Research, 33*, 119-142.
- Floyd, K., Mikkelsen, A. C., Tafoya, M. A., Farinelli, L., La Valley, A. G., Judd, J., et al. (2007). Human affection exchange: XIII. Affectionate communication accelerates neuroendocrine stress recovery. *Health Communication, 22*, 123-132.
- Fukutake, T., & Dore, R. P. (1989). *The Japanese social structure: Its evolution in the modern century*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.
- Garbarino, J., & deLara, E. (2002). *And words can hurt forever: How to protect adolescents from bullying, harassment, and emotional violence*. New York: Free Press.
- Goldsmith, D. J., McDermott, V. M., & Alexander, S. C. (2000). Helpful, supportive and sensitive: Measuring the evaluation of enacted social support in personal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 17*, 369-391.
- González-Romá, V., & Hernández, A. (2006). Power and Type I error of the mean and covariance structure analysis model for detecting differential item functioning in graded response items. *Multivariate Behavioral Research, 41*, 29-53.
- Goodwin, D. J., & Plaza, S. H. (2000). Perceived and received social support in two cultures: Collectivism and support among British and Spanish students. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 17*, 282-291.

- Gray, J., & Laidlaw, H. (2004). Improving the measurement of communication satisfaction. *Management Communication Quarterly, 17*, 425-448.
- Haley, W. E., Levine, E. G., Brown, S. L., & Bartolucci, A. A. (1987). Stress, appraisal, coping, and social support as predictors of adaptational outcome among dementia caregivers. *Psychology and Aging, 2*, 323-330.
- Hawker, D. J., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 41*, 441-455.
- Hecht, M. L. (1978). Measure of communication satisfaction. *Human Communication Research, 4*, 350-368.
- Hendricks, V. M., & Blanken, P. (1992). Snowball sampling: Theoretical and practical considerations. In V. M. Hendricks, P. Blanken, & N. Adriaans (Eds.), *Snowball sampling: A pilot study on cocaine use* (pp. 17-35). Rotterdam: IVO.
- Hofstede, G. (2003). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- House, J. S. (1981). *Work stress and social support*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*, 1-55.
- Hunter, S. C., & Borg, M. G. (2006). The influence of emotional reaction on help seeking by victims of school bullying. *Educational Psychology, 26*, 813-826.
- Hunter, S. C., & Boyle, J. M. E. (2004). Appraisal and coping strategy use in victims of school bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 83-107.
- Hunter, S. C., Merchan, J. M., & Ortega, R. (2004). The long-term effects of coping strategy use in victims of bullying. *Spanish Journal of Psychology, 7*, 3-12.

- Jones, A., & Crandall, R. (1986). Validation of a short index of self-actualization. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 12*, 63-73.
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Rimpelä, M., Marttunen, M., Rimpela, A., & Rantanen, P. (1999). Bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation in Finnish adolescents: School survey. *British Medical Journal, 319*, 348-351.
- Kanetsuna, T., Smith, P. K., & Morita, Y. (2006). Coping with bullying at school: Children's recommended strategies and attitudes to school-based interventions in England and Japan. *Aggressive Behavior, 32*, 570-580.
- Kline, R. B. (2005). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
- Kochenderfer, B. J., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). Victimized children's responses to peers' aggression: Behaviors associated with reduced versus continued victimization. *Development and Psychopathology, 9*, 59-73.
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., & Skinner, K. (2002). Children's coping strategies: Moderators of the effects of peer victimization? *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 267-278.
- Kristensen, S. M., & Smith, P. K. (2003). The use of coping strategies by Danish children classed as bullies, victims, bully/victims, and not involved, in response to different (hypothetical) types of bullying. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 44*, 479-488.
- Langford, C. P., Bowsher, J., Maloney, J. P., & Lillis, P. P. (1997). Social support: A conceptual analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 25*, 95-100.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Little, T. D. (2000). On the comparability of constructs in cross-cultural research: A critique of Cheung and Rensvold. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 31*, 213-219.



- Little, T. D., Slegers, D. W., & Card, N. A. (2006). A non-arbitrary method of identifying and scaling latent variables in SEM and MACS models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 13*, 59-72.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sousa, L., & Dickerhoof, R. (2006). The costs and benefits of writing, talking, and thinking about life's triumphs and defeats. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*, 692-708.
- Ma, X. (2002). Bullying in middle school: Individual and school characteristics of victims and offenders. *School Effectiveness & School Improvement, 13*, 63-89.
- MacKinnon, D. P., Lockwood, C. M., Hoffman, J. M., West, S. G., & Sheets, V. (2002). A comparison of methods to test mediation and other intervening variable effects. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 83-104.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 98*, 224-253.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1998). The cultural psychology of personality. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 29*, 63-87.
- Matsunaga, M., & Imahori, T. T. (2009). Profiling family communication standards: A U.S.-Japan comparison. *Communication Research, 36*, 3-31.
- Meredith, W. (1993). Measurement invariance, factor analysis and factorial invariance. *Psychometrika, 58*, 525-543.
- Morita, Y. (2001). *Ijime no kokusai hikaku kenkyu* [Cross-national comparative study of bullying]. Tokyo: Kaneko Shobou.
- Morita, Y., Soeda, H., Soeda, K., & Taki, M. (1999). Japan. In P. K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, & P. Slee (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 309-323). New York: Routledge.

- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (2007). *Mplus: User's guide* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.
- Nansel, T. R., Craig, W., Overpeck, M. D., Saluja, G., Ruan, W. J., & the health Behaviour in School-aged Children Bullying Analyses Working Group. (2004). Cross-national consistency in the relationship between bullying behaviors and psychosocial adjustment. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 158*, 730-736.
- Nansel, T. R., Haynie, D. L., & Simons-Morton, B. G. (2003). The association of bullying and victimization with middle school adjustment. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 19*, 45-61.
- Naylor, P., & Cowie, H. (1999). The effectiveness of peer support systems in challenging school bullying: The perspectives and experiences of teachers and pupils. *Journal of Adolescence, 22*, 467-479.
- Naylor, P., Cowie, H., & del Rey, R. (2001). Coping strategies of secondary school children in response to being bullied. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry Review, 6*, 114-120.
- Nesdale, D., & Naito, M. (2005). Individualism-collectivism and the attitudes to school bullying of Japanese and Australian Students. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 36*, 537-556.
- Oetzel, J. G., & Ting-Toomey, S. (2003). Face concerns in interpersonal conflict: A cross-cultural empirical test of the face negotiation theory. *Communication Research, 30*, 599-624.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know what we can do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*, 3-72.
- Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). *Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Pennebaker, J. W., Barger, S. D., & Tiebout, J. (1989). Disclosure of traumas and health among Holocaust survivors. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *51*, 577-589.
- Petronio, S. (2002). *Boundaries of privacy: Dialectics of disclosure*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Contemporary approaches to assessing mediation in communication research. In A. F. Hayes, M. D. Slater, & L. B. Snyder (Eds.), *Sage sourcebook of advanced data analysis methods for communication research* (pp. 13-54). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rigby, K., & Barnes, A. (2002). To tell or not to tell: The victimised student's dilemma. *Youth Studies in Australia*, *21*, 33-36.
- Rook, K. S., & Underwood, L. G. (2000). Social support measurement and interventions: Comments and future directions. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.), *Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists* (pp. 311-334). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ryan, R. M., Chirkov, V. I., Little, T. D., Sheldon, K. M., Timoshina, E., & Deci, E. L. (1999). The American dream in Russia: Extrinsic aspirations and well-being in two cultures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 1509-1524.
- Salmivalli, C., Karhunen, J., & Lagerspetz, K. M. J. (1996). How do the victims respond to bullying? *Aggressive Behavior*, *22*, 99-109.
- Smith, P. K. (2000). *Bullying: Don't suffer in silence—An anti-bullying pack for schools* (2nd ed.). London: HMSO.
- Smith, P. K. (2004). Bullying: Recent developments. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, *9*, 98-103.
- Smith, P. K., & Shu, S. (2000). What good schools can do about bullying: Findings from a survey in English schools after a decade of research and action. *Childhood*, *7*, 193-212.

