A Typology of Retaliation Strategies Against Social Aggression Among Adolescent Girls

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was twofold (1) to examine which socially aggressive topics were most provocative and (2) to develop a typology for retaliation against social aggression. These concepts were analyzed through qualitative interviews with a sample of 15 girls, ages 10-16. The following socially aggressive topic themes were categorized in terms of frequency (from most to least): identity attacks, destabilization, boyfriend jealousy, family, insecurities, and secret exposure. Retaliation behaviors, including truth coalition, face-to-face confrontation, faux confrontation, cancel the friendship, gossip, cold shoulder, physical violence, rumors, nonverbal cues, picking teams, and specialized torture were found to be either methods of social leveling or payback. These results are the first to continue the examination of social aggression in terms of self communication and the communication process. Results suggest that the kind of retaliation exhibited to these provocative topics depends considerably on context—including the extent to which boys are involved, socioeconomic status of parties involved, proof of wrongdoing, and extent to which a party feels the need to save face. Results also suggest significant implications regarding low socioeconomic status—that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences are confounded with socioeconomic status to the point that cultural, ethnic, and racial traits can become shared with those of differing groups if low socioeconomic status is shared.
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INTRODUCTION

Sugar, spice, and everything nice are not always what little girls are made of. Recent popular culture entertainment, such as the blockbuster movie *Mean Girls* (Waters, 2004), has depicted vicious hurtful behavior in girls that seeks to victimize certain populations in order to gain status. But this phenomenon does not only appear in movies. In fact, several bestselling books, which have over the last five years, spawned an outbreak of news articles and talk show topics, have also introduced similar behavior among young girls. Simmons’ (2002) *Odd Girl Out*, shortly followed by Wiseman’s (2002) *Queen Bees and Wannabees*, were two of the first bestselling books to take strides in identifying intentional, spiteful, and cruel relationships between girls. *Odd Girl Out* (Simmons, 2002) featured in-depth interviews from many teenage girls’ points of view. The stories, letters, and even poems that the girls shared with Simmons offered insight into female socialization behavior from the perspective of head bullies, victims, bystanders, and social network minions. Wiseman’s (2002) “queenbees” were similarly analyzed through extensive interviewing, revealing much insight about the nature of female bullying, as well as the roles boys, sex, and even drugs play in female socialization.

Despite the denial of this behavior by some news critics (Hays, 2002; Kantrowitz, 2002), recent academic research has indeed unveiled a complex, aggressive culture in which girls seek to destroy relationships and others’ social standing through malicious acts like spreading slanderous gossip or rejecting girls in their social networks (Galen & Underwood, 1997). Due to its complexity, researchers in psychology have disagreed about how to define this new type of aggression—whether it is *relational, indirect, or social aggression*. While each of these concepts do vary slightly, *social aggression* most effectively captures the comprehensive array
of manipulative behaviors that destroy girls’ self esteem, social standing, or reputation (Coyne, Archer & Eslea, 2006).

Much psychological research has studied social aggression, especially to examine and define the behaviors of which it is comprised; however, there is little communication research or theory to explain or illustrate this “mean girls” phenomenon. The purpose of this study, then, is to examine two qualitative communication-based research questions about social aggression among girls. The goal of this study is to first discover the most frequent topics that elicit retaliation, such as dating issues or friend disloyalty. Second, this study hopes to unveil a typology of retaliation behaviors against those topics. Mapping which conversation topics most likely instigate retaliatory social aggression within social networks may help scholars not only forward a new model of communicative behavior, but may help them predict vulnerability as well. The ability to predict social aggression—whether a girl’s vulnerability of victimization or her vulnerability of becoming an aggressor—will help parents, teachers and mentors educate their daughters and students about the behavior and perhaps even stifle it. Academically, understanding a communicative model of social aggression may forward new concepts and theories that can be further tested in research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization of Social Aggression

Until recently, aggression studies have focused predominantly on physical violence among boys due to a cultural notion of male assertiveness and domination (Fry & Gabriel, 1994). In fact, so many studies on male aggression exist that many researchers have operated under the assumption that boys are naturally more aggressive than girls (Buss, 1961). However, an explosion of research on the differences between male and female aggression has recently
emerged (e.g. Galen & Underwood, 1997; Crick & Casas, 1997; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist & Peltonen, 1988; Peets & Kikas, 2006). Boys are typically associated with physically aggressive behavior, such as hitting, punching, kicking, or in effect, beating someone up. These behaviors are much easier to spot; they are overt, fairly simple to observe, and can be re-created in an experimental setting. In fact, since 1967, there have been 2,989 studies on aggression in children (mainly boys); of those, only 91, or 3 percent, include the faintest mention of one of physical aggression’s counterparts, verbal aggression, whereas the other 2,898 are completely physical-focused (Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2001). Girls’ aggression, on the other hand, takes on a more indirect, relational form, as it consists of behaviors such as gossip, backstabbing, eye-rolling, and the like; these behaviors are intended to damage another’s self esteem, social status, social network, reputation, or any combination thereof (Galen & Underwood, 1997). As research paradigms have expanded to include these other malicious types of behavior, a new concept of aggression has developed—social aggression.

While the concept originally grew out of studies examining the differences between boys’ and girls’ aggressive behaviors, social aggression has been studied further as a construct comprised of several different dimensions that describe similar manipulative behaviors. Harré and Lamb (1993), for instance, have noted that approximately 200 different definitions of aggressive behavior exist as dimensions for research. Among those 200 include three major overlapping dimensions of what is seen as typically female aggression: indirect aggression, relational aggression, and social aggression. Indirect aggression is a concept first examined by Lagerspetz, et al. (1988) that describes behavior in which an aggressor maintains anonymity, which allows her to avoid both retaliation from the victim, as well as third-party disapproval. In other words, indirect aggression refers specifically to covert relationship manipulation, acted out
through behaviors such as gossip or spreading vicious rumors, both of which can easily be
refuted if the aggressor is asked about the incident later. *Relational aggression*, on the other
hand, is a concept forwarded by Crick, Werner, Casas, O’Brien, Nelson, and Grotpeter, et al.
(1999) that also refers to behaviors that damage relationships or harm others emotionally;
however, relational aggression includes the use of overt tactics like direct confrontation. For
instance, a girl might tell her friend she cannot come to her birthday party because she does not
like her anymore; whereas a more indirect approach would feature a third-party to whom a rumor
might be spread in order to send the same message to the friend. *Social aggression*, on the other
hand, includes all behaviors, verbal and nonverbal, direct and indirect, that relate to damaging
another’s self esteem or social standing. Behaviors noted in social aggression as opposed to
indirect or relational aggression include eye-rolls, apathy, death stares, and so forth.

In addition to the three major conceptualizations of social aggression, there have been
studies in dozens of specific dimensions of aggression, many of which relate especially to social
aggression. Examples of these dimensions include *physical* aggression versus *verbal* aggression
(Buss, 1961), *targeted* versus *targetless* aggression (Buss 1961), *physical* versus *social*
aggression (Galen & Underwood, 1997) *reactive* versus *proactive* aggression (Dodge & Coie,
1987, Roland & Idsøe, 2001) *covert* versus *overt* aggression (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, &
Kaukiainen, 1994), *rational* versus *manipulative* aggression (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, &
Kaukiainen, 1992), *expressive* aggression (Campbell, Sapochnik, & Muncer, 1997), and *hot*
versus *cool* aggression (Underwood, Galen, & Pacquette, 2001).

With all these subtypes and subcategories of social aggression, it is easy to see how over-
defining may lead to confusion. Researchers had valid intentions in such an extensive social
aggression vocabulary. Many of these subtypes of social aggression exist for the ease of
operationalization, as certain studies monitor specific behaviors in lieu of others. For example, when Rose, Swenson, and Waller (2004) studied the relationship between social aggression and perceived popularity, there was a vast difference in the correlation of perceived popularity between the use of overt aggression and relational aggression. Perceived popularity was correlated with the use of relational aggression whereas overt aggression was not. However, both of those behaviors can be classified as social aggression. If the study had incorporated all socially aggressive behaviors under one umbrella term, the results may have been quite different; perhaps overt and relational aggression might have cancelled each other out and completely skewed the results. As we can see, social aggression encompasses a variety of verbal, nonverbal, covert and overt behaviors, making it extremely complex. Due to this wide variety, operationalization of social aggression is quite difficult. However, there appears to be considerable overlap between many of the behaviors each term includes. For example, indirect and relational aggression are virtually used interchangeably in studies. Underwood, et al. (2001) keenly observed that relational aggression, as studied by Kaukiainen et al. (1999), is identical to the indirect aggression studied by Lagerspetz et al. in 1988. Further, Coyne, et al. (2006) assessed that while relational, indirect, and nonverbal aggression have been found in different levels of frequency—indirect being most frequent—and different levels of hurtfulness—indirect and relational being most harmful—considerable overlap exists between all of the terms and the behaviors associated with them. If relational and indirect aggression can be considered the same concept, certainly some of these other subtypes could be condensed to broaden definitions and reduce confusion.

A working definition for the purpose of this study will, in fact, broaden the terminology and range of behaviors associated with that definition. While indirect or relational aggression
does more accurately describe the frequent behavior in which girls engage, social aggression will be a more appropriate definition to use for this study. The purpose of this study is exploratory; therefore the broadest definition should be used so as to not limit the range of behaviors that could be used as retaliation tactics. Social aggression, which (unlike indirect or relational aggression) includes direct confrontation as well as subtle nonverbal behavior in its definition, will ensure that a complete range of behavior is captured. Social aggression, for the purpose of this study, is defined as any covert or overt behavior, be it verbal or nonverbal, which seeks to destroy another’s social status, network, relationship, self-esteem, or any combination thereof.

**Causes of Social Aggression Among Girls**

While some studies of social aggression have found that boys are as equally, if not more, socially aggressive than girls (e.g. Peets & Kikas, 2006; Goldstein & Tisak, 2003), most studies indicate that social aggression is predominantly enacted by girls (e.g. Crick & Gropeter, 1995; Peets & Kikas, 2005). Researchers have advanced several hypotheses that correlate social aggression with girls: hypotheses that include socialization of infant girls (Damon, 1983), sophistication of relationship networks (Lagerspetz et al., 1988), cultural pressures that force social aggression to be an outlet for female aggression (Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005), and reaction to negative self perceptions (Gropeter, 1995). According to Damon (1983), even from infancy, girls experience *connectedness* to others that can only be explained by their awareness of their biological similarity to their mothers. Since they see themselves as similar to their mothers, girls feel like they can relate more to them, and similarly as well to other women, and are thus more likely to create these relational bonds of connectedness. Traces of this connectedness can be seen in the gender difference study Lagerspetz, et al. (1988) conducted in which they found that indirect social aggression, which females preferred to direct aggression,
was a result of the social structure of girls’ friendship networks. Not only were friendships more emotionally significant than boys’, but girls’ relationships were also closer. Close relationships, especially when the dynamics of those relationships change, often instigate opportunities for indirect social aggression (Lagerspetz, et al., 1988).

The complexity of social networks among girls has been correlated with female social aggression. Galen and Underwood (1997) suggest that social networks among girls are often much more exclusive than boys’ networks and are characterized by a high degree of self-disclosure. Sometimes self-disclosure may not be comfortable to girls, and instead they would rather feign the intimacy of information-sharing through gossip (Richardson & Green, 2003). Gossip, which generally consists of information-spreading about a third party unbeknownst to that party, falls under the umbrella of behaviors that social aggression encompasses. Gossip has also been argued to be a tool for girls to participate in self-disclosure (Richardson & Green, 2003). According to some researchers, gossip unites groups and strengthens interpersonal friendships while allowing an individual to express herself (Rysman, 1977). Some researchers suggest that the use of gossip (and other socially aggressive behaviors) take self disclosure one step further. According to Richardson and Green (2003), gossip acts as a way for girls to participate relationally in tight networks without actually disclosing about the self. They concluded that people who are uncomfortable in social situations resort to gossip as a means of expression and disclosure without being vulnerable to attacks themselves. Certainly an inability or discomfort with self-disclosure would inhibit integration into the close intimate relationships that mark female connectedness.

A key element to the complexity of female networks is the idea of status. Several studies indicate that social aggression as a covert tactic may be used by girls within social networks to
lower the status of other girls while defending their own place in the hierarchy (Kuttler, Parker, & La Greca, 2002; Underwood, 2004). However, status must be achieved without costing the aggressor her reputation (Merten, 1997). Specifically, girls desire status in the form of popularity, which has nothing at all to do with the actual definition of popularity. That is, those who are popular are not well-liked by all; rather they are well-known to the student community and highly sought-after as friends (Merten, 1997). Popular girls are often considered the meanest in school, yet they hold a higher place in social hierarchy due to traits others may desire, such as coolness, cuteness, wealth, talent, power, or extreme confidence (Merten, 1997). The power popular girls have over others is exacerbated by frequent, emotion-laden conversations peers have about them daily (Eder, Evans, & Parker, 1995). Once girls gain the reputation of being popular, they will take great strides in defending that reputation, which in part includes participation in social aggression (Rose, Swenson, & Waller, 2004; Merten, 1997, Underwood, 2004). Elite clique exclusivity, glares, ignoring, eye-rolling, high-profile conflict creation and manipulation are all tactics girls will employ to elevate and maintain a high level of popularity (Merten, 1997; Underwood, 2004).