- Smith, P. K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R., & Slee, P. (Eds.). (1999). *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, P. K., Talamelli, L., Cowie, H., Naylor, P., & Chauhan, P. (2004). Profiles of non-victims, escaped victims, continuing victims and new victims of school bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 565-581.
- Spera, S. P., Buhrfeind, E. D., & Pennebaker, J. W. (1994). Expressive writing and coping with job loss. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*, 722-733.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (2005). The matrix of face: An undated face-negotiation theory. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 71-92). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Toda, Y. (1997). Kyouiku gakubusei no ijime/ijimerare keiken to ijime ni taisuru ishiki [Bullying/bullied experiences and attitudes to bullying among students in the faculty of education]. *Proceedings of the Faculty of Education, Tottori University, 6*, 19-28.
- Toda, Y. (2001). Peer support: Its development in Japanese schools and some issues to be concerned. *Tottori University Journal of the Faculty of Education, 2*, 59-75.
- Wills, T. A., & Shinar, O. (2000). Measuring perceived and received support. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.), *Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists* (pp. 86-135). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Xu, Y., & Burleson, B. R. (2001). Effects of sex, culture, and support type on perceptions of spousal social support: An assessment of the "support gap" hypothesis in early marriage. *Human Communication Research, 27*, 535-566.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>16</sup> Although Xu and Burleson's (2001) original scale includes other support dimensions (e.g., tangible support) as well, they are not examined in this study due to their lack of relevancy. For example, one of the tangible support dimension scale asks the degree to which the support provider was "*offering to lend you something (including money)*," which is argued to be of little relevancy to the current study's context (i.e., bullied victims' crisis disclosure and thus unfolded interaction). The other support dimension, informational support, was found in the preliminary analysis to be indistinguishable from the network support in the current study's data.

<sup>17</sup> Preliminary analyses were performed to examine if the data obtained from recent graduates would systematically differ from those from the college student samples. However, those two groups did not significantly differ with regard to all the variables analyzed in the current study, and therefore, the decision was made to treat them indistinguishably.

<sup>18</sup> The participants' e-mail addresses were deleted from the record afterwards.

<sup>19</sup> To control the effects of the covariates, they were specified as exogenous variables, from which paths were drawn to all substantive factors analyzed in the model (Figure 4.2).

<sup>20</sup> Those face concern measures were part of the overall survey and assessed victims' perceived face concerns prior to engaging in disclosure about their bullied status.

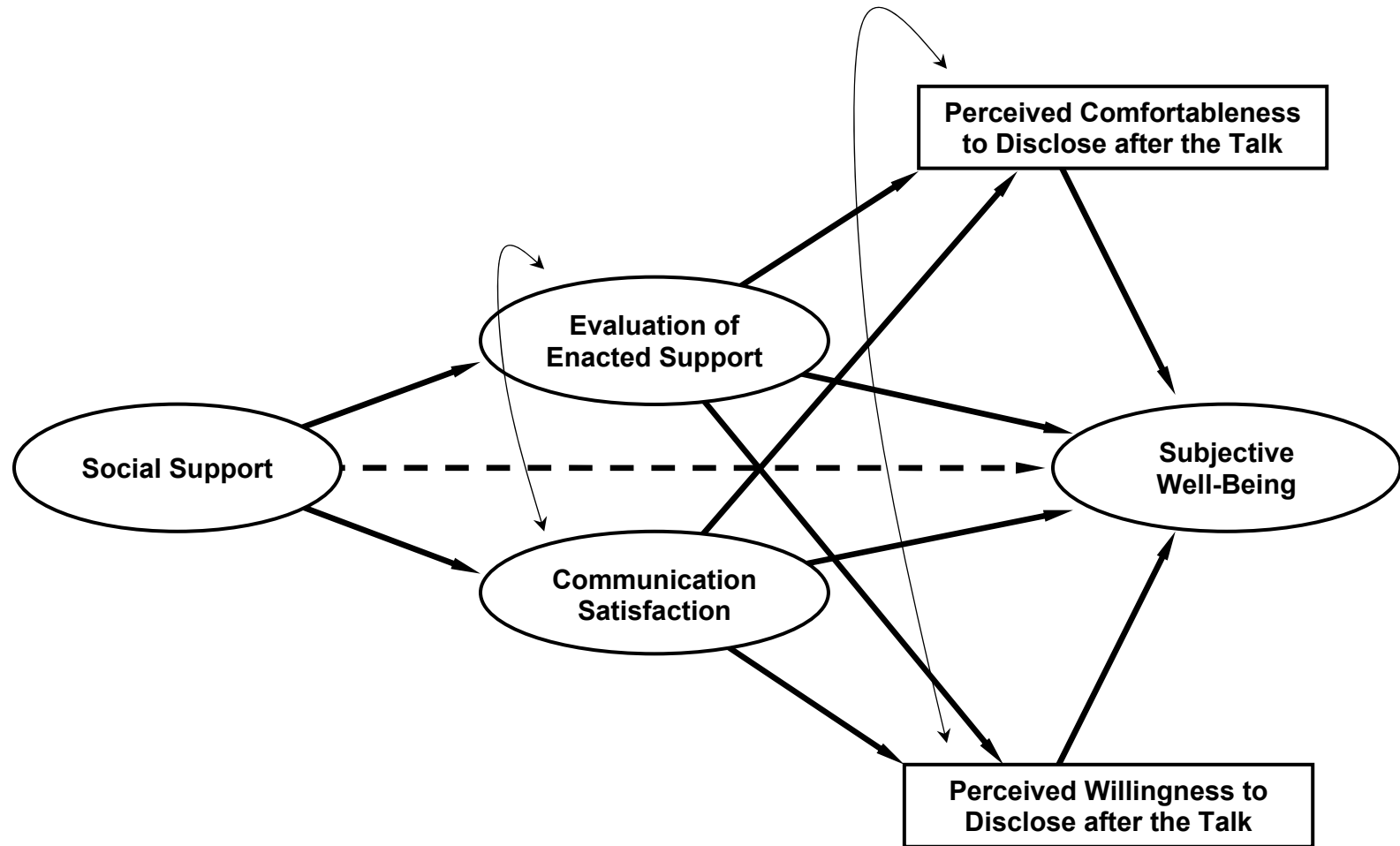
Table 4.1

*Descriptive Statistics, Bivariate Correlations, and Scale for the Japanese (n = 148) and the U.S. (n = 192) Data*

Factor	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	EMS	ESS	NWS	EES	CS	CCD	WCD	SWB
Emotional Support (EMS)	72.53 80.10	23.79 20.73	.94 .92							
Esteem Support (ESS)	64.05 76.71	25.53 22.23	.63*** .60***	.91 .92						
Network Support (NWS)	28.75 51.12	22.44 32.69	.01 .31***	.21* .43***	.82 .94					
Evaluation of Enacted Support (EES)	5.84 5.99	1.24 1.02	.57*** .63***	.40*** .58***	-.22* .28***	.95 .95				
Communication Satisfaction (CS)	81.16 82.71	16.36 19.77	.44*** .69***	.30** .54***	-.43*** .22**	.68*** .72***	.77 .79			
Comfortableness for Crisis Disclosure (CCD)	167.00 144.10	62.21 52.35	.32** .30***	.40*** .24**	.16 .13	.39*** .40***	.20 .36***	— —		
Willingness for Crisis Disclosure (WCD)	144.56 141.13	68.17 58.78	.31** .26***	.31** .19**	.07 .15*	.24* .40***	.09 .34***	.61*** .75***	— —	
Subjective Well-Being (SWB)	47.79 76.58	22.35 17.58	.11 .37***	.17 .32***	.10 .19*	.06 .34***	.15 .35***	.19 .14	.00 .15*	.90 .90

Note. Upper element in each cell is the data from the Japanese sample, and the lower element is the U.S. Data. Diagonal elements are reliability coefficients (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ). Comfortableness and willingness for crisis disclosure were assessed by single-item measures.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



*Figure 4.1.* Conceptual Model of the Mediation Process of Appraisal, Social Support, and Adaptation for Bullied Victims. Note. Arrow-headed paths indicate directional causal paths and doubly-arrow-headed arcs indicate inter-factor correlations postulated in the model. Dashed path indicates the mediated effect of social support on subjective well-being.

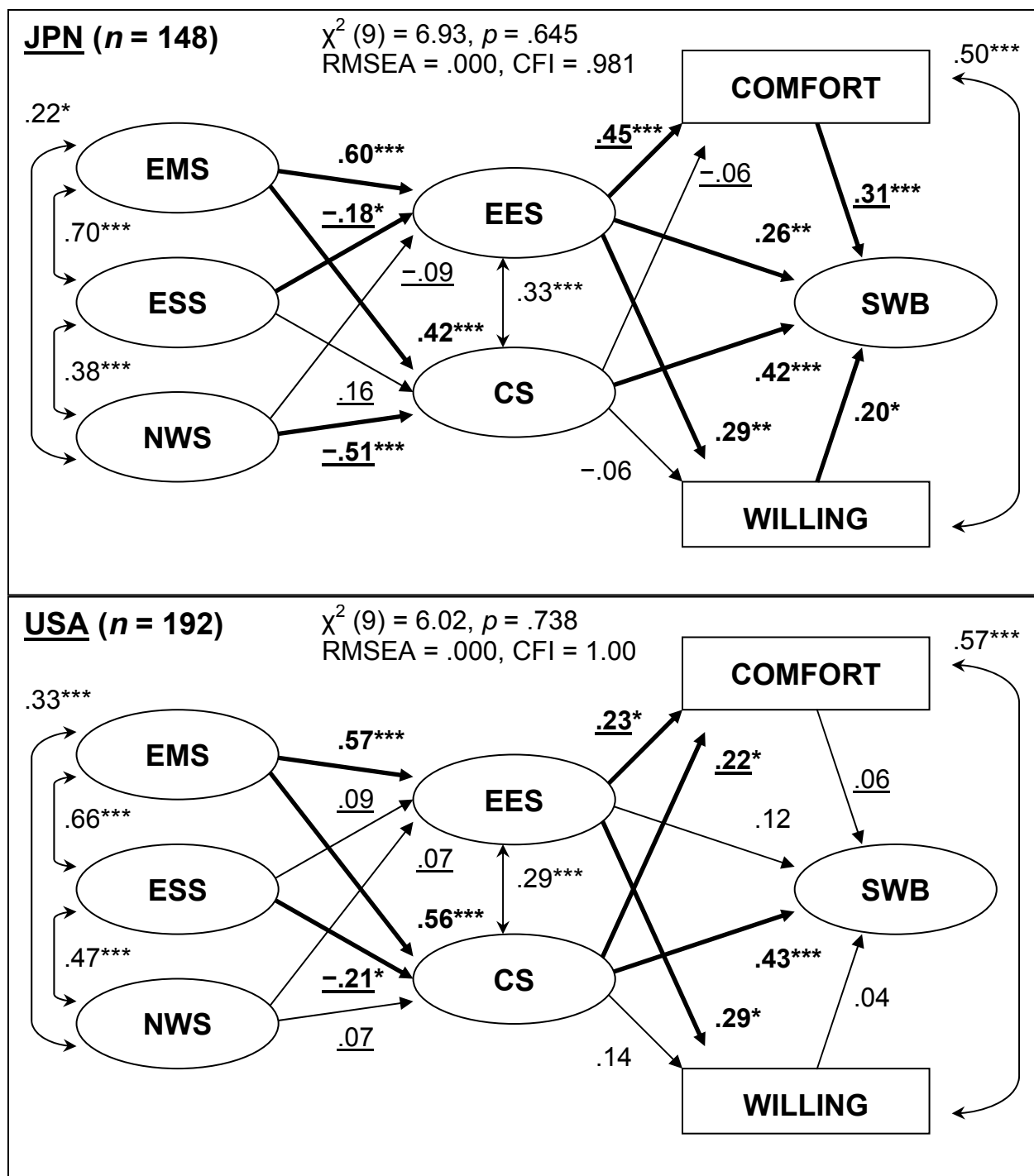
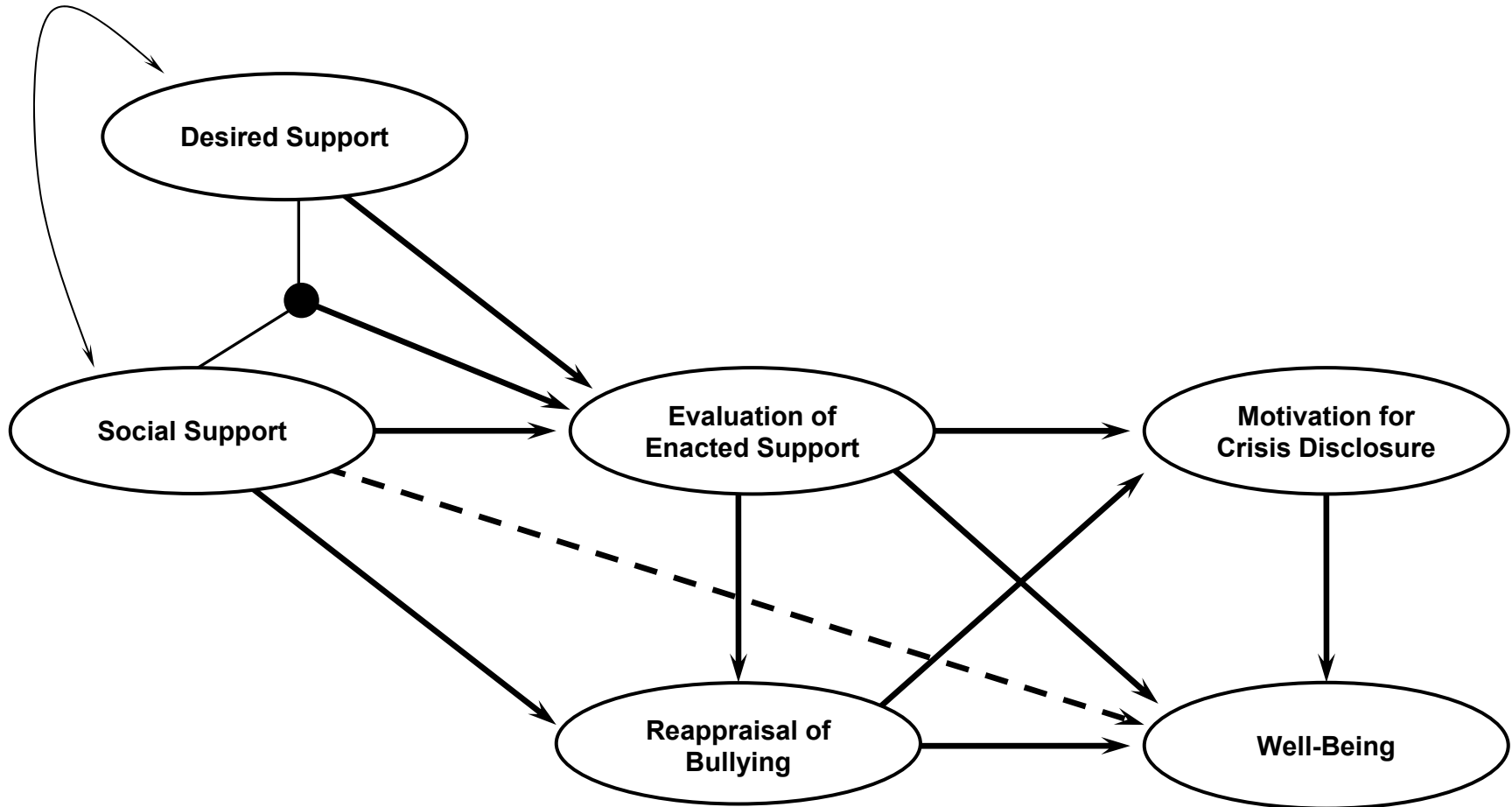