Popularity might consume the thoughts of youths so pervasively because they are emotionally insecure. While nearly all anecdotal teenage angst stories will reflect this need for peer acceptance, research does, in fact, indicate that there may be truth in this idea. Crick and Gropeter (1995) found that socially aggressive children are unhappy and insecure about their friendships. In other words, using social aggression helps these children feel better about themselves by putting down others. Aggressors usually pick on others with no friends, or new, unassertive, or geeky kids (Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2000). Some researchers add that social aggression results from an inability for adolescents to regulate their insecure or negative
emotions. Conway (2005) suggests that through social aggression, some girls manage the anger and distress they feel in highly emotional situations. Indeed, girls have been found to gossip and spread false rumors (that is, regulate emotion) out of jealousy, one such distressing experience (Kuttler, Parker, & La Greca, 2002).

Other researchers take a broader socio-cultural approach to explaining the roots of socially aggressive behavior among girls. Crothers, Field, and Kolbert (2005) suggest that girls are especially prone to the use of social aggression due to cultural constructions that have created and maintained a traditional feminine role that suppresses anger and maintains pleasant relationships with others. Their findings indicate that girls who identify with this traditional model of femininity were more likely to view themselves as socially aggressive versus those who did not associate with the traditional model (Crothers, et al., 2005). Underwood, et al. (2001) add that even from a young age, children associate overt or direct anger with the male gender role. Girls who do engage in overt aggression are viewed by their teachers and peers as more deviant, whereas boys who engage in similar behavior are seen as normal. Simply put:

Aggression in general is less acceptable for girls, and is more actively discouraged in them, by either direct punishment, withdrawal of affection, or simply cognitive training that ‘that isn’t the way girls act.’ Girls then build up greater anxieties about aggression, and greater inhibitions about displaying it. (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, p. 234)

Age Range of Social Aggression

Interestingly, this social aggression phenomenon has not been limited to just teenage girls, the years of which are historically considered to be ones of growing pains caused by new body changes, hormones and changing school settings. While studies have shown that sensitivity to social aggression, especially relating to dating, does increase with age (Goldstein & Tisak, 2003; Merten, 1997), many child development studies have indicated that basic social aggression between peers occurs earlier. Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, and Gariépy
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(1989) found that from fourth to seventh grade (that is, from age 10 to 13), girls had decreased their use of physical aggression as a conflict resolution tactic and increased their use of social aggression in the form of social alienation. However, in fourth grade there were still indications of social alienation being used by ten percent of the girls. Eleven and twelve year olds appear to be just as “ruthless” in their use of social aggression as teens, as their anger toward other girls, and consequently their engagement in socially aggressive acts, could last for “either one minute or for the rest of her life” (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988, p. 411). Yet children even younger show signs of social aggression. Several researchers have found that indirect social aggression is used by girls even as early as preschool (Ostrov, Woods, Jansen, Casas, & Crick, 2004; Crick & Casas, 1997). Even at three years old, girls engage in more social aggression than boys (Ostrov, et al., 2004). Not only were they delivering and receiving social aggression, at three years these children were engaging in “sophisticated” patterns of social aggression that included “gossip, secret-telling, and rumor spreading” (Ostrov, et al., 2004, p. 367). An abridged transcript of the 2004 study illustrates:

Girl 3: (right seat) grabs the red crayon from Girl 1 (left seat).
Girl 1 and Girl 2 (middle) attempt to color with the white crayons (they watch Girl 3).
Girl 1 looks at Girl 3 (who keeps coloring).
Girl 1 looks at Girl 2, says: “I gotta tell you something” (Girl 1 gets up from her seat and leans in to tell Girl 2 a secret. During this secret spreading Girl 3 looks at Girl 1).
Girl 3 replies with “I heard that!” to Girl 1.
The 3 min picture, and session, ends with Girl 3 still in possession of the good crayon. (Ostrov, et al., p. 367).

In many cases, however, social aggression does not end with adolescence. Studies have found social aggression to be quite prevalent in the adult world. More disturbingly, studies have found socially aggressive behavior to correlate to adult maladjustment. For adults, social aggression is related to antisocial behavior as well as peer rejection (Werner & Crick, 1999). Moreover, young adults described socially aggressive peers as lacking the ability to manage
anger or their romantic and peer relationships; additionally socially aggressive adults engage in self-destructive behavior, like bulimia, for example. Between 6 and 13 percent of young adults exhibit the aforementioned behavior associated with social aggression (Werner & Crick, 1999).

Cultural Differences in Social Aggression

Many researchers make the mistake of generalizing this social aggression phenomenon to all children’s and adolescents’ experiences of growth and development. While social aggression is gaining more attention in research throughout the Western world, the way social aggression is manifested simply is not the same for all populations. In Russia, for instance, social aggression is a recognized phenomenon, especially among girls. Yet, popular girls were positively correlated with constructive conflict resolution, rather than victimization (Butovskaya, Timentschik, & Burkova, 2007). In the United States, however, studies do suggest that popular youths are more central in social aggression circles (Xie, Farmer, & Cairns, 2003). In Germany, boys are reported to bully others more than girls, regardless of the type of aggression, be it physical or social (Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, & Jugert, 2006). In the United States girls are consistently found to engage in social aggression more than boys (Ostrov, et al., 2004; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Indonesian researchers, who did find social aggression patterns among girls to be considerably similar to U.S. patterns, were also hesitant to suggest that social aggression among girls is a widespread phenomenon based on the discrepancies between Italy, China, Russia, and Australia (French, Jansen, & Pidada, 2002). Even among sub-populations in the United States, discrepancies arise in the way girls relate to each other. Among inner-city African American girls, social aggression is fairly prevalent, but in many cases it actually leads to physical fighting, a condition research does not indicate to be true among mainstream Caucasian girls. Interestingly, in two of the three fights between African American girls, Talbott, Celinska,
Simpson, and Coe (2002) describe the same girl acting as both victim and aggressor for two separate incidents. This is a pattern which parallels one found among boys, who act as both bullies and victims at school. Xie, et al. (2003) also confirm this tendency for African American girls to engage in more physical aggression. Among fourth grade girls, there is little difference in the amount of physical aggression they exhibit versus their male peers (Xie, et al., 2003).

Effects of Social Aggression

The most common effect of social aggression on victims is, simply, that “it hurts a hell of a lot” (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000, pg. 359). The hurt is accompanied by loneliness, and it can escalate into clinical depression that often affects daily life. Some informants have reported being so depressed that they could not stop crying, cut classes, and even dropped out of school completely (Underwood, 2003). In fact, social withdrawal is a common coping mechanism girls employ at the onslaught of social aggression (Owens, et al., 2000). Others cope by considering suicide to combat the pain, even as early as age nine (Owens, et al., 2000; Van der Wal, de Wit, & Hirasing, 2003). Suicidal thoughts are far more common among victims of indirect social aggression than direct aggression; therefore in some cases social aggression can be a dangerous weapon for children and adolescents to use as they negotiate relationships and social status (Van der Wal, et al., 2003). The psychological effects social aggression has had on victims often do not evaporate with age; they last well into their adult lives. Social aggression has been linked to psycho-social maladjustment even into adulthood (Werner & Crick, 1999).

Bullies themselves have also been linked to psychosocial maladjustment. Werner and Crick (1999) link bullies to antisocial behavior, egocentricity, emotional instability, depression, and poor overall life satisfaction. Social aggressors are also more likely to participate in physical aggression, especially in the African American community (Talbott, et al., 2002). Additionally,
and interestingly, eating disorders have been linked to social aggressors (Werner & Crick, 1999). As aggressors become adults, continued socially aggressive behavior marks a symptom of borderline personality disorder, which is characterized by relational and intrapersonal instability, especially in terms of self-esteem. Aggressors with borderline personality disorder are often seen as manipulative and emotionally unstable (Underwood, 2003). At the most extreme end of the spectrum, Van der Wal, de Wit, and Hirasing (2003) link aggressors to general deviance and delinquency, implying that these behaviors provide the foundation for a future in criminal activity.

Perhaps the most discouraging effect of social aggression among girls is the implication for socialization that it leaves in its wake. Girls learn through experiences with social aggression not to trust other girls, even if they are nice at face value. Girls learn that disclosure with and trust in other women, especially with information that could leave them vulnerable, is something to be feared, not embraced. Girls also become wary of genuinely nice girls, for fear that they may be two-faced or phony. They fear engaging in healthy conflicts to express feelings because their friends might get hurt; or their friends muster an army of alliances and covertly employ socially aggressive tactics to destroy the girls’ reputations or relationships. They also find solace in isolation and internalizing opinions (Simmons, 2002). Further, girls are socialized to carry this behavior into adulthood to manage conflict, and even into romantic relationships (Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002). Girls who are socialized to manage interpersonal conflict with social aggression are likely to attack their romantic partners with social aggression, leaving both parties with a poor view of their relationship. As Linder et al. (2002) discovered, men in relationships do report higher levels of victimization than do women with regard to social aggression, and they consequently view their relationship poorly. The way girls learn to manage conflict with peers in
childhood and adolescence appears to seriously impact their futures. The socially aggressive behavior (especially within adult romantic relationships) that girls learn early in life carries questionable implications about communication, management, and stability of future interpersonal and family relationships.

Rationale for Study

Much quantitative psychological research has been conducted to examine the behaviors that constitute various categories of social aggression among girls. However, some qualitative research has been done in the field as well. Simmons (2002), author of recent novel *Odd Girl Out*, has examined the “hidden culture of aggression in girls” (p.1) through in-depth interviews and discussions in schools and private conversations with girls across the country. Simmons learned and published valuable information on the behaviors that describe this phenomenon. Similarly, Owens, Slee, and Shute (2000) have also engaged in important qualitative research that breaks down the processes of coping with victimization of social aggression. Their study is an important stepping stone for the purpose of this study because, though psychology-based, it actually marks one of the first studies to yield communication results through a careful analysis of the different steps of coping.

Owens, et al., (2000) unveil the self-communication process victims experience. This process is six steps. In the first step, *confusion*, victims ask themselves what they have done wrong to deserve socially aggressive treatment from their peers. They become stunned and confused about past encounters with aggressors that would incur such treatment. The confusion then leads to the second step, *covering up*, or denying to an outside view the extent of the victim’s pain. Teachers, parents, and peers notice that girls covering up will shrug off their hurt to show their aggressors that they cannot affect them. However, eventually the victim concedes
to the next step, *the pain*, letting flow all the feelings she had been repressing during the cover-up stage: “embarrassment, anger, worry, fear, humiliation, loneliness, self-consciousness, betrayal, and sadness” (Owens, et al., 2000, p. 367). This stage, according to self-reports, may last for years with damaging psychological effects. The pain leads to a fourth step, *the desire to escape*, which may include escaping simply from the former group of friends, perhaps even the school itself, and most drastically, from life. Suicidal thoughts can be quite pervasive in the desire to escape, and are presumably linked closely to the depth and duration of the pain. The desire to escape then turns into the fifth, a *fear/paranoia* about social aggression. Victims constantly think peers are talking about them, either in front of them or behind their backs, and wonder if the behavior will ever cease. Fear and paranoia leads to the sixth step, *catastrophizing self talk*, in which victims send intrapersonal messages like “everyone hates me and it will never get better,” (Owens, et al., 2000, p. 369) damaging self-worth and inhibiting the road to recovery.

Two other steps ensue. These steps are not included in the previous model in terms of self-communication but are still part of the victimization process: *hitting back* and *recovery* (Owens, et al., 2000). By the time victims have reached the recovery stage they are ready to resolve the conflict constructively. However, it is the *hitting back* stage that will be most pertinent to this study. Hitting back does not represent a physical reaction to social aggression; rather, it is the retaliation process in which girls engage that furthers the cycle of social aggression. It is the stage in victimization in which the victim returns the gossip, rumor-spreading, glaring, etc., thereby *escalating* the conflict. Hitting back may even include formation of alliances, bringing in other girls who were not part of the original conflict (Owens, et al., 2000).
This qualitative analysis of the self-communicative coping process is monumental for communicative research in social aggression and is especially pertinent to the development of this study regarding retaliation against social aggression. Aside from this recent study, virtually no research has sought to uncover patterns of retaliation to social aggression. Therefore, a qualitative study is a good place to start in uncovering understanding about the retaliation that furthers the cycle of social aggression. The research questions posed in this study are:

RQ 1: What topics ignite retaliation patterns to social aggression among girls?

RQ 2: What does that retaliation look like?

METHOD

To answer the research question, a series of extensive, qualitative interviews were conducted. Because this study was exploratory in nature, interviews were the best way to develop a preliminary understanding of girls’ retaliation to social aggression. Fifteen girls between the ages of 10 and 16 were selected because studies (Pellegrini, 2002; Rose, et al., 2004; Peets & Kikas, 2006) have constantly shown that the ages in which girls start maturing, reaching puberty, changing school from elementary to middle to high school are the ages that are most susceptible to harmful social aggression. Eleven, 12, 13, and 15-year-olds span the most active participants in social aggression (Lagerspetz, et al., 1988; Kuttler, et al., 2002; Xie et al., 2002). Ten and 16-year-olds, then, appeared to be the cusp age groups that transitioned into out and out of peak social aggression years. By extending the age range to include 10 through 16-year-olds, it was possible to understand more about the stages and processes children and adolescents went through as they developed a more complex socialized model of social aggression.

Participants were selected through convenience sampling, about half of the participants being daughters of faculty and staff members at a small liberal arts university in the Midwest.
The rest of the participants came from a local after school program for at-risk youth. (See figure 1.) Amidst the 15 girls, there were three sets of sisters. Some demographic information was deduced from interviewed, but in most cases such information was not explicitly sought.