Figure 4.2. Results of the Structural Equation Modeling Analysis of the MASA. Note. EMS = Emotional support. ESS = Esteem support. NWS = Network support. EES = Evaluation of enacted support. CS = Communication satisfaction. COMFORT = Perceived comfortableness to talk about bullying after the talk. WILLING = Perceived willingness to talk about bullying after the talk. SWB = Subjective well-being. Significant paths within each model are marked by boldface. Path coefficients that are underlined are significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) across cultures. Covariates and their effects are not presented in the figure.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$





*Figure 4.3.* Expanded Conceptual Model of the Mediation Process of Appraisal, Social Support, and Adaptation for Bullied Victims. Arrow-headed paths indicate directional causal paths and dashed path indicates the mediated effect of social support on subjective well-being postulated in the model. Doubly-arrow-headed arcs indicate inter-factor correlations. The filled circle connected to social support and desired support factors indicate their interaction effect (see Muthén & Muthén, 2007, pp. 61-63).

Chapter 5  
Concluding Remarks

Addressing as pestiferous a social problem as bullying is a challenging and, in fact, perhaps never-ending endeavor (Nansel et al., 2004; Smith et al., 1999). Nonetheless, the three studies conducted for the current research have rendered a number of insights that illuminate some previously unexplored aspects of bullying dynamics. To clarify the contributions made by the current research to the literature, major findings obtained through the three studies reported in earlier chapters are noted in this section. Following this review, limitations of the current research and future directions are also discussed. Finally, some concluding remarks are stated to locate the current research within the larger body of research on bullying.

#### *What Has Been Uncovered in This Research*

As an initial step toward establishing a fruitful program of research on bullying from a communication-centered perspective, the current research has focused on bullied victims' interpersonal relationship and communication in their coping process. In so doing, the three studies conducted for this research made several theoretical and methodological advances, which are noted in turn below along with some practical implications.

#### *Theoretical Advances*

The first major contribution of the current research is made on the theoretical front. That is, the three studies reported in Chapters 2 through 4 have demonstrated in one way or another that victims' coping is an important part of bullying dynamics and, moreover, interpersonal relationships and communication do make appreciable differences in this process. Obvious as this may sound, it should be reminded that victims' coping process has received relatively little attention in the existing literature on bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; see also Chapter 1). Further, even the few studies that examined coping did not specifically focus on the interactional aspects of the process revolving around bullied victims and concerned others such as families and best friends (e.g., Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey, 2001).

Not only has the current research addressed these limitations but it also has uncovered the underlying structure of such communicative dynamics through the examination of theoretically formulated models. In addition, exploration of bullied individuals' coping process from a relationally-centered perspective generated LCA/LPA-based typologies of those victims' relational environments and disclosure behaviors. Finally, investigation of the cross-cultural variability of the supportive communication for victims has illuminated interesting similarities and differences between Japan and the U.S. How these findings inform the theories on interpersonal communication and bullied victims' coping are discussed in greater detail below.

The first study conducted for the current research (Chapter 2) has shown that individuals who have experienced bullying more than what their parents suspect have a significantly less optimal level of subjective well-being than those whose parents accurately grasp their experience. Notably, this association between child-parent discrepancy and well-being held even after the effects of the victims' self-report of bullying experiences are statistically controlled; stated differently, the Chapter 2 study has shown that, even when two individuals experience an equal level of victimization, their post-bullying adjustment would vary depending on how well their parents understand those victims' crisis. This finding is important because it provides direct evidence that an interpersonal relationship (i.e., family relations) provides as an additional source of variance in bullied victims' adjustment, separately from the impact of victimization per se. Moreover, this study has revealed that the child-parent discrepancy on bullying can be traced to the given family's communicative orientation (i.e., FCS profile).

Together, these findings suggest that bullied victims' coping and adjustment process is a communicative process that in part operates at the relational level (Smith, 2004). As Espelage and Swearer (2003) maintain, this notion of social network and interpersonal dynamics is one of the unexplored areas in the previous studies on focusing on bullying, which tend to focus on

micro-level individual difference factors (e.g., personality traits of victims) or macro-level sociological factors (e.g., socioeconomic status or ethnic membership). The Chapter 2 study has challenged this theoretical divide by demonstrating the rich potential of the niche “in-between”; that is, the communicative and relational aspects of bullied victims’ coping process.

The second study (Chapter 3) attempted to clarify the association between FCS profile and child-parent discrepancy. To do so, it assumed that children from certain families are more likely than others to disclose about bullying, and this self-disclosure would reduce the child-parent discrepancy. It also hypothesized that FCS profile would help identify the families where children feel comfortable engaging in such disclosure. This hypothesis indeed found empirical support. Victims from the *Open-Affectionate* families reported perceiving stronger efficacy for disclosure than their *Detached* counterparts; likewise, those from *Mixed* families felt strong efficacy for disclosing about their experience, though mostly to their mothers (i.e., their efficacy perceptions with reference to fathers were largely indistinguishable from *Detached*).

Further, these efficacy perceptions were found to correlate with the victims’ reported disclosure/non-disclosure patterns such that the stronger the perceived efficacy, the more likely they were to disclose. Thus, this FCS → Efficacy → Disclosure/Non-Disclosure mediation illuminated a path that connects the FCS-discrepancy linkage identified in the first study. To illustrate, victims from *Open-Affectionate* and *Mixed* families tend to feel more efficacious to disclose and indeed do divulge their experience of victimization more than those from *Detached* families; because the parents of the former groups of families are more likely to receive direct disclosure, they generally have better grasp of their children’s experience of bullying.

In addition, the Chapter 3 study’s results indicate that, whereas efficacy perceptions generally increase the likelihood of bullied victims’ disclosure, not all types of efficacy are equally influential. Among the four efficacy types examined, coping efficacy and perceived

willingness of the target (i.e., recipient of disclosure) to listen to victims is the strongest predictors of disclosure. This finding has specific and general theoretical implications. First, similar to the results obtained in the Chapter 2 study, it demonstrates the importance of the role played by victims' surroundings, supporting Smith's (2004) framework that transcends the traditional bully-victim dyadic perspective. More generally, the differential effects of the four efficacy perceptions evidenced in the Chapter 3 study provide empirical evidence for the distinctiveness of those efficacy subdimensions. Such differentiation should inform the theories featuring the construct of efficacy (e.g., Afifi & Weiner, 2004; Bandura, 1997, 2001) and make the "mesh of the net finer" (Gudykunst, 2005, p. 281) to help capture the subtle phenomena, which that might not be picked up by the current theories' framework.

To augment these discoveries from a different angle, the third study (Chapter 4) investigated supportive communication enacted in response to victims' disclosure. It hypothesized a mediational model to determine what supportive strategies are perceived as favorable by bullied victims and also how those message appraisals lead to the victims' motivation for further self-disclosure and post-bullying adjustment. This model was tested across Japan and the U.S. to explore cross-cultural similarities and differences in supportive communication for bullied victims. The results were largely in line with the existing findings of supportive communication literature. Emotional support, or message intended to communicate affection and empathy for the recipient to ameliorate her or his distress (Xu & Burleson, 2001), was most positively perceived by both Japanese and U.S. American victims. However, victims' evaluation of the other two types of support (i.e., esteem and network support) was mixed: Esteem support was only weakly, if at all, related to the bullied victims' appraisal of the enacted support; on the other hand, network was unrelated to the U.S. American victims' appraisals, and it generated particularly negative perceptions to Japanese victims.

In a sense, these results raised more questions than it succeeded to answer. Why does emotional support generate positive perceptions apparently pan-culturally, whereas esteem and network support do not (the latter even results in damaging the recipients' satisfaction)? To what extent are these patterns context-specific (i.e., social support enacted in response to bullied victims' disclosure)? Is there any occasions where esteem and/or network support are perceived as appropriate and effective by the victims, and if so, what would be the moderating factors? These are just a tip of the pool of questions that readily come to mind in view of the results from the Chapter 4 study; unfortunately, they cannot be examined by that study's data and future research need to explore them systematically. Such incompleteness, however, should not be taken as disappointing for: (a) the study did successfully replicate the previous findings on the effectiveness of emotional support (Mortenson, Liu, Burleson, & Liu, 2006; Xu & Burleson, 2001) and replication is indispensable to advance scientific knowledge; and, (b) moreover, identifying problems to be explored, such as those enumerated above, is useful for guiding future studies, which will be further discussed later in this chapter.

In addition, the study reported in Chapter 4 found that victims who positively appraised the enacted support felt encouraged to disclose more widely subsequently; further, this pattern was identified for both Japanese and U.S. American victims. This finding is especially important when taken together with one of the most frustrating findings reported in the bullying literature; that is, despite the widely demonstrated effectiveness of disclosure, victims often are afraid to share their bullied status with others and, as result, suffer only with themselves (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Rigby & Barnes, 2002).

Together, these three studies have demonstrated the importance of bullied victims' coping and the theoretical value of communication-centered perspective in tackling the process revolving around those victims and their surroundings. As discussed above, setting the focal

point on the communicative dynamics and interpersonal relationships opens up an interesting arena for research that illuminates bullied victims' coping process; the three studies conducted for the current research provide evidence that this communication-centered perspective can bring fruitful findings that are related to and yet distinct from those obtained through the existing approaches that focus on individual differences or sociological factors. The current research's findings suggest that having caring relationships and engaging in quality communication reduce the risk and help maintain victims' subjective well-being, and this protective effect of social support was found to span across cultures, with intriguing similarities and differences. Although research on bullied individuals' coping process and the role of communication therein is a relatively new topic in the literature and much remains to be known, the current findings point to the promising potential of this particular venue of research.

#### *Methodological Advances*

Second, the current research demonstrated the utility of some innovative methodologies and techniques that are not employed by the majority of bullying studies. Perhaps most notable on this front is the successful application of latent class and profile analysis (LCA/LPA; Lanza, Flaherty, & Collins, 2003; Vermunt & Magidson, 2002) to the exploration of coping processes and family backgrounds of bullied victims. Although theoretically established half a century ago (Gibson, 1959), LCA/LPA has not been widely utilized until recently (Lanza et al., 2003). As a consequence, this technique, albeit increasingly popular in fields such as prevention science and public health research (e.g., Hagedaars & McCutcheon, 2002), is still underutilized in the bullying and communication literature. Nonetheless, the studies conducted for the current research have shown that LCA/LPA provides a useful tool to identify the underlying structure of such complex phenomena as bullied victims' self-disclosure patterns (Chapter 3) and their families' communicative orientations (Chapters 2 & 3). Sifting the wheat from the chaff, so to



speak, LCA/LPA illuminates the primary patterns of variation in the target phenomena while discarding those that are deemed unreplicable based on certain statistical criteria (e.g., BIC and entropy). It is hoped that the current studies' demonstration of the utility of LCA/LPA will encourage a wider application of this promising technique in the future bullying research.