Figure 1: Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>At-risk or university affiliated</th>
<th>Type of School (if applicable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>university affiliated</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>at-risk</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrissy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>at-risk</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>university affiliated</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaliyah</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>at-risk</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Laticia</td>
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<td>at-risk</td>
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Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of participants as well as their parents and were conducted in one of four places: (1) the university’s combination coffee shop, fast food, and lounge area (2) a different university lounge area that did not have food or drink service, (3) the main room of the at-risk youth location, or (4) a small office at the at-risk youth location. One interview was not conducted in either of these locations and was instead carried out over the phone. For the university-affiliated participants, conducting interviews at the campus coffee and fast food shop or the adjacent lounge was ideal for several reasons. First, the lounge area provided comfortable chairs, warm inviting lighting, and bright colors that enabled the
informants to relax and feel free to share information. Second, neither location was too crowded on any of the interview occasions and few distractions existed to deter informants from sharing detailed information and narratives. Finally, the campus eatery was a place with which the university’s faculty and staff were familiar and comfortable. It is likely that they felt quite comfortable allowing their daughters to talk to a student alone there; not to mention, it was convenient for the informants’ parents, since the eatery is located right in the middle of the campus where they work.

For the at-risk students, interviews were either conducted on a sofa in the main room of the program location or in a small office with wood chairs. Neither of these locations was particularly ideal for interviewing, as the main room sometimes produced curious passers-by and the office was a bit formal and stuffy for comfort. However, conducting interviews at the location of the at-risk program did enable the girls to feel comfortable in their own surroundings, as opposed to an alternative location, to which these girls might not have been receptive.

Each participant was interviewed individually, with the exception of one set of sisters, who were interviewed together. Assent and consent forms were signed by both parties before each interview began, with the exception of the at-risk girls, whose families had signed blanket forms for such projects as a requirement for participation in the after school program. Each girl was reminded that she could choose to cancel her participation at any time during the interview. To compensate for the girls’ time, snacks and drinks were offered for consumption during each interview, and a $5 check was mailed to each participant’s house after the interview.

Once all prerequisites had been met, the study and its purpose were explained. Permission was asked to tape record the conversation, and it was further explained that the conversation would be completely confidential and that nothing she said would be linked back to
her name (pseudonyms have been given to each girl so as to not reveal her identity). Rules for the conversation were then established: (1) that first names could be used for all parties and (2) that each participant had the freedom to express all stories openly and honestly. It was important to start each interview with small talk and introductions in order to ensure participants’ comfort revealing personal and in some cases, painful memories. In order for the informants to reveal such information, they needed to be able to trust and feel some kind of connection to the researcher. It was thus attempted to build rapport for each participant’s ease and comfort. Questions like “You’re in fifth grade…are you enjoying it so far?” and discussions about upcoming birthdays or events accomplished this goal in most cases.

Once rapport was sufficiently established, the definition of social aggression and all the behaviors that it encompasses was verbalized by the researcher to ensure each participant’s ability to accurately answer the questions. A semi-structured funnel sequence model for each interview was followed, the first questions covering more broad ideas and gradually narrowing down to more specific questions (See Appendix A for both the definition of social aggression and the list of questions.) The semi-structured funnel format of the interview allowed coverage of all necessary topics, which included a general discussion of social aggression, retaliation to social aggression, and provocative topics, in the allotted amount of time. By starting off with general observations of social aggression, the informants seemed to feel like they were answering easy, unspecific questions, allowing them to feel less off-put and engaged in the interview. Starting off with specific questions in a reverse funnel format or requesting personal narratives right away may have made some of the girls feel nervous or confused about being able to answer the question at all, much less with the kind of detail researchers need for an interview to be successful. Some informants quickly grew confident in their ability to answer the
questions, which helped them feel free to share deeper, more personal experiences. Some girls did get a bit anxious about sitting and focusing for a long period of time; however, one-on-one conversations held their attention much better than perhaps a different format, like focus groups, in which some informants may have become bored and may have chosen not to participate. In some instances, participants did not disclose relevant information or enough personal evidence to make conclusions at all. For those participants, another approach was attempted; questions about the hit movie *Mean Girls* enabled some girls to verbalize ideas, while other girls responded to different terminology, like bullying instead of social aggression, for example. However, most participants were receptive to the personal questions about social aggression, and the script was followed fairly closely. As each interview was semi-structured, additional questions, such as “Tell me about the nature of conflicts in general” and “Do you think a lot of conflicts start over boys?” were added as the conversation allowed. Each interview lasted between 25 and 70 minutes.

It was originally intended that each interview would conclude with the offering of a $5 gift card to Target. Two interviews did in fact conclude that way; however, the institution that funded this study quickly brought to the researcher’s attention that gift cards were not approved as compensation sources. After this correction, all other interviews concluded with a reminder that each participant would receive a $5 check in the mail.

All interviews, with the exception of the phone interview, were tape recorded, and those tape recordings were subsequently transcribed into print documents. These documents, along with other notes and mental recall were the primary source of analysis for this study. Transcript-based analysis was used to report the findings. Transcript-based analysis, though most time consuming, provided the richest understanding for this particular phenomenon because the most
valuable pieces of information that came out of each interview were the stories the informants told about their experiences with retaliation to social aggression, as well as their ideas and opinions about it. The details of these stories would have been lost if the exact written record had not been consulted. While other written notes and mental recall were considered when analyzing the transcripts for main ideas and themes, the taped recordings that made up the bulk of the transcripts were very dependable and transferable records that were easily analyzed to draw confirmable conclusions.

To find meaning in the transcripts, a version of the critical process, a process used particularly by media scholars and rhetoricians (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2006; Foss, 2004) became the primary method for analysis. Approaching artifacts through the critical process is comprised of three steps: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. For the purpose of this study, only the first three steps were executed. First, it was necessary to describe the events taking place in these narratives. To do this, each participant’s narrative was coded for specific events in which retaliation against a socially aggressive act took place (there were 126 such events). After these events were coded, patterns of behavior were analyzed, grouped together and given behavioral labels. The narratives were also coded for general responses about retaliation that did not include specific personal examples. These general responses were also given similar behavioral labels. These coded labels were categorized into broader themes in order to produce a chart of retaliatory behaviors that had similar characteristics (see chart pg. 37). A similar process was utilized to categorize other non-retaliatory behavioral responses to social aggression, including coping strategies, for example. Finally, using the chart of retaliatory behaviors as well as non-retaliatory behaviors, an interpretive model was developed to uncover the nature of retaliation and non-retaliation responses to social aggression (see chart pg. 33).
RESULTS

Based on the interview transcripts, certain themes arose regarding the degree to which topics were provocative. That is, references to certain topics either verbally or nonverbally yielded a higher likelihood for retaliation. Provocative topics included, from most to least (based on the number of times they were referenced in the participants’ narratives): identity attacks, destabilization, boyfriend jealousy, family, insecurities, and secrets. Responses to these provocative topics appeared to be either functionally positive or negative; that is, they were either constructive or destructive to the emotional or social well-being of the victim. The array of responses the participants demonstrated included retaliation, as well as other coping strategies such as affective internalizing (i.e. isolating the self, ignoring the behavior, etc.), escape (i.e. trying to remove oneself from the pain of social aggression) and constructive behavior (i.e. talking to a parent or counselor).

Provocative Topics

Identity Attacks

Identity attacks in this study were messages in which aggressors attacked a fundamental part of a girl’s personality or identity. Examples included name calling in which the aggressor drew attention to a flaw in the victim’s personality that the victim did not find aversive herself. Gabby, for instance, did not find herself particularly controlling, but was very off put when her friend Kara called her a control freak. The unsolicited attack on her personality gave Gabby reason to retaliate against Kara. Another example included gossip or rumors that linked a victim to qualities marking a bad reputation. Rebecca, for instance, found herself during her first few weeks at a new school hanging out with a girl who had a reputation for being promiscuous,
unbeknownst to Rebecca. She was alarmed at the socially aggressive behavior that was exhibited toward her for no apparent reason simply for being associated with the bad girl.

Rebecca: Um, in seventh grade I switched schools and it was my first year at the school. I was hanging out with my first friend, Sarah. Apparently she didn’t have the best reputation and I wasn’t aware. All the girls were talking about me, and I got sucked into her problems. It was hard because people were talking about me and I was not aware why they were doing it…At first I was vicious back, just giving each other the stare down, and it just started to affect me.

Associating someone’s identity, like the girls who associated Rebecca with a bad reputation, often led to more social aggression, as shown when Rebecca was “vicious back, just giving each other the stare down.” Identity attacks were by far the most commonly mentioned topic that led to retaliation behaviors, nearly twice as many as the second (27 and 16, respectively).

Additionally, fifteen girls were described as being victims of identity attacks, eleven participants (73 percent of the 15 participants) plus an additional four as narrated through the participants’ stories. Identity attacks were not only the most mentioned, but also the most pervasive topic to elicit retaliation.

Destabilization

Destabilization, which in this study the second most commonly mentioned topic to elicit retaliation (16 references; 11 total victims), can be described as any verbal or nonverbal message that undermines a friendship assumed to be in good standing. This primarily occurred with little or no warning that the friendship was strained from the perception of the victim. Caitlin, for example, felt betrayed by her friend Brittany when she assumed their friendship was amicable. Though Brittany had originally refused to fault Caitlin for injuries sustained on a bike ride through Caitlin’s neighborhood, Brittany admitted months later to another friend (loud enough for Caitlin to hear, of course) that the fault was indeed Caitlin’s. Chrissy also felt betrayed when
her friend Olivia lied to Chrissy about dating Andrew in addition to talking behind Chrissy’s back about it. Blaire’s story epitomizes blind-sighted betrayal of friendship in good standing:

Blaire: …I had a best friend, her name was Kayla, and she got in trouble for she got caught like having sex with this guy or something like something dumb and she didn’t want to be the only one getting in trouble. So, she went to my mom and told her that I like had sex too...like she made up a whole bunch of stuff that wasn’t even true just to get me in trouble. Just to bring someone else down, and we were like best friends, so.

Blaire saw Kayla’s betrayal as a symbol of destabilization in their relationship, because prior to this instance they were good friends. However, due to the destabilization that occurred, their friendship was subsequently threatened, which gave Blaire reason to react in a vengeful, retaliatory way.

**Boyfriend Jealousy**

Boyfriend jealousy, though close in number of references to destabilization, was the next most commonly mentioned topic among the participants’ narratives. It may come as little surprise that boys would somehow be noted as a provocative topic, considering the hormonal changes during adolescence that induce attraction (Perloff, 1949). However, the key element to marking boyfriend jealousy as its own topic, rather than mere references to boys, was, in this study, the ownership of the boy to the girl. That is, a girl had an acknowledged stake on a boy in a way that attached him to her. This included crushes, if a girl had somehow laid claim to him, and that claim had been acknowledged by others. When such a claim existed, and an aggressor sent a verbal or nonverbal message to the girl of ownership in an attempt to un hinge the relationship, boyfriend jealousy ensued. Socially aggressive attacks rooted in boyfriend jealousy victimized 11 girls. Two of these attacks resulted in violence.

Leslie: Ok, well Jackie, she’s known for like the “drama queen” in the school, basically…and um, she had a boyfriend, Mark, and he, he was hangin out with Julie cuz Julie was bein really nice to him that night and he didn’t wanna hang out with Jackie there. And there was a rumor goin around that Julie and Mark were making out behind
the tree and that was not true at all and so she goes up to Julie says, “so I heard you guys were kissin and making out with my boyfriend all night.” And um, they started to fight…and then um, Jackie she went way too far. She bit her lip and made it bleed. And she told her mom that, that um, Julie did it to her…And everything Jackie did to Julie Jackie told her mom that Julie did to her.

It appears, then, that even though boyfriend jealousy is third in terms of provocation, it can be an especially volatile topic that can even lead to extreme acts of retaliation.

**Family**

The last three classifiable topic themes actually turned out to be quite close in frequency. The first of these last three was family, which was any message that degraded another girl’s family. This topic affected six girls (five participants, plus an additional character as illustrated through Michelle’s narrative) and gave reason for at least four of them to retaliate. Interestingly, it only affected the girls from the at-risk after school program. None of the girls affiliated with the university found family to be a particularly volatile topic. Additionally, attacks on family were most likely to result in physically violent retaliation.

Kenya:...I heard this girl had kicked my cousin in her head and they supposed to be friends, and somebody told me that and they were mad, and I told her, well I ain’t tell her but I told somebody I was gonna fight her. And then, and then we came back from Thanksgiving break and then I fought her. Actually I let people, I got caught up cuz I wasn’t even gonna fight her in school, I was gonna fight her after school so something happened and can fight after school...And I just fought her cuz you know I don’t live like, well, if I’m bout to fight, I don’t like to argue, you know how people just argue—like you this and that and now the teacher’s comin and you got in trouble for practically nothin. So why not get in trouble for stuff that make you plan on gettin in trouble? So I just fought her.

Kenya’s story is not the only one to include such reactions to attacks on family. Some girls in this study even mentioned having had charges pressed against them for fighting in school—fights which, as several girls suggested, probably had something to do with attacks on family. Communication that involved attacks on family and subsequent hurt and retaliation was mentioned eight times throughout the course of the participant’s narratives.
Insecurities

Any conversation topic capitalizing on a victim’s insecurities was the next most commonly mentioned theme (seven times). Five girls were affected by socially aggressive messages that exposed victims’ insecurities, or issues about herself which a girl found wrong or unappealing. Common insecurities included body image perceptions (being too fat, not being pretty enough), clothing (not having the right outfit), and wealth (not having enough money). Like family, which was a volatile topic confined to the at-risk girls, insecurities was a topic that was confined only to the girls affiliated with the university (i.e. the upper middle class girls).