Additionally, two methodological advances were made in the current research. One such advance is involvement of bullied victims' parents, along with victims themselves, in the survey and studying the child-father-mother triad as the unit of analysis (Chapters 2 & 3). Research has long been called for investigation into the family's role in bullying dynamics (see Berdondini & Smith, 1996). As Espelage and Swearer (2003) and Smith (2004) point out, however, the vast majority of the existing studies only surveyed one party—typically bullies or victims—and those directly assessing family members are rare to date. In this regard, the current research's approach marks a notable methodological breakthrough. Moreover, it has shown that incorporating family climate into the analysis does account for additional variance in bullied victims' coping process. *Ceteris paribus*, having parents who endorse supportive and relationship-centered family communication standards (Caughlin, 2003) provides victims with extra cache for coping. Such parents, in comparison with their detached counterparts, understand their children's victimization status more accurately (Chapter 2) and the children feel more comfortable to share the information about bullying with them (Chapter 3). Unsurprisingly, this child-parent interactive closeness is found to be associated with a more optimal level of victims' subjective well-being.

Another methodological advance made in the current research is the collection and comparison of data from two national cultures (i.e., Japan and the U.S.; Chapter 4). As noted in Chapter 1, despite its strong international orientation, theory-based cross-cultural research is surprisingly uncommon in the literature on bullying (see Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006, for an exception) and other interpersonal processes. That is, although a number of international

studies do exist, they typically focus on documenting descriptive aspects of bullying (e.g., Eslea et al., 2004; Nansel et al., 2004; Smith et al., 1999). Consequently, few studies compare and contrast multiple cultures with regard to the theoretical models that are intended to explain the observed cross-cultural patterns (Smith, 2004). The Chapter 4 study attempted to address this concern and has uncovered some interesting differences, as well as similarities, between Japan and the U.S. in supportive communication for bullied victims and their appraisal/coping process.

### *Practical Implications*

In addition to the theoretical and methodological advances just discussed, the findings obtained through this research have a number of practical implications. As noted in Chapter 2 (pp. 58-60), however, those implications should be interpreted cautiously given the immaturity of the current research. Exploration, not to mention theoretical formulation, of bullied victims' coping is still at its infancy stage and uncritical application of findings may end up doing more harm than good to the involved parties or aggravating, rather than alleviating, the problem of interest (see, e.g., Manne et al., 2003; Reynolds & Perrin, 2004, for discussions on the negative impact of well-intentioned and yet ill-practiced support on breast cancer survivors' adjustment).

At the same time, some implications do seem noteworthy. First, parents should be warned against being overconfident. The study conducted for Chapter 2 replicated the previous findings on parents' general tendency to underestimate the risk of bullying their children face; that is, children are found on average to have experienced more victimization than their parents suspect (Fekkes et al., 2005; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). This finding suggests that many of the bullied individuals are undergoing the agony of victimization without even being noticed by their close surroundings that they are suffering. In fact, Morita, Soeda, Soeda, and Taki (1999) note that parents who find out the fact of their children being bullied typically claim that they had not previously recognized a hint of victimization.

Of course, there is a thin line between being attentive to children's sign of distress and being oversensitive if not paranoiac about the slightest risks that are part of everyday life. Nonetheless, given the robustness of the finding (Chapter 2; Fekkes et al., 2005; Stockdale et al., 2002), it seems reasonable to suggest that parents at least should be aware of the possibility that they may be underestimating the risk of bullying and prepare themselves to tune in to their children's signs of support-seeking. To aid in this admittedly difficult task, future research should explore the communicative strategies other than explicit disclosure used by bullied victims to signal their suffering. Such typologies would help parents recognize their children's subtle messages, if any, and thereby minimize the risk of child-parent discrepancy on bullying.

Second, the findings associated with FCS profile suggest that understanding characteristics of bullied victims' family relations provides a useful initial diagnostic tool to evaluate a given individual's risk. FCS profile has shown robust and moderately strong associations with such key constructs as child-parent discrepancy (Chapter 2) and victims' perceived efficacy perceptions (Chapter 3). Those constructs, in turn, predicted victims' post-bullying adaptation and coping. Thus, identifying the FCS profile of one's family may help distinguish individuals who are particularly vulnerable once they fall victims of bullying.

Third, and in relation to the point made above, the current findings suggest that coping with bullying is not an individual endeavor but an interpersonal and relational process (Sutton & Smith, 1999). Although a number of previous studies have shown that victims' individual characteristics such as personality traits influence their reaction to bullying (e.g., Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), the findings obtained through this research clearly demonstrate that relational features and interactional processes also make significant differences in how victims cope. In terms of practical implication, this recognition of the interpersonal dynamics calls for the involvement of victims' surrounding parties (e.g., family

and best friends) in the efforts to facilitate coping, such as family counseling and peer support system (cf. Naylor & Cowie, 1999; Smith, 1994; Smith & Madsen, 1997).

Fourth, when any effort to help victims cope should be done in a culturally sensitive manner. As a social problem, bullying does not occur in a vacuum (Olweus, 1978, 1993). As noted earlier, the literature is still thin on how culture intersects with bullying (Kanetsuna et al., 2006; Smith et al., 1999). On this front, the current research should be taken as an initial step, and a long journey no doubt is to follow to accumulate empirical findings and theoretical insights, as well as to clarify the existing knowledge, regarding the cultural impact on bullied victims' coping process. For example, the results of the study for Chapter 4 suggest that emotional support is an effective support strategy for both Japanese and the U.S. American victims. How to be emotionally supportive, however, may vary across cultures; research suggests that whereas certain behaviors are considered supportive of one's emotion across cultures, other behaviors entail sometimes radically different meanings from culture to culture (e.g., Mortenson et al., 2006). At the same time, the robust cross-cultural invariance in the positive effects of emotional support identified in the current research suggests that the behaviors considered emotional support in the existing social support framework (Xu & Burleson, 2001) should operate equivalently for Japanese and U.S. American victims in terms of their outcomes. Nonetheless, future research needs to explore the theoretical mechanisms through which various cultural factors operate to manifest the outcomes of supportive communication and also strive to establish sound operationalization to capture the target phenomena such as enactment of support strategies to obtain cross-culturally comparable data.

#### *What Has Remained To Be Addressed in the Future*

One of the overarching goals of the current research is to provide a stepping stone for future research on bullying and victims' coping. As such, the findings obtained through the three

studies conducted for this research point to various promising directions for future studies to pursue. Some of those research agendas being already noted in earlier chapters, this section discusses limitations of the current research and issues that remain to be addressed.

First, one major limitation of the current research is its focus on victims' disclosure of their being bullied. This particular communicative act was set as the target phenomenon in this research because previous studies have shown that victims who disclose tend to cope better than their undisclosed counterparts (Hunter & Borg, 2006; Naylor et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2004). Given its face-threatening nature, however, it seems reasonable to suspect that victims might not choose direct and explicit disclosure as the initial step of their coping process. In fact, research suggests that being bullied is a highly stigmatizing experience and victims often painstakingly try not to let others know their bullied status (e.g., Rigby & Barnes, 2002).

Upon these surmise and research findings, a number of questions readily come to mind. For example: What communicative strategies victims use to signal their bullied status? Do they first hint their crisis through subtle, water-testing messages and eventually venture to engage in more risky strategies such as explicit disclosure? If so, then, what marks the "tipping point" above which victims can no longer hold the secret and choose to reveal that they are being bullied? Or, would there be more distinct between-individual patterns such that some victims become despaired and cloister themselves when their initial signaling attempt through subtle messages fails to be noticed, whereas others rather immediately reveal their victimized experience? What are the key ingredients of the interaction in which victims, who may be reluctant to tell the truth at the outset, become encouraged to disclose? Future research needs to explore these questions and hypotheses, among others, systematically and with guidance of relevant theories to enhance our understanding on how victims communicate with their surrounding parties in an attempt to seek support and cope with bullying.

Second, although the involvement of victims' parents (Chapters 2 & 3) is argued to be an important methodological step made in the current research, the depth and breadth of the data obtained from those parent respondents was limited. This limitation was in part inevitable due to the need to minimize the demand posed upon those voluntary participants who took the survey without any compensation. Nonetheless, if future studies find ways to assess parental data more thoroughly, it would help answer some questions that are left unexplored in this research.

One such question concerns how family as an interdependent system would react to the "turbulence" (cf. Theiss & Solomon, 2006); namely, their children's being bullied. Theories such as family systems theory (Yerby, 1995) and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) suggest that turmoil or disruption at one part of a system should have repercussions on other parts of the same system. According to this view, the impact of bullying would ripple over the victim's family and affect not only victims themselves but their parents and other related parties (e.g., siblings and relatives) as well. Although few studies have systematically examined how bullying influence victims' family as a whole, anecdotal evidence cumulated through case studies indicates that bullying can cause severe confusion and distress among family members, particularly parents, and also impair healthy family functioning by burdening parents to negotiate with school and/or bullies' family about remedial plans and actions (Moriguchi, 2007; Yamawaki, 2006). Thus, future research examining how bullied victims' social network operates in their coping process will likely find interesting insights.

Third, dynamics of supportive communication and coping processes involving victims and their surroundings need more exploration. The results of the study reported in Chapter 4 suggest that emotional support is highly effective in enhancing victims' coping, whereas esteem support and network support are not. It remains to be explored, however, whether there are moderating variables that clarify the mixed patterns found in that study. In other words, would

there be a situation in which esteem and/or network support is perceived as equally or more effective as emotional support? Given the potential of social support (see Goldsmith & Brashers, 2008) and the stake involved in the issue (e.g., Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999), future studies should be encouraged to carefully disentangle the complexities around this topic of theorizing about social support for bullied victims.

### *Concluding Remarks*

Despite the decades of research and a wide range of disciplines interested in the topic, the literature on bullying still bears some gaps that need to be filled (see Chapter 1 for a review). Identifying the relational and interactional processes of victims' coping as one of such "holes" in the literature, the current research has embarked on the mission of investigating bullied victims' coping process from a communication-centered perspective. The three studies reported in earlier chapters found that bullied individuals' post-bullying adjustment and well-being are indeed associated with their interpersonal relationships and the social support they receive therein.

A unique contribution made by the current research to the literature is its findings on a post-bullying process (i.e., victims' coping). The findings obtained through the three studies complement those rendered by the existing bullying studies that are more geared toward identifying risk factors and establishing effective prevention strategies (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). As Caplan (1964; Caplan & Caplan, 2000) argued, such prevention-oriented research efforts are useful in reducing the incidence of the problem in question and keeping individuals from being afflicted. Knowing what constitutes risk factors, however, might not necessarily help those who suffer from bullying here and now. Similarly, what is effective to prevent bullying may not provide a useful strategy in situations where bullying is already an ongoing problem. In such situations, what bullied individuals and their concerned others (e.g., family and best friends) need is the knowledge on how to avoid the worst outcomes such as victims' committing suicide

(see Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999) and to assuage, and possibly terminate, the problem. In view of the lack of such “stopgap measures,” the current research has deliberately undertaken the approach to focus on post-bullying adjustment of victims and their coping processes. The findings reported in the earlier chapters may not be as useful to prevent the problem of bullying from mushrooming, but it is hoped that they do provide the information sought by those find themselves or their beloved ones caught in the suffocating iron claw of bullying.



## References

- Afifi, W. A. & Weiner, J. L. (2004). Toward a theory of motivated information management. *Communication Theory, 14*, 167-190.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 1-26.
- Berdondini, L., & Smith, P. K. (1996). Cohesion and power in the families of children involved in bully/victim problems at school: An Italian replication. *Journal of Family Therapy, 18*, 99-102.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology, 22*, 723-742.
- Caplan, G. (1964). *Principles from preventive psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books.
- Caplan, G., & Caplan, R. (2000). Principles of community psychiatry. *Community Mental Health Journal, 36*, 7-24.
- Caughlin, J. P. (2003). Family communication standards: What counts as excellent family communication and how are such standards associated with family satisfaction? *Human Communication Research, 29*, 5-40.
- Eslea, M., Menesini, E., Morita, Y., O'Moore, M., Mora-Merchán, J. A., Pereira, B., Smith, P. K., & Wenxin, Z. (2004). Friendship and loneliness among bullies and victims: Data from seven countries. *Aggressive Behavior, 30*, 71-83.
- Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? *School Psychology Review, 32*, 365-383.

- Fekkes, M., Pijpers, F. I. M., & Verloove-Vanhorick, S. P. (2005). Bullying: Who does what, when and where? Involvement of children, teachers and parents in bullying behavior. *Health Education Research, 20*, 81-91.
- Gibson, W. A. (1959). Three multivariate models: Factor analysis, latent structure analysis, and latent profile analysis. *Psychometrika, 24*, 229-252.
- Goldsmith, D. J., & Brashers, D. E. (2008). Communication matters: Developing and testing social support interventions. *Communication Monographs, 75*, 320-330.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2005). An anxiety/uncertainty management (AUM) theory of effective communication: Making the mesh of the net finer. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 281-322). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hagenaars, J. A., & McCutcheon, A. L. (Eds.). (2002). *Applied latent class analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunter, S. C., & Borg, M. G. (2006). The influence of emotional reaction on help seeking by victims of school bullying. *Educational Psychology, 26*, 813-826.
- Kanetsuna, T., Smith, P. K., & Morita, Y. (2006). Coping with bullying at school: Children's recommended strategies and attitudes to school-based interventions in England and Japan. *Aggressive Behavior, 32*, 570-580.
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Rimpela, M., Marttunen, M., Rimpela, A., & Rantanen, P. (1999). Bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation in Finnish adolescents: School survey. *British medical Journal, 319*, 348-351.
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., & Skinner, K. (2002). Children's coping strategies: Moderators of the effects of peer victimization? *Developmental Psychology, 38*, 267-278.