Gabby:…there was this one girl named Emma and we weren’t like really really good friends…So I mean we would talk every once in a while, and one time on the phone I was just like, I was just kidding, and I was like oh shut up Emma you’re such a fatty. And like, I was so kidding. But then it kinda occurred to me like oh, um, well Emma isn’t the skinniest person that maybe I shouldn’ta said that. And like she got furious, and like everything I would say she would have something like real contradicting to say about it, like everything that I said apparently bothered the crap out of her…She kinda got all her friends to not talk to me as much…

Clearly Gabby’s friend Emma was hurt that Gabby had called her a “fatty” because as Gabby admitted later, Emma is a bit insecure about being on the heavy side.

Secret Exposure

For this study, the final topic to recur as a theme that elicited retaliation was secret exposure, which was simply communication in confidence about a girl’s secret feelings or actions; these feelings or behaviors were not to be revealed to anyone outside the ring of confidence. There were six references to secret exposure as dictated through the narratives of four girls. If a friend revealed Jillian’s deepest secret about her longtime crush, for example, she would be likely to retaliate against her friend. Blaire described another instance in which a friend revealed secret information:
Blaire: I had a best friend named Kelsey, and we been best friends since we were like five. She lived down the street from me, still does, and um like, my mom’s like her mom basically, and she was over there getting something and my mom caught her in a lie, cuz she’s like a, she lies a lot and so my mom just like called her out on one, and like Kelsey got like mad about it and like started telling my mom all this stuff, cuz like this summer I was like crazy, and like did a lot of bad stuff cuz I was like bipolar depressed or something (we just found medicine for it) but um, she like told my mom all thus stuff and, got me…my mom called me and started yelling at me like crazy.

Blaire had trusted her friend Kelsey with secret information about some of the risky behavior in which she participated that particular summer. Betraying Blaire by revealing that information to her mother was later cause for Blaire to retaliate against Kelsey.

It is important to note that there was a bit of fluidity to these categories, that they were not necessarily mutually exclusive. While some narratives provided examples that appear to be resoundingly categorical, other examples could just have easily been classified under a different topic theme. This last anecdote for example, in which Blaire’s friend exposed her secret bad behavior to her mother, could have just as easily been classified as destabilization. Mallory’s private conversation with her friend revealed secrets about her sexual behavior that were subsequently twisted and used to attack her identity. This could have been potentially classified as the type of breach of privacy that underlies secret exposure, or perhaps since Mallory’s sexual identity became publicly scrutinized, perhaps this example could have been classified as an identity attack. Similarly, it is also important to note the role of boys throughout all of these topic classifications. Though boyfriend jealousy was its own category, not all socially aggressive behavior rooted in boy issues was enveloped into the boyfriend jealousy category. In fact, approximately 25-35 percent of all other topic categories (minus insecurities, which had zero percent) included narratives dealing somehow with boys or sexuality (e.g. that Mallory had slept with her boyfriend, that Chrissy liked one of the grossest boys in the class, that an angry girlfriend of Caitlin’s ex questioned Caitlin’s trustworthiness, etc.).
Retaliation

When a girl used socially aggressive tactics relating to these six topics, victims in this study responded through a variety of ways. These responses can be classified with a combination of three dimensions. First, responses appeared to be either functionally positive or negative. These terms, coined by Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) to help define the dark side of human communication, refer to the extent to which the victim is emotionally or socially helped or hurt by the response. If a behavior decreased an individual’s self esteem or results in the loss of a friend, for example, the behavior was functionally negative, whereas if a behavior resulted in an increase in self esteem or in the repair of a strained friendship, the behavior was functionally positive. The second dimension suggests that response behavior seems to be active or non-active. This dimension refers to the extent to which the response behavior was acted out or was internal. Finally, the third dimension implied that behavior was either directed against the aggressor or directed toward benefiting the self. These dimensions interconnected to form five types of responses the girls in this study enacted against provocative topics. (See figure 2.)
Figure 2: Behavioral Responses

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<td>Aggressor</td>
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<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
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*Self Validation is a term coined by Petty, Brinol, and Tormala (2002). The term embodies the idea that cognizant thought (or messages one sends to oneself) affects attitude. Positive self-validation was not reported by any participants in this study. Positive self validation could be described as sending oneself positive messages to reverse pain or psychological damage incurred by acts of social aggression.

**Social Leveling**

Social leveling, which accounted for approximately 34 percent of the participants’ responses to social aggression, appeared to be a functionally positive, active behavior, helping the victim recover from social aggression both emotionally and socially. Social leveling seemed to be directed against the aggressor in a social context; that is, social leveling discredited aggressors’ attempts to undermine victims’ reputations and status. However, the purpose of social leveling seemed not to actually destroy the reputation of the aggressor. In other words, social leveling served to merely neutralize the negative effects of social aggression on the victim’s reputation, not to bring down an aggressor.

**Truth coalition**
Social leveling was best illustrated through a tactic that can be conceptualized as a truth coalition. A truth coalition, for participants in this study, was comprised of the victim and her loyal peers; this coalition worked to dispel false rumors by spreading the truth. The truth coalition appeared to work as the purest form of social leveling, because it did not try to destroy aggressors’ reputations for spreading false rumors; it merely spread truth to counteract them.

Jillian participated in a truth coalition when her friend was painted as a person she was not. For example, her best friend was dating a guy another friend liked, and the jealous friend embarrasses my other friend in front of her boyfriend, like telling him everything we do at sleepovers and parties…she went behind her friend’s back and talked to her boyfriend, and said that she has a belching problem and that if he tried to make a move she’d burp in his face.

To combat the jealous friend, though, Jillian and her group told the boyfriend that the belching problem did not exist. They worked to dispel the false rumor but did not force a poor reputation on the jealous friend for making the remarks in the first place.

**Face-to-face confrontation**

In addition to the truth coalition other kinds of retaliatory responses existed for these participants that could be classified as social leveling behaviors. One of these social leveling behaviors was face-to-face confrontation. Face-to-face confrontation occurred literally when a victim confronted an aggressor in person regarding socially aggressive behavior in which the aggressor had allegedly participated. Face-to-face confrontation accounted for 15 percent of retaliatory action against an aggressor in this study, which seems surprisingly high. However, there was a caveat to this figure—many attacks of social aggression that led to face-to-face confrontation included some form of proof that the aggressor did indeed perform social aggression. For example, Caitlin’s friend Emily had an Instant Message record of Caitlin saying
she did not like Emily’s boyfriend. Armed with the IM record, she confronted Caitlin about the attack on her boyfriend, who served as an extension of her own identity.

*Cancel the friendship*

The next kind of social leveling technique employed by participants in this study was to simply cancel the friendship, which allowed victims to separate themselves from the negativity and the aggressor altogether, therefore creating an opportunity for the victim’s reputation and social status to start over at a neutral balance. Essentially, cancelling the friendship could have been a way for the girls in this study to cut their losses with some friends and allow for rebuilding and growth with other friends. For example, when Kenya’s social group got mad at her for being promiscuous with a boy another girl liked, she cancelled the friendship with the group, moved to a new group, and reversed her bad reputation with the old group into a neutral reputation with a new group. Cancelling the friendship occurred when there was little hope of resolving strained relationships and was done as a method of self preservation rather than punishment on the aggressor. Cancelling the friendship accounted for approximately 10 percent of the responses to social aggression.

*Faux confrontation*

Another social leveling retaliatory response was what can only be described as the faux confrontation. In this study, the faux confrontation tried to function as a face-to-face confrontation but kept at least one of the parties from becoming too vulnerable. Parties, for example, removed the face-to-face component of the confrontation or pretended as if the confrontation was a joke or an accident. Faux confrontations accounted for approximately 5.5 percent of total retaliatory techniques in this study. Examples of the faux confrontation included *mediated confrontations, j/k confrontations, and third party confrontations.*
Mediated confrontations. Mediated confrontations, or confrontations that occurred through media like Instant Messenger, MySpace, cell phones, etc., were most the common of the faux confrontation tactics among participants (four percent). However, several participants alluded in general to other peers having had arguments over MySpace.

Gabby: Lot of people do the internet bullying thing back to each other. Fights happen over like MySpace and stuff...Everyone just gets real angry with each other on [MySpace]. Lot of people post bulletins about each other too...Yeah. They’ll be like oh my gosh, this one chick and says, I won’t name em, but I’m pretty sure you all know who I’m talking about, and like, she’s like so annoying, blah blah blah.

These MySpace mediated confrontations allowed girls to express their anger indirectly, because their anger was publicly expressed but did not necessarily directly attack their target.

J/k confrontation. The j/k confrontation was the only type of faux confrontation that happened face-to-face; however, what made the confrontation false was the retraction of the message. J/k confrontations usually incorporated a phrase such as its namesake “just kidding” or “I didn’t really mean it that way.” Of the 126 participant narratives in this study that included a specific character, socially aggressive attack, and retaliation, only one (an accidental attack by Gabby on Emma—Gabby called Emma a fatty in the heat of an argument then tried to take it back) can be classified as a j/k confrontation; however, some participants referred to the use of j/k confrontations generally among their peers.

Third party confrontation. The same pattern (only one example) held for the third party confrontation, which can be described as a situation in which a friend outside the dyadic conflict tried to confront or resolve the conflict for one of the parties. Only Gabby specifically said her friend engaged in a third party confrontation against her friend Marissa. Like the j/k confrontation, though, third party confrontations were also indirectly referenced in general.
It is important to note that faux confrontation, cancelling the friendship, and face-to-face confrontation were not solely social leveling techniques. That is, these responses were not mutually exclusive. For some girls, these response behaviors worked not only to neutralize the negativity of their aggressors’ attacks; rather, some victims tried to use these strategies to degrade their aggressors to the point where peers actually saw the victims as more socially reputable (See Figure 3). This was where social leveling crossed over into payback.

**Figure 3: Retaliation Behaviors**

Payback, which accounted for approximately 63 percent (including overlapping behaviors, 33 percent excluding overlapping behaviors) was functionally negative in that it seemed to perpetuate the social aggression/conflict cycle rather than resolve the problem, thus causing harm to the girl using payback as a strategy. Payback was active on the part of the victim and was directed against the aggressor. Unlike social leveling, payback served to actually
degrade the victim herself in an almost vengeful way. In some contexts, face-to-face confrontation, faux confrontation, and cancelling friendship all served to perpetuate the cycle of social aggression just as easily as they served to resolve conflicts. For example, when Blaire confronted a girl about saying something mean about her to some other friends of Blaire’s, it started another cycle of eye rolls, glares and general animosity between them, whereas a confrontation between Shaliah and her friend was resolved through face-to-face confrontation. The former was payback and the latter was social leveling. Whether these three retaliation schemes were used as social leveling or payback depended entirely upon relational and social contexts of the parties and situations involved. There were eight classifiable retaliatory behaviors that seem to fit exclusively under the payback category.

_Gossip_

According to Abrahams (1970), gossip is talk about others’ business. According to this study, gossip can be viewed as a concept that refers to the spreading or venting of true information to others about another person. Gossip in some instances was as simple as a communicative transaction that passively vented to a friend about a particular act of social aggression. For example, when a girl in Jillian’s gym class intentionally flirted with her crush in front of her, Jillian admitted to having gossiped about the girl with her close circle of friends. However, gossip in some instances a bit more deliberate—for example, when Caitlin’s friend Allison shared a story about Emily that no one should have known about.

Caitlin: …she cried at a pool once because some dog chased her or something and that’s kind of, you know embarrassing if you think about it because it was like a little dog, but. So I’ve just heard, you know, stories like that about how she was always dumb and such a baby and all this stuff.
This true story about Emily effectively served the purpose of degrading her among Caitlin and her group of friends. Gossip was a fairly popular retaliatory technique used among participants, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the total responses.

**Cold shoulder**

The cold shoulder, or shunning an aggressor, was another fairly common retaliatory tactic among participants, accounting for approximately nine percent of responses, just behind gossip. Victims engaged in cold shouldering, which was usually derived from anger, to punish an aggressor, though specific reasons for cold shouldering varied. Some victims, such as Caitlin, used the cold shoulder tactic to start phasing out aggressors from their lives; other victims used the cold shoulder to signal to the aggressor that their relationship was staggering. If someone were to spread a rumor that Chrissy liked of the gross boys in her class, she “would probably do like the cold shoulder eye roll thing.”

**Physical violence**

The next form of payback was *physical violence*, which did occur approximately four percent of the time (of all responses, 12 percent of payback behaviors), according to the participants’ narratives. Physical violence was only pertinent to the at-risk girls. None of the girls who were affiliated with the university reported using violence as a retaliatory tactic, although Blaire reported that the “white trash” at her school have engaged in violence before, and Caitlin reported that she might not be afraid to get physical if the conflict escalated to that point. The at-risk kids reported physical violence between girls as much as 20 fights a month. For these girls, physical violence was usually the result of someone attacking their families.

Interviewer: …What kinds of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?
Laticia: If, I would have to...you can say anything you want to say. Don’t talk about my family. You can say anything you want about me. Don’t talk about my mom, my dad, my grandma, my brothers and sisters. I don’t know. Don’t talk about that.
Interviewer: Yeah? What makes you really upset about that?
Interviewer: I don’t know maybe I’ve...always been like that ever since I was a little girl. Cuz my father has never been there. I will always, ever since I was little. He’s like the in and out of prison-type. And my mom she she’s there, but she’s not there. Like I see her but I don’t talk to her. There’s stuff she don’t even know about me. And it’s like after all my mother’s been through, my dad has never been there; my mom has never been there; and I’ve lived with my grandma for about three and me and her don’t get along, and that’s what makes me mad. Like I’ve known you for my whole entire life, and I been livin since I was three, and there’s things you don’t even know.
[Part of this transcript has been edited for length]
Interviewer: Um, if someone did start attacking your family through a rumor or to your face what would you do?
Laticia: Pick up a brick and hit em with it.
Interviewer: Wow. Really?
Laticia: Really. I don’t, I don’t care if it’s a rock, I’m gonna hit you. [pause] Why everybody around me everyday, sound it’s too violent, I’m not too violent. I’m only violent if you mess with my family, or you mess with me. S’only time.

Laticia, as shown here, was not afraid to be violent; in fact, violence appeared to be the only way she would retaliate at all. Several other at-risk girls responded similarly, especially if someone had attacked their families.

Rumors

Gossip is often confused with rumors, which are noted by scholars such as Knapp (1944) as unverifiable, likely false, stories spread around to other parties. Deliberately spreading rumors was not as popular among participants, accounting for only three percent of the total retaliatory technique. In fact, few girls could actually recall a specific story in which intentional rumor-spreading was used as retaliation. However, some participants, like Blaire, perceived to be rumors as the “number one” form of retaliation.

Nonverbal cues

Nonverbal cues were another form of payback exhibited by participants in this study. Eye rolls and glares were the most commonly referenced types of nonverbal cues, though only
three instances of their use were reported, which equates only two percent of all total response behaviors. As the definition of payback warrants, nonverbal cues do, in fact, perpetuate cycles of social aggression. Megan admitted to responding via “the eye roll thing,” and Rebecca, too admitted to having engaged in the “stare down.” Some victims in this study, such as Blaire and Caitlin, appeared to glare or roll their eyes at long-term enemies, who in turn gossiped about them, an act which ultimately reached the ears of Blaire and Caitlin. This cycle caused them to continue retaliating via nonverbal cues.

*Picking teams*

Related to cold shouldering was a behavior that can be classified, according to these findings, as picking teams. Picking teams occurred when the victim tried to sway friends away from the aggressor in the hope to gain loyalty. Picking teams accounted for only two percent of the entire range of response behaviors, which equated to seven percent of payback behaviors (not including overlapping behaviors). This was an interesting payback strategy because by definition it should have been an active behavior that targets the aggressor. However, sometimes victims were unaware that they were having their friends pick teams, making it a more subconscious (and hence non-active) behavior. Caitlin, for example, claimed that she did not make her friends choose sides just because she did not like Emily, but she still used language that insinuated she would rather expel Brittany from the group to thus keep her friends for herself.

Caitlin: But I know that [the length of Brittany’s friendship with my other friends] makes it harder for them to let go and so I can’t really say, you know, drop them and like steal their friends or whatever. But I do sometimes, like the other night we were talking about how Brittany’s just, she’s going on and on about how she’s not good enough and how everyone’s better than her. And uh, Melissa was saying that you know, she thinks it’s funny that she keeps saying that and I interrupted her and was like “well she’s right.” She’s not good—I was mad because she was taking time from Melissa…When I get mad I’m just like well, just because she thinks she isn’t good enough, then she shouldn’t be here, you know? If she honestly thought that and wasn’t just saying it for the attention then she honestly wouldn’t be here right now.
Though Caitlin thought she was being fair and respectful of her friends’ decision to stay close to Brittany, she used subtle messages to make her friends understand that Brittany was not worth their time. This strategy (though perhaps unconscious) of loyalty-seeking enabled Caitlin to soundly establish her team’s stance against team Brittany.

Specialized torture

Specialized torture was another kind of payback technique that arose throughout different participants’ narratives. Instead of making aggressors miserable in a social context—that is, instead of seeking to destroy their social status or reputation—victims reported doing things to “get under their skin,” doing something that would really set aggressors off. Blaire suggested that even though she had her own boyfriend, she might flirt with an aggressor’s crush just to make her mad. If an aggressor spread a “vile rumor” about her, Rebecca would “maybe find something personal to her and get under her skin in a way that only she would feel it, not necessarily to publicly humiliate her, but to do something that would really tick her off.” Like picking teams, specialized torture accounted for two percent of all response behaviors, or seven percent of pure payback behaviors.

Many participants used a variety of retaliatory techniques in combination with each other as well as with coping strategies to deal with socially aggressive attacks. Besides family attacks usually inciting physical violence among the at-risk girls, no significant patterns emerged between specific topics, kinds of socially aggressive attacks, and retaliation. That is, gossip about insecurities, for example, did not elicit similar retaliation responses between participants.

Coping Strategies

The following three response types are all examples of coping strategies. While the original research question was not to examine coping strategies, but rather, retaliation
techniques, the following coping strategies are important as they were reaffirmed practiced behaviors through the narratives of this study (coping strategies were used approximately 28 percent of the time).

**Affective Internalizing**

Affective internalizing was functionally negative. It hindered the emotional well-being of victims. Affective internalizing appeared to be non-active behavior that was confined to the self. Examples of this type of behavior included getting upset and bottling emotions. Chrissy described getting so upset over socially aggressive acts against her that she “wanted to slip into a hole and go away.” Affective internalizing accounted for approximately 13 percent of the participants’ responses to socially aggressive behavior.

**Constructive Coping**

Constructive coping, according to this study’s findings, was a functionally positive, active behavior employed to benefit the self. Ignoring the behavior was an example of constructive coping. Participants said they ignored aversive socially aggressive behavior four percent of the time. Talking to a parent, coach, teacher, or counselor for strategy accounted for only 5.5 percent of the responses. Jillian, Gabby, and Shaliah vented their frustrations through music and writing (three percent).

**Escape**

Escape was a functionally negative, active behavior that appeared to be confined to the self. Escape seemed to occur when victims tried too hard to internalize their emotions and subsequent eruptions of emotion and functionally negative behavior resulted. Caitlin, Laticia, Michelle, and Mallory all reported brash, sometimes destructive behavior with their families. Michelle and Laticia have actually been violent with their families as a result of poor emotional
management. Isolating oneself also appeared to be a form of escape, especially when the victim (a) did not know how to handle her emotions or (b) when she actively (though sometimes unsuccessfully) tried to separate herself from anything that could cause emotional drama. Some escape responses resulted in more severe strategies. In an attempt to literally escape from her pain, Blaire tried cutting herself. Escape responses to social aggression were least common among participants, accounting for only two percent of all responses.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study present a strong foundation for understanding retaliation strategies against social aggression, and yielded a wide array of expected and unexpected results. As expected, socially aggressive behaviors regarding boys made nearly all the participants retaliate. There was little difference regarding the extent to which boys were involved for girls ages 11 through 16. Neither of the 10-year olds reported boy involvement in their social aggression experiences, suggesting that perhaps the age when serious social aggression begins is age 11. Gabby put it nicely when she said, “Honestly though, like the back story to pretty much everything that you’re ever gonna fight with girls about has to do with a guy somehow. Whether you’re gonna admit it or not.” Hormonal changes during adolescence introduce new thoughts and emotions about the opposite sex, and negotiating them subsequently brings new tensions and new perhaps even new competitive attitudes toward girl friends. (Urban, 2005) What is interesting, however, is that the boyfriend jealousy topic category itself was not the category with the most number of referenced retaliatory responses. Identity attacks were almost twice as likely to elicit retaliation as the next highest category (destabilization). However, according to this study, over a fourth (26 percent) of those identity attacks did have to do with boys in some way, suggesting that perhaps many girls affiliated part of their identity with boys. Perhaps this
association of identity with boys can be related to the notion of femininity, which is, as Alcoff (1994) outlines, traditionally defined by men. This preoccupation with boys among adolescent women may be a way of incorporating for the first time this performance of femininity. Performing femininity through defining identity through males was seen in this study in the following three ways: (1) girls saw boys as indicative of their level of attractiveness (2) they equated different types of boys with different lifestyle choices that left them up for scrutiny, or (3) they saw boys as completely separate entities that did not validate or complement their own identities. The first two affiliations confirm past research which has suggested that girls’ reputations are indeed defined by their relationship to boys (Proveda & Crim, 1975), whereas the third affiliation (seeing boys as separate from their identities) deviates from former research models, challenging Alcoff’s (1994) notion of femininity, and should be explored in further study.

Unlike the relationship between retaliation and boys, some findings were less expected. Despite the limited sample size of participants, the biggest surprise was a clear class difference in the way girls perceived topics to be volatile and how they retaliated. Research has been conducted that examines race differences in socially aggressive behavior (Talbott, et al., 2002; Xie, et al., 2003), but the dichotomy that existed for this study in the way girls retaliated and why they retaliated was not purely a question of race, but also of socioeconomic status. Specifically, girls affiliated with the university were much more concerned with secret exposure, insecurities, boyfriend jealousy, and destabilization; whereas, the at-risk girls found attacks on family most concerning (identity attacks were pretty even between both groups). Though no official demographic data was collected, the girls affiliated with the university appeared more educated based on their ability to communicate complex thought. Additionally, research shows that more
educated children are often raised from more educated families, and that with more education, people are able to attain better jobs and more monetary resources (Chiswick, 1988).

Literature on the structure and functioning of African American families suggests that kinship support—the extension of parenting tasks to adults beyond the immediate family unit, such as aunts, uncles, grandmothers, etc.—is a distinct culture trait among the population (Taylor, Casten, & Flickinger, 1993). Thus a connection to family is simply a cultural value that African American populations exhibit that Caucasian families typically do not experience as much. Interestingly, though, the group of at-risk girls interviewed in this study were almost perfectly equal in number between African Americans and Caucasians, suggesting that perhaps this typical African American family cultural value is spilling over into the Caucasian population not because of race, but because both these populations share the same economic hardship and need the same support of kin to survive. This preoccupation with attacks on family among the at-risk girls in this study makes sense under this logic. That is, this at-risk group composed of both African Americans and Caucasians (a group which shares structural similarities to traditionally marginalized, poverty-stricken African Americans) values family in a way middle class Americans do not; however, middle class Americans value a traditionally feminine image the same way at-risk girls value family. Therefore, to attack an at-risk girl’s family is like attacking things middle class girls value—things like their hair, clothes, image, etc.

Another way to understand this preoccupation with attacks on family is to look at how the girls viewed family. Several of the at-risk girls referred to family members as being the "core" part of them in the same way middle class girls considered specific personality traits or values their cores. Other girls, like Laticia, for instance, were especially sensitive to attacks on their families because their families were unstable. Laticia describes how:
…my father has never been there…ever since I was little. He’s like the in and out of prison-type. And my mom she she’s there, but she’s not there. Like I see her but I don’t talk to her. There’s stuff she don’t even know about me. And it’s like after all my mother’s been through, my dad has never been there; my mom has never been there; and I’ve lived with my grandma for about three and me and her don’t get along…

Perhaps for girls of unstable families, like that of Laticia, attacking family members becomes a way of attacking the girl herself. From either of these perspectives, it could be argued that family, for the at-risk girls, is just another extension of their own identities. This concept might help explain why identity attacks are just as pertinent to the at-risk group as family attacks—family attacks could simply be a subcategory of identity attacks in general.

To understand the at-risk group’s likelihood for engaging in retaliatory violence, it is important to once again return to an analysis of the prevalence of violence in the African American community. Mistry, Vandewater, Huston, and McLoyd (2002) suggest that among African American families, low effectiveness in discipline, which often occurs as a result of parents’ psychological distress caused by economic hardship, is associated with high teacher ratings of problem behavior, like violence. Perhaps this explains why physical violence as a retaliation technique is more prevalent among the at-risk girls—the same conditions exist for many African American families (simply because they are a historically marginalized, poverty-stricken population) and poor Caucasian families. Interestingly, however, a few of the university-affiliated girls did mention either the use of violence by girls in their schools or an inclination to use violence themselves if the conflict escalated to the point where violence was necessary. Blaire suggested that the girls who used violence were “white trash,” a derogatory name given to poor white students. This certainly fits the socioeconomic pattern suggested thus far. Despite their more middle class status, however, some of the university-affiliated girls did
say they would be inclined to use violence, and this may perhaps be somewhat attributed to the generally lower average family income of the city in which the university inhabits.

Another explanation for the prevalence of violence in the at-risk community could again be attributed to theories of traditional femininity. Social aggression, as research has shown, is simply a way for females confined to the feminine role to aggress covertly so as to save their feminine face. However, females in the at-risk community appeared to be far less concerned (if at all) with maintaining a performance of traditional femininity. Perhaps this could be attributed to the fact that many girls in this population were more concerned about basic survival, which included solving problems regarding base needs like food and shelter. Kenya put it nicely when she said she did not have patience for social aggression because “I got my family to worry about, I don’t be on no games, like I said I gotta get my grades I gotta do stuff, I gotta get in stuff, I gotta get more involved in stuff. I gotta get outta here. Frankly, I got to go see the world.” That is, Kenya was operating in survival mode to better her life. Social hierarchy and status, which are hallmark motivations for much social aggression behavior, appeared to simply not be a matter of survival for this at-risk population. Social hierarchy and status would, however, be important for the survival of middle and upper middle class girls, whose social realities do incorporate more elements of traditional femininity. Future research examining the correlation between class, economic means, and social aggression will be crucial in examining these issues.