- Lanza, S. T., Flaherty, B. P., & Collins, L. M. (2003). Latent class and latent transition models. In J. A. Schinka & W. F. Velicer (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology: Vol. 2. Research methods in psychology* (pp. 663–685). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Manne, S., Ostroff, J., Sherman, J., Glassman, M., Ross, S., Goldstein, L., et al. (2003). Buffering effects of family and friend support on associations between partner unsupportive behaviors and coping among women with breast cancer. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 20*, 771-792.
- Moriguchi, A. (2007). *Ijime no kouzou* [Structure of bullying]. Tokyo: Shincho-sha.
- Morita, Y., Soeda, H., Soeda, K., & Taki, M. (1999). Japan. In P. K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, & P. Slee (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 309-323). New York: Routledge.
- Mortenson, S., Liu, M., Burlison, B. R., & Liu, Y. (2006). A fluency of feeling: Exploring cultural and individual differences (and similarities) related to skilled emotional support. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 37*, 366-385.
- Nansel, T. R., Craig, W., Overpeck, M. D., Saluja, G., Ruan, W. J., & the health Behaviour in School-aged Children Bullying Analyses Working Group. (2004). Cross-national consistency in the relationship between bullying behaviors and psychosocial adjustment. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 158*, 730-736.
- Naylor, P., & Cowie, H. (1999). The effectiveness of peer support systems in challenging school bullying: The perspectives and experiences of teachers and pupils. *Journal of Adolescence, 22*, 467-479.
- Naylor, P., Cowie, H., & del Rey, R. (2001). Coping strategies of secondary school children in response to being bullied. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry Review, 6*, 114-120.

- Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys*. Washington, DC: Wiley.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know what we can do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Reynolds, J. S., & Perrin, N. A. (2004). Mismatches in social support and psychological adjustment in breast cancer. *Health Psychology, 23*, 425-430.
- Rigby, K., & Barnes, A. (2002). To tell or not to tell: The victimised student's dilemma. *Youth Studies in Australia, 21*, 33-36.
- Smith, P. K. (1994). *Bullying: Don't suffer in silence—An anti-bullying pack for schools*. London: HMSO.
- Smith, P. K. (2004). Bullying: Recent developments. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 9*, 98-103.
- Smith, P. K., & Madsen, M. (1997). *A follow-up survey of the DFE Anti-Bullying Pack for Schools: Its use, and the development of anti-bullying work in schools*. London: DfEE.
- Smith, P. K., Morita, Y., Junger-Tas, J., Olweus, D., Catalano, R., & Slee, P. (Eds.). (1999). *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Stockdale, M. S., Hangaduambo, S., Duys, D., Larson, K., & Sarvela, P. D. (2002). Rural elementary students', parents', and teachers' perceptions of bullying. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 26*, 266-277.
- Sutton, J., & Smith, P. K. (1999). Bullying as a group process: An adaptation of the participant role approach. *Aggressive Behavior, 25*, 97-111.
- Theiss, J. A., & Solomon, D. H. (2006). A relational turbulence model of communication about irritations in romantic relationships. *Communication Research, 33*, 391-418.
- Vermunt, J. K., & Magidson, J. (2002). Latent class cluster analysis. In J. A. Hagenaars & A. L. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Applied latent class analysis* (pp. 89-106). New York: CUP.

- Vossekuil, B., Fein, R. A., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). *The final report of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education.
- Xu, Y., & Burleson, B. R. (2001). Effects of sex, culture, and support type on perceptions of spousal social support: An assessment of the “support gap” hypothesis in early marriage. *Human Communication Research, 27*, 535-566.
- Yamawaki, Y. (2006). *Kyoushitsu no akuma: Mienai “ijime” wo kaishou suru tame ni* [Evils in the classroom: To solve invisible “bullying”]. Tokyo: Poplar Press.
- Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2004). Online aggressor/targets, aggressors, and targets: A comparison of associated youth characteristics. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 45*, 1308-1316.
- Yerby, J. (1995). Family systems theory reconsidered: Integrating social construction theory and dialectical process. *Communication Theory, 5*, 339-365.

**VITA**  
**Masaki Matsunaga**

Office Address: Room 51-05-09B, 3-4-1 Okubo, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-8555, JAPAN  
E-Mail Address: Matsunaga@aoni.waseda.jp

**Education**

Ph.D. 2009, The Pennsylvania State University, Communication Arts and Sciences  
M.A. 2004, Seinan Gakuin University, Communication Studies  
B.A. 2001, Seinan Gakuin University, English Language Studies

**Academic Appointments**

Assistant Professor Waseda University (Tokyo, Japan), April, 2008 – Present  
Visiting Lecturer Sophia University (Tokyo, Japan), April, 2008 – Present  
Research Assistant The Pennsylvania State University, January, 2007 – March, 2008  
Teaching Assistant The Pennsylvania State University, January, 2006 – December, 2006  
Part-Time Instructor Seinan Gakuin University (Fukuoka, Japan), April, 2004 – July, 2004

**Recent Publications**

**Matsunaga, M.**, Hecht, M. L., Elek, E., & Ndiaye, K. (in press). Ethnic identity development and acculturation: A longitudinal analysis of Mexican-heritage youth in the Southwest United States. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*.

**Matsunaga, M.** (2009). Parents don't (always) know their children have been bullied: Parent-child discrepancy on bullying and family-level profile of communication standards. *Human Communication Research, 35*, 221-248.

**Matsunaga, M.**, & Imahori, T. T. (2009). Profiling family communication standards: A U.S.-Japan comparison. *Communication Research, 36*, 3-31.

Kam, J. A., **Matsunaga, M.**, Hecht, M. L., & Ndiaye, K. (2008, electronic publication ahead of print). Extending the theory of planned behavior to predict alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use among youth of Mexican heritage. *Prevention Science*.

**Matsunaga, M.** (2008). Item parceling in structural equation modeling: A primer. *Communication Methods and Measures, 2*, 260-293.

**Scholarly Awards and Grants**

**Nine Top, Top-3, Top-4, and/or Top Student Paper Awards** at various international, national, and regional conferences, including ICA, NCA, and WSCA.

**Research Grant for New Faculty Member**, Faculty of Science and Engineering, Waseda University, June, 2008. ¥400,000 was awarded for the research on bullied victims' coping process and the communicative role of family and surroundings.

**Fulbright Scholarship Award for Graduate Studies**, Institute of International Education (the United States of America) and the Japan-U.S. Educational Commission (Japan). In addition to the full-year tuition coverage, ¥200,000 and \$19,690 were awarded. (Extended to August 2006 with the maximum renewal grant of \$15,000; renewal date: March 22, 2005.)