Another surprising result that arose from the study was the extent to which all participants framed themselves as being in the right. For example, many girls were quick to point out that “I would never do that; I’m not a backstabber,” but would completely contradict themselves later in their narratives. Or, if they themselves did not purport to have acted socially aggressive toward others, they seemed to know an abundance of friends who have acted in such
a way. It seems highly unlikely that if friends in the same social networks are acting socially aggressive, that the participants themselves would refrain from being socially aggressive themselves. This behavior, in fact, speaks to three theoretical phenomena, the first called the third person effect, which suggests that third parties are often more susceptible to perceived negative behaviors (Davison, 1983). Though originally studied in terms of media influence during World War II (soldiers believed others were more influenced by propaganda than they themselves), this similar logic can be applied here, since girls see other girls as being more socially aggressive than they. The second theory to describe these girls’ attitudes about social aggression is attribution theory. Attribution theory asserts that people are unlikely to associate negative attributions (which could include personality traits like social aggression) with themselves; rather, they associate themselves with positive attributions (Truchot, Maure, & Patte, 2003). Therefore, when girls see themselves as being in the right regardless of their socially aggressive behavior, they are rationalizing their behavior in order to see themselves in a positive light, rather than a negative one.

Thirdly, what participants appear to be doing from this “I’m-always-right complex” is a face-saving strategy. Face negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 1988) suggests that when a person’s face (which represents that person’s own constructed positive self image of him or herself for a given social situation) is threatened, that person will try to save face in order to salvage his or her social image. In this case, it appears as though the participants who retaliate against social aggressors are trying to save face by legitimizing their actions in the context of their social world. The most telling example of this mentality came from Gabby, who, despite having literally stolen her friend’s boyfriend away from her, still tried to convince her social circle that she was not to be faulted.
Gabby: We were actually dating two and half hours before he actually broke up with [my friend] [awkward laugh] but, so, that was what kinda got her really mad…She she was like real mad. And she pretends that everything’s fine the next day at school. But then she starts ignoring me and I’m just like what is wrong, and she’s like, gets real mad at me for it, I’m like, this is so not my fault! Like I’m not, I didn’t ask [emphasis added] for him to date me, I just simply said the fact that I would date him if he ever wanted to, like weeks later, maybe even months.

This I’m-always-right complex” extended beyond just saving face with friends and actually seemed to affect the extent to which participants engaged in face-to-face confrontation. Though some participants claimed to have no problem confronting people, other participants seemed to only retaliate via confrontation when there was a substantial amount of proof that the victim was in the right. That is, when victims proved that they were being unjustly attacked, there seemed to be a greater likelihood that they would confront the aggressor. Proof could come in a variety of forms: a trusted friend’s word, a transcript of an Instant Messenger conversation, a text message. If a victim was able to prove with any of these tools that an aggressor falsely or unjustly attacked her, she was able to correct her social standing (save face) and thereby work to project a negative image of the attacker. Future research on retaliation might benefit from a facework perspective, and looking at established social networks, like sororities, teams, squads, or close groups or friends might help researchers see how much perceived correctness is constructed by the victim and how much it is legitimate.

The analysis of face-to-face confrontation brings exposes another interesting point. Face-to-face confrontation appears to be much more prevalent as a means of conflict resolution than former research has suggested of girls (Coyne, et al., 2006; Lagerspetz, et al., 1988, Richardson, 2005). The most significant suggestion this behavioral trend makes is that it runs counter to traditional constructions of femininity, which promote demure, non-confrontational behavior (Damon, 1983; Lagerspetz, et al., 1988; Crothers, Field & Kolbert, 2005). In fact, social
aggression is believed by some to be an outlet for overt female aggression, which is typically not encouraged according to the confines of ladylike behavior (Damon, 1983). Perhaps the increase in the use of face to face confrontation indicates a generational shift in gender roles, or perhaps this small sample is simply an anomaly. Future research is needed to assess this.

Finally, the last significant result of this study speaks to the overall complexity of the social aggression phenomenon. Retaliatory behavior was expected to be somewhat reciprocal—that is, if an aggressor spread a rumor about a victim, a victim would be inclined to spread a rumor in retaliation. Such a simplistic view of the retaliation process was not the case. The provocative nature of some topics was a factor in determining whether a girl would retaliate, but other variables not explicitly examined in this study clearly affected retaliation behavior as well. Length and quality of friendship of the aggressor, the social context of the conflict, and personality quirks of conflict parties, whether the attack was part of an ongoing conflict or whether it was an isolated instance—these are just a few variables that affected whether a participant was likely to retaliate or not. Even if that likelihood can be established for future samples, determining the type of response is still another challenge. Social aggression is highly complex and contextual, and it should have been no surprise that retaliation to social aggression would prove similarly complex and contextual.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Empirical research concerning topic volatility and retaliation techniques is necessary to more fully understand the scope of this phenomenon. Recognizing that only 15 girls from a small pocket of the country participated in this study (one of the biggest limitations to this study), there is only so much that can be generalized regarding retaliation behavior and the topics or acts that make girls retaliate. Future research needs to look at more specific variables and
make more pointed correlations before scholars can start to recognize and predict patterns of behavior.

Another major limitation to this study is that no formal demographic data was collected. Much of the data regarding socioeconomic status was inferential based upon whether a girl mentioned that she went to private school or simply based on whether she was affiliated with the university or with the at-risk youth after school program. Future research on retaliation to social aggression, especially regarding socioeconomic correlations to provocative topics or response methods, must include this information to ensure credibility.

Future research will also need to be framed in a way that makes sense to at-risk girls. Some at-risk girls, though claiming to know what social aggression was, did not relay social aggression stories at all. Sometimes the word *bullying* was more effective at producing social aggression anecdotes; other times no information was extracted, no matter what language was used. This problem speaks to one of the main limitations of this study—it was designed for the population the social aggression phenomenon affects the most, upper and middle class girls. Since the addition of at-risk girls to the participant sample was unplanned and unexpected, there was no preparation for handling the possible cultural differences that surfaced. A prior understanding about these girls’ family situations, lifestyles, trust issues, or fear or disdain for speaking with people perceived to be counselors or social workers would have been useful for constructing effective questions. Future research in this area should acknowledge those concerns. However, this study does provide some larger implications regarding the process of social retaliation and could be a foundation for the creation of a behavioral retaliation theory, which could be instrumental for parents, teachers, coaches, and counselors as they try to help adolescents constructively cope with social aggression.
CONCLUSION

This study, based on the interviews of 15 girls ages 10-16, informs researchers that girls only use coping strategies, which could include affective internalizing, constructive coping, and escape approximately 28 percent of the time. This means that girls are more than twice as likely to use retaliation strategies against aggressors to serve one (or both) of two purposes: to neutralize a victim’s negative image through social leveling or to directly attack an aggressor through payback. Social leveling can include behaviors such as a truth coalition, face-to-face confrontation, faux confrontation, or cancellation of friendship. Like social leveling, payback can include behaviors such as face-to-face confrontation, faux confrontation, or cancellation of friendship; however, it also includes behaviors like gossip, rumor-spreading, nonverbal cues like rolling the eyes or glaring, picking teams, cold shouldering, specialized torture, or physical violence. Most of these behaviors, which the exception of violence, which is confined almost completely to at-risk girls, are used in similar ratios, suggesting that all these behaviors are like tools in a kind of retaliation toolbox. Whichever tool is used depends upon a complex interconnection of relational context, personalities of the parties involved, topic volatility, etc. Topics to which girls are most likely to retaliate include identity attacks, destabilization, boyfriend jealousy, family, insecurities, and secret exposure, though family is only relevant for at-risk girls. This study offers implications regarding the relationship between retaliation, race, and class differences, as well as the general social aggression phenomenon in the context of socioeconomic class. That is, research that has formerly linked violent socially aggressive behavior (Xie, Farmer, & Cairns, 2003) with African Americans now appears to be prevalent among low socioeconomic girls, regardless of race. Additionally, typical African American protectiveness of family also appears in low socioeconomic status girls, suggesting that perhaps
protectiveness of family is not purely a matter of race, but is in fact confounded with socioeconomic status.

Given the results of this study, a typology of retaliation behaviors could certainly be outlined and tested in future research. However, the results also could hold some predictive value regarding the nature of retaliation. It appears from this study that payback behaviors, with considerable certainty, perpetuate the cycle of social aggression, whereas social leveling does not necessarily produce the same effect. Perhaps this payback theory could be tested in future research on social aggression to see if this pattern indeed exists. Such a theory could provide helpful information for parents, teachers, coaches, and counselors as they try to mediate conflicts and encourage helpful and more beneficial coping strategies to social aggression. Retaliation to social aggression is complex in nature, and additional research to examine its structure, its effects, and its generalizability, is now required.
Appendix A: Interview Script

General script for qualitative interviews (may be subject to change upon relativity to each participant):

Begin the interview with introductions: name, year in school, favorite subject, favorite TV show, etc. until the participant appears to feel at ease.

Then make sure the participant understands the following definition of social aggression: any kind of behavior that tries to damage social standing, relationships, or self-esteem. These kinds of behaviors can include gossip, rumor-spreading, backstabbing, ignoring, eye rolling, turning your friends against you, etc. Make sure the participant fully understands this definition.

1. When girls get angry at their friends, do you think they do socially aggressive things?

2. What kinds of things do girls do to each other when they are angry?

3. How do the girls who are hurt by social aggression respond?

3. Have you ever been a victim of social aggression? (If no, move to question 8)

4. What happened? Who was there? Where did it happen? How did you feel? How often does this happen?
5. How did you react? Did you retaliate?

6. Have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends? (If no, move to question 11)

7. What happened? Why did you do that to her? What did she do to you? Where did it happen? How did you feel? How often does this happen? Did she do anything back to you? [Now continue to question 13]

8. Have any of your friends ever been the victim of social aggression?

9. What happened? Who was there? Where did it happen? Do you know how she felt? How often has this happened since?

10. How did she react? Did she retaliate?

11. Have any of your friends ever done anything socially aggressive to someone else?

12. What happened? Who was there? Where did it happen? Why did that person do that to her? What did she do to her before? How did that person feel? Has she done things like this before? How often has this happened since?

13. If one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful to do? Why?
14. What would your response be?

15. If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t going to be your friend anymore or something like that, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor?

16. How would you respond?

17. What kinds of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

18. What kinds of things would you do to retaliate?
Appendix B: Interview Transcriptions

*Caitlin, age 15*

Interviewer: When girls get angry at their friends, do you think that girls do socially aggressive things or do you think that doesn’t really exist?

Caitlin: I think they do…

Interviewer: yeah

Caitlin: …a lot of passive aggressive things like the he said she said stuff

Interviewer: Yeah yeah. Cool. Um, what like specifically do girls do when they get angry at each other?

Caitlin: It’s a lot of like someone talks to their friends and then talk to the other person’s friend and the other person’s friend gives the message back to the person, the first person you’re fighting with

Interviewer: Yeah, so it’s just like a cycle

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: …and it finally gets back to the other person

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: …and then they get angry and they have no idea who’s been spreading the rumors

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: …right?

Caitlin: Yeah, and then what’s really true.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, how are girls who are hurt by social aggression respond? So the victim, like the person the rumor is spread about. What is, how do they usually respond?
Caitlin: I find it’s a lot of, mostly anger. Not, I mean—it’s—they’re hurt but they mostly come off mad more than anything else.

Interviewer: Um, do they do any like specific behaviors? Do you think like if someone’s spreading a rumor about them do you think they’ll like spread another rumor about somebody else or do they internalize it a lot more than we see

Caitlin: Well there’s a lot of different ways I’ve kind of seen. So, a lot of the times now everybody’s so worried about being fake and stuff now, I find, and so they wanna—they say things to people’s face more often and then they wanna yell at each other more.

Interviewer: Oh that’s interesting. That’s different. It’s kind of like different from what it used to be a little bit

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: …even like five years ago when people were in school. It’s more like secretive. So it’s a lot more overt now? People are actually

Caitlin: I..

Interviewer:….talking to each other?

Caitlin: Well there’s, like, I was having drama issues a little while ago

Interviewer: Oh girl, just tell all, it’s ok, nobody’s names will be used.

Caitlin: Well it’s like there’s this, there are people who are really worried about being fake and they wanna say everything to each other’s face just because they want to but they, they usually get someone else to do it for them.

Interviewer: Ok.

Caitlin: Like.

Interviewer: Interesting.
Caitlin: They get what they want said out but they don’t—aren’t usually the ones who say it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Get someone else to say...yeah.

[pause]

Caitlin: But…

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Caitlin: I’m not sure. It’s like one person that I’m having difficulties with right now.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Caitlin: She’s just, um. She just got really mad at me and some of my friends recently and it’s like—it’s just—she always complained and said that we were all backstabbers and fake and all this stuff

Interviewer: Uh huh

Caitlin: And then, but she would sit with us and talk about a whole bunch of other people too

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: …but

Interviewer: That’s pretty typical, yeah. Crazy. I love it. [Caitlin laughs] Um, so, I guess that kind of answers have you ever been a victim of social aggression?

Caitlin: Yeah, kind—I mean, I wouldn’t really consider it, myself a victim just because I kind of don’t care about

Interviewer: yeah

Caitlin:…it much. But I guess considering all things

Interviewer: Um, next…ok, sorry I got confused. Um, so what happened in this like particular instance like, that you can maybe remember, one like this instance right now with your girlfriend, um, like what happened, who was there, you know why, who-what-when-where-why?
Caitlin: Well there are four of us I think…yeah. And, well five of us actually. And one night four of us went to the mall for like half an hour just after we worked community service hours and the other person didn’t go with us and she got really upset. And so the next day at church—she goes to church with two of the friends that we went to the mall with—and she just blew up at both of them and was mad at all of us for like a day and then she came back and said she wasn’t mad with all of us, that she was just mad at one person for whatever happened at church and it got really confusing and her boyfriend got involved and it was all very…

Interviewer: huh

[pause]

Interviewer: Do you think she did that to make herself sound “oh I wasn’t really mad after all, don’t hate me,” you know what I mean?

Caitlin: yeah, yeah

Interviewer: Like, why do you think she did that?

Caitlin: I’m not sure. I think she’s kind of…paranoid and she’s, she’s not a very big person. She’s like 5’2”, 100 pounds, but she likes to start drama and act all tough and stuff and I don’t think she realizes that she could get herself hurt someday.

Interviewer: Um hmm

[pause]

Caitlin: There’s just some girls that like drama.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Caitlin: Like they need it in their life to feel…

[pause]
Interviewer: Yeah that’s definitely true. Um, so how did you feel, like as somebody who was being attacked for like a minute?

Caitlin: It was harder to watch my friends cuz I’m just kind of—I don’t know, I don’t, for me things, things don’t really seem real, like I don’t get emotionally involved until it gets to like the breaking point. But just watching my friends react to it cuz she was trying to pull everyone apart. And she’s the girl that started all this with the type of girl that if she hated you she couldn’t be friends with any of your friends just because they were friends with you.

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: And so she would tell my friends that because she hated me, but then she’d also say she didn’t hate them, that she still wanted to be their friends but couldn’t because of me and it was just confusing, like I was putting my friends in the middle of it and it wasn’t fair.

Interviewer: How did you react [pause] Or are you still reacting, trying to figure it out?

Caitlin: Well, like, in the beginning, it was just, nothing was ever even really said between me and her cuz she just, you know, she would sit with us at lunch and now she’s gone, and I didn’t have any classes with her, so nothing was ever really, you know, said, but there was a lot of “I’m sick of Caitlin” and all this crap going on that I heard about, but I was just kind of wanted it to be over and I wanted her to kind of vanish.

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: Cuz earlier, like when I was in middle school and elementary I just kind of drifted away from friends and this was the real…like the first real fight that I’ve had that had ended a friendship. Cuz everyone else, we just kind of, our schedules stopped matching up

Interviewer: Mm hmm
Caitlin: …and we just kind of moved on. And I was just kind of sick of it, like, just make it stop, you know, and just seeing how it was affecting everyone cuz my two other friends that were—I go to school with, the fifth one goes to a different school—but with my two friends I see them everyday and like, the one who started all of this, Emily, she had someone come over and ask if we all wanted to fight her, like, which kind of shocked me cuz that doesn’t seem like a very smart move

Interviewer: yeah

Caitlin:…on her part cuz she’s so small, but it’s just fighting really upsets my friends and it just hurt me to watch them react to it.

Interviewer: Yeah. How did some of your friends react? I mean because there were probably like a lot of rumors spreading, a lot of, kind of facts, gossiping it sounds like, you know, a lot of confusion, a lot of like he said she said, wait, who said what said, you know, like what’s going on. How did, like, if you’re the one that doesn’t get emotionally involved, I’m sure some of your friends are

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: like do get a little more riled up, what did they do, or what are they doing now?

Caitlin: Um, my one friend Melissa, she was—it really upset her a lot. And it brought her to tears at one point just because it was stressful and it wasn’t something she should have had to worry about. But, and my other friend at first in the beginning she didn’t want to lose the crazy friend Emily at the time cuz since they’ve been friends since like third grade or something. And so that—it was upsetting to them at first and now I think they’re just angry. They just want it to be over and they’re mad.

Interviewer: Yeah
Caitlin: But they’re tolerating her still, so they still have her in their lives kind of, but I never see her
Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: so it’s kind of different for me cuz I’m—it’s easier for me to forget about it, but then they still talk about it and it still makes them mad and stuff and um…Allison and Emily used to do a volunteer thing together and now that they’re not really friends, Allison’s trying to find other friends to do it with. But Emily’s still going to it and so now Emily’s mad that everyone is going to be there because now she’s worried that we’re all going to gang up on her or something
Interviewer: yeah

Caitlin: But really it’s so that Allison will have someone to be with when she’s doing her volunteer work
Interviewer: When you were talking about Emily and what’s she’s doing, um, are you like more venting about oh this is what she did to me today or is it, like, I don’t know, like are you talking with each other pretty often about her or do you talk to other people, do you talk to your parents, do you talk to, you know, different people about what she’s doing and what you’re going through at all?

Caitlin: Well in the beginning we talked about it a lot because it was big news, but now that it’s kind of died down some it’s just when new things come up that we talk about it
Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: And I think we’re all trying to figure out what the best reaction would be to do because they want to stay civil so they don’t cause any more problems…and

Interviewer: Seems mature
Caitlin: But it’s difficult because she’s very immature and she wants to keep fighting and bringing things up and it’s hard very for them. And it just…very confusing. And we’re still trying to help each other figure out what to do. You know, my thing would be, you know, just to ignore it, if it’s not important, but then they have to deal with her because they have two classes with her so they have to be civil and it’s just, it’s kind of hard for me to see what they’re going through because I’m not going through it the same way they are.

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: Especially since I wasn’t as close to her as they were anyway…so…

Interviewer: Do, have any of your friends ever spread a rumor about her, kind of tried to get back at her in any way?

Caitlin: They haven’t really—I don’t think they’ve started rumors, they’ve, I mean, since they weren’t friends anymore I’ve heard stories about her from Allison because they were friends for so long about you know embarrassing stuff that you kind of regret doing

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: Like, you know, just, she cried at a pool once because some dog chased her or something and that’s kind of, you know embarrassing if you think about it because it was like a little dog, but. So I’ve just heard, you know, stories like that about how she was always dumb and such a baby and all this stuff. But I think it’s just been with the four of us, and I don’t think a lot of it’s gotten out, because then I probably—I’m pretty sure she’s said some things to a bunch of other people since she’s moved to another table. I’m thinking that everyone at that table kind of has a general idea of what happened.

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: but…
Interviewer: You don’t have to deal with that table do you? Or your friends—do they talk to people at that table at all?

Caitlin: Um, not—we don’t talk to them a whole lot. One of the kids that’s at her table I guess she told him what happened and he wanted to make it his life goal to ruin me.

Interviewer: Hm ok.

Caitlin: Which was, you know, out there but he still talked to me like he was my friend, but I’d heard what he was doing from other people. Then he still talks to me like he’s my friend. But…yeah.

Interviewer: And you just ignore him usually, or what do you do?

Caitlin: I talk to him like he’s my friend because he’s the kind of kid that’s real overdramatic and every other day he wants to fight someone, and he’s just crazy. So I’d rather just, you know, be a liar around him too, rather than have him against me more, or openly I guess.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Caitlin: But then I’m not end up in the middle of one of his crazy I want to fight that person.

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: So

Interviewer: Huh. Interesting, well let’s see, where are we here? Um, have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends before?

Caitlin: mmm…

Interviewer: Even if it’s just minor, like ignoring them for a day or…

Caitlin: Yeah I’ve done some of that too, just like, when stuff upsets me I’m not very good at talking about it like right then and there. I need to think about it and think about what I’m going to say and how I’m going to handle it. So I usually just block them out and…that’s how it was a
lot through middle school. And then, since I’ve been in high school I’ve noticed that when I have a problem with people they just…kind of steer clear of me, so I’m not really blocking them out, we’re just kind of avoiding each other…when there’s a problem.

[pause]
Interviewer: Um

[pause]
Interviewer: Is there like a particular instance you can remember where you did something socially aggressive, whether it was something big, something small? Uh, do you remember kind of the scenario—what happened, who was there, why, anything like that?

Caitlin: mmm…I don’t know that it was intentional, but um, another friend of mine, that’s no longer in the picture—over the summer, we had a falling out I guess cuz her, um, her sister came back and for a while it was just, you know, yay, your sister’s back. But then, she would never hang out with us anymore and she kept blowing us off repetitively to go to like Wal-Mart with her sister or whatever. And so we just kind of dropped her as a friend for like a week. Then her mom got involved and…so we’re not friends anymore.

[pause]
Interviewer: Her mom got involved?

Caitlin: Yeah. That was really strange, too. Pretty horrible. It kind of ruined a lot for everything, for everyone I mean. Because, I was home alone and her mom called me. And she asked for me, she didn’t ask for my parents, and I think her mom’s got something wrong with her brain.

Interviewer: Mm hmm
Caitlin: But, she, and she just started going on about how I was playing all these mind games and I was giving her daughter the cold shoulder and I needed to stop and how I was horrible and I didn’t, you know, I didn’t, uh, care about Brittany, and I just was selfish and conceited and I thought that everyone’s world revolved around me…and she told me that I needed therapy and that I was mentally disturbed and all this crazy stuff.

Interviewer: Wow.

Caitlin: And I just—I—I yelled back, too, and I was like, you know, you need to, cuz I was hysterical too. Crazy, but…it just, it was very strange because she’s in her early fifties I think, and she called—I was 14 at the time—and she called me and yelled at me like she was, you know 15 again.

[pause]

Interviewer: Some people like to relive their youth, I guess.

Caitlin: Yeah.

[pause]

Interviewer: Do you remember, like, your conversation on the phone, exactly what went back and forth between you guys? Like, you mentioned that she said you were selfish and conceited and needed therapy and all this stuff.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember what you said back to her? At all?

Caitlin: um, she…she was always—I never liked her even when I was friends with her daughter cuz she always, she was always real protective and she was real—she didn’t seem like she was very nice or anything. And I knew she loved her daughter but she just didn’t really like, like what she did. Like she wouldn’t, you know, if her daughter wanted to go to a friend’s house it
was too far away, it just wasn’t worth driving her and stuff like that. And Brittany couldn’t go for walks or bike rides or anything at 15! Because it might be too dangerous. And it just always bothered me because Brittany would be scared to do things, and that kind of made me sad sometimes cuz I wanted her to enjoy the world, I guess. But her mom just—I—I don’t really remember exactly what I said, but when she said like you don’t care about Brittany I just—I was like, well, yeah I do I think you’re hurting her and I think you’re making her afraid and then she said that I was selfish and that I thought everyone was out to get me and I—I don’t remember what I said to that. I must have said that I wasn’t. She said that I needed therapy and for along time I’d been thinking that she needed therapy.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Caitlin: So I was like, well I think you need to never call her again, and I slammed down the phone very angrily.

Interviewer: Wow. That takes a lot of guts.

Caitlin: It was—I was screaming and

Interviewer: Yeah.

Caitlin:...crying, and you know, mad, but.

Interviewer: Do you find that with a lot of your friends, like the parents do more of the battling, or is it more like you guys and not about, like the parents don’t get involved?

Caitlin: Well that’s the only real parent that’s involved like that, that I’ve seen. A lot of my friends parents know what’s going on and they kind of stay out of it unless it affects them. Like when all this stuff happened with Emily and Allison, um, Emily gave Allison a ride to school every morning for the most part and then after this her dad said that she wouldn’t—that he wouldn’t take Allison to school anymore. And so when that happened Allison’s mom stepped in
and said if she apologized, then you need to accept it. And I think that actually make Allison mad because she felt like her mom was only doing that for her own convenience and her mom didn’t really understand

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: …what the problem was, and that sometimes it’s just better to let it go and find a new [inaudible mumble]

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: It’s like, it’s one thing, but sometimes, it just feels like the parents only step in when it’s convenient.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you wish parents stepped in more, or would you rather they not, you just work it out yourselves?

Caitlin: Well, with my parents, I don’t really talk about this stuff a lot.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Caitlin: Because it’s just—it’s—I’ve found that when you talk about your friends, most of the time you’re venting. And then your parents hold a grudge, and since they never cared about your friends the way you did they don’t really let go of it.

Interviewer: Mm hmm.

Caitlin: and so it’s harder to be friends with that person again if your parents are secretly harboring that grudge, so I, I don’t my parents about the Brittany thing and the Emily thing because I don’t expect to have them back. But when it’s like minor things and I think we’re gonna make up I don’t tell them just because like, with the Brittany thing I have a feeling that Brittany told her mom things only when she was venting and never told her good things, which is why her mom blew up at me. And I don’t want that to happen to me with my friends. I don’t
want my parents to hold a grudge against them. Or anything, and I try to make sure everybody sees the good side so I can remain friends with them. Parents have a lot of say in that kind of thing, even when you don’t want them to.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you find that you were, um, like when Brittany was, and her mom, you know, like when they decided to expel you from their lives, um, did you find yourself, um, venting to your other friends about her or um, kind of like reliving the bad moments about her with your other friends?

Caitlin: Yeah, we, after that we just kind of—and it’s been this way for a while, the Brittany and her mom thing was almost five months ago—

[tape recorder moved]

Interviewer: Sorry, just checking, go ahead

Caitlin: and we’re still kind of going over it. And then we, um, well actually a month ago her mom told her it was ok to be friends with me again

Interviewer: Hm.

Caitlin: and then so after that Brittany thought that it would be ok to just come back and I didn’t want her back because of everything that had happened and it was so much easier to have her out of my life because of how protective her mom was. I didn’t have to worry about her anymore.

Interviewer: Hm.

Caitlin: …and so I didn’t really want her back but then she kind of went into this depression type thing and every time I’d be around or she’d be reminded of me, she’d um, go to Melissa, and you know, say that she was sorry and that she wanted to fix everything and that is was hard on her and that she really cares a lot. And she would keep doing this to Melissa and it would upset Melissa because Melissa knew from talking to me that there wasn’t any chance of fixing what
had happened. And she, just, continuously she got worse and worse and then it got to the point where she was telling Melissa “you shouldn’t have let me hang out with them because they’re too good for me and I’m not good enough for them” but, and then that eventually made Melissa mad because she was tired of picking Brittany up every time she put herself down. And Melissa was constantly trying to include her and wasn’t responding. And then there was a fight just recently between them and now they’re good again I guess but…

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: It’s just been…crazy…I’m surrounded by crazy people.

Interviewer: Yeah. Sounds like it.

Caitlin: [laughs]

Interviewer: I don’t envy it, that’s for sure. Um [pause] um, I think we might have kind of touched on this a minute ago, but when you started, um, ignoring Brittany like the first time because her sister was back in town and like, you were like eh, whatever she thinks that she’s so much greater with her sister you know, fine, you know, go be that way, um, did—did you notice like she was doing anything to you guys at that time? Like, in like, before her mom called you and pretty much like, cussed you out, um, like during the time when she was still hanging out with her sister and you guys were kind of like, “whatever,” um, did you notice that she was doing anything to you guys or did you hear any rumors about what she was saying about you or anything like that?

Caitlin: Well, like it was kind of her sister and her sister’s friend. And her sister’s like 24, so we thought it was weird that her sister and her sister’s friend—I mean they’re both in their mid-twenties—always wanted to hang out with Brittany who was 15.

Interviewer: Um hmm
A Typology of Retaliation

Caitlin: But, um, one time we all tried to do something together, cuz we were tired of being left out, so we went to the movies with her sister and her sister’s friend. And uh, when Brittany and I were in eighth grade, we were riding bikes and she—I don’t know how she did it—but she fell off and she chipped her elbow and dislocated her shoulder and broke both arms. I have no idea how she did it on a bike, but

Interviewer: Wow

Caitlin: so—and there was always that feeling of guilt like I was there, it was my fault, I shouldn’t have gone

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: that way I knew my neighborhood and I should have turned around and gone back the other way and there was always that

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: guilt thing, but, we went to the movies together and we were sitting in the thing and Brittany’s sister’s friend leaned over and asked Brittany if I was the girl who broke her. Yeah, I pushed her off the bike, right? Ok. [sarcasm].

Interviewer: And did she say it loud enough

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: so that you could hear it?

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: Like intentionally?

Caitlin: Yeah. She’s like “is that the girl that broke Brittany?” And, I mean everyone—we were sitting all in the same aisle and everyone just kind of stopped what they were doing because they knew that that was just said and they knew that I heard it.
Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: and…Oh God.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Caitlin: But then after that we didn’t talk to—I never talked to her sister or her sister’s friend after that. And so I think they all kind of started not liking me but they never said anything because of Brittany and then the whole just taking space of Brittany thing for a week just set off the whole motion

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: thing

Interviewer: Um, like when—when you heard that, when she said is that the girl who broke Brittany, was that kind of your—uh, it’s like—how did you make sense of that with like, about your relationship with Brittany at that point, you know what I mean, like did you feel like that was a significant moment in your friendship, that maybe this is not,

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: clearly this is not what it used to be, or something like that or, like how did you make sense of it, what went through your mind

Caitlin: Well like,

Interviewer: when you heard that?

Caitlin: when the first, when the accident first happened, um, I didn’t get to go to the hospital with her cuz, you know, makes sense and everything, but then like, the next day I went to visit her and her mom told me that the first thing Brittany said was don’t blame Caitlin for this, it was my fault and all that. You know that was a real—like a good thing I felt like that was a nice thing to say because I didn’t want her parents to blame me either. But then when we were at that
movies um, I don’t remember if her sister’s friend asked Brittany’s sister or if she asked Brittany but whoever it was, they said “yes.” And I was like, you know, yeah ok you should have said—I mean you don’t have to make it battle here, but you could have been like no Brittany broke Brittany or something or it’s no one’s fault or

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: anything. But like after, after everything things started to seem more tense and I stopped going to her house and we just kind of went to a mutual friend’s house instead of going to each others’ houses…more, and I don’t know, and she would tell me that her parents didn’t like me and stuff and that she couldn’t figure out why her parents didn’t like me and she didn’t blame me, she blamed whatever rock she hit on the bike that made her flip, I guess, but.

[pause]

Interviewer: Wow, that’s pretty nutty

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: Pretty crazy.

Caitlin: [laughs]

Interviewer: Um, ok. Let me see…oh no, bottom page. Um, if one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful to you and why?

Caitlin: Well lately with the whole Emily thing that’s been going on she’s been saying that I’m running my mouth and that I’m not a good friend and that I’m a backstabber. I’m not this kind of—it doesn’t really hurt but it really makes me mad that she’s letting other people think that. When I try to pride myself on, you know, going out of my way to be a good friend and be there, and I always make sure that if I say anything out loud I also I’d be willing to say it to whoever’s face.
Interviewer: Mm hmm

Caitlin: And just kind of to do things like that, so when she says that I’m a bad friend and all this stuff, it’s just like, she doesn’t really know me and I can’t believe she’s letting other people believe that about me.

Interviewer: Mm hmm. [pause] Would you say that, um, your capacity to be a great friend, and, you know, like I don’t know maybe the most important some, or something like that, is that one of the qualities you hold dear to yourself? Is that like the most important quality you have, you think?

Caitlin: Yeah, I try to um, because of everything that’s happened, like in the past year I’ve kind of learned some things about, you know, what’s good and how to help people and stuff. And so, I always try to make it clear when I’m dealing with problems that, like with the Brittany thing, and Melissa was in the middle, I told her that, you know, I don’t care if she stays friends with Brittany because I didn’t want to be friends with her. And I don’t want to make her choose. And I did the same thing with Allison and Emily. And I said that Allison could still be friends with Emily and I wouldn’t have a problem with it and I always try to be as fair as possible with that stuff because I know what it’s like to have people tell you, you know, you can’t be friends with them just cuz I don’t like them. That, that’s always made me mad. And, so, it’s like she doesn’t really know me and I don’t like that she thinks she does and that she…. [pause]

Interviewer: Alrighty. Um, like in light of the rumors that are being spread about you that seem to be um, kind of like really hitting you in the heart

Caitlin: mm hmm
Interviewer: you know, where, like this is my personality, like you’re attacking the core of me, like why are you doing this? Um, is there something that you would do maybe not now, but generally when that happens? Like in response? Is it really that you would like try to internalize it as much as you can and ignore it or is there something that you do to release your anger? Maybe it’s directed as somebody, maybe it’s not, but…

Caitlin: Well, I think that a lot of the time I do just internalize it, you know, over-think it, and you know, do all that. I, if the subject comes up a lot with, you know, just my circle of friends because they’re all involved. And so when we talk about it, it’s, you know, completely open and I haven’t always been able to talk about it, but stuff that really gets me, I just kind of talk about it a little bit more with them. But, most of the time, I just, this is bad, but I just kind of take it out on myself or my home life. Or…just being frustrated.

Interviewer: Do you usually get more like snappy with your parents and siblings and that kind of stuff or do you like stress yourself out more or try to take on more roles, like what do you usually do when you’re…

Caitlin: Well it’s like recently, it’s just I’ve found that there’s nothing I can do to make this just go away because everything else I—every other friendship that isn’t a friendship anymore just kind of went away. And this is an actual fight so I can’t make it go away and that stresses me out and I over think it and that stresses me out more. And you know, I get upset about it. And then other times I just, I don’t know, I guess it would be an attitude but I, I just don’t feel like being around people, when I’m home I’m aggravating to be around when I’m with my family and stuff.

[pause]
Interviewer: Do you ever take it out on uh, your friends that you trust? Maybe not like, intentionally, like “I’m gonna be mean to you today,”

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: But you know, like, when you’re venting and stuff do you…

Caitlin: Like, sometimes I really wish that Melissa and Allison would just completely cut Emily off, so then I wouldn’t have to hear about it anymore, she wouldn’t be involved anymore. And I, I don’t want to say that cuz then it’s like, Caitlin stole all my friends and then that rumor gets started and all that and but it’s really hard and so it’s, you know, I say mean extra mean things about Emily to you know make, maybe they’ll get the hint maybe they’ll realize how bad she is, maybe they’ll drop her, things’ll be easy again. I’ve really wanted Melissa to stop being friends with Brittany lately too because Brittany’s gone through this crazy spiral of crazy people emotions, just, you know, like “I’m not good enough to be around them, but you know, you’re a bad friends because you don’t involve me” and it goes back and forth and it’s real crazy. And it upsets Melissa and so I’m tired of hearing about it and I don’t like it, so I want Melissa to drop Jessica but I can’t say that either cuz then it’s, you know, another phone call to me like “why are you trying steal all Brittany’s friends?” and stuff.

Interviewer: Do you like, say things to kind of, like in code almost, like “oh wouldn’t it be nice if we didn’t have her around?”

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: or you know, like, kind of be vague about it or do you directly say like, you need to get rid of these girls, you know?

Caitlin: I can really say like get rid of them because like it’s just like Caitlin’s being selfish and she doesn’t want them to be friends and stuff and it’s difficult because Allison and Emily were
friends since third grade and Melissa and Brittany were friends since second grade. And so, you know, they have seniority over me because I’ve know Melissa since seventh grade and I’ve known Allison since ninth grade. So it’s kind of like they say that the length of the friendship doesn’t matter, just who’s a better friend. But I know that that makes it harder for them to let go and so I can’t really say, you know, drop them and like steal their friends or whatever. But I do sometimes, like the other night we were talking about how Brittany’s just, she’s going on and on about how she’s not good enough and how everyone’s better than her. And uh, Melissa was saying that you know, she thinks it’s funny that she keeps saying that and I interrupted her and was like “well she’s right.” She’s not good—I was mad because she was taking time from Melissa and she was like “I was going to say that she doesn’t try, but [laughs] that’s another way of saying it.”

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: And like just stuff like that. When I get mad I’m just like well, just because she thinks she isn’t good enough, then she shouldn’t be here, you know? If she honestly thought that and wasn’t just saying it for the attention then she honestly wouldn’t be here right now.

Interviewer: Yeah. [pause] Um, if one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t going to be your friend anymore, or something along those lines, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor about you? Maybe indicating a similar thing?

Caitlin: Yeah, I—I’d be hurt if she said it to my face, but I think I—I’d still deep down, I mean after thinking it about it over and over and over again, I’d still deep down have to respect the fact that she said it to me. But I think it’d be still hurt a lot worse just coming from her—just you know, I don’t, you’re a bad person I don’t want to be your friend anymore would just, that would suck.
Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: But I think I’d be more angry and less hurt if it was spread around and then got back. [pause]

Interviewer: Um, how would you respond to a situation like that? If somebody said, you know, to your face, I don’t want to be your friend anymore. What would you, what would you do?

Either to that girl, or you know, how would you take it out on other friends, family? What would you do?

Caitlin: That’s really difficult. I mean I guess it all depends on who the person was and the setting and everything, but I mean if there had been fighting and she, you know, there we were fighting and we were both mad and she said I don’t want to be your friend anymore, I’d probably be like well I don’t want to be your friend anymore either. But if it was kind of just out of the blue, like I’m sick of you, you’re not nice, I don’t want to be your friend anymore, I’d, I don’t even know what I’d do, that, you know like…probably just, you know, be “fine” say “fine, whatever, goodbye” and then go home and be upset. Just cuz there’s not really a good way to react to that.

[pause]

Interviewer: Um, do you think that you would try to, I don’t know, like sabotage that person at all whether, like, through a rumor or through um, I don’t know, try to destroy their friendship with other people? [pause] Sweet phone.

Caitlin: Yeah it’s my mom’s, it’s a Blackberry. [laughs] I have no idea what this is—try to put it back there…

[pause]

Interviewer: Cool
Caitlin: Yeah she can check her email on it and everything.

Interviewer: Pretty cool. I can’t do that on my phone. [laughs]

Caitlin: I don’t even have a phone.

Interviewer: Well, I got one when I started driving, when I got a phone.

Caitlin: That’s probably good, that kinda makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah. Emergencies and things. But my brother who’s two years younger than me got his phone at the same time as me, which really pissed me off

Caitlin: Oh yeah

Interviewer: because it was like he’s 14 and I’m 16. I had to wait until I was 16 why does he wait till he’s 14 and he gets a phone?

Caitlin: I kind of thought that would happen cuz my oldest brother got his when he was 16 and then my, he’s older than me but he’s the middle child, and he got his when he was either 16 or 17 and I was like, why aren’t you more upset about that? I would be!

Interviewer: [laughs]

Caitlin: And I didn’t get mine when I was 15 either so I’m kind of like Andy got his! You know

Interviewer: Oh um

Caitlin: Hopefully soon

Interviewer: Yeah, probably. When do you get your, do you guys have like a permit or something in Ohio?

Caitlin: Yeah we have we get our permit when we’re 15 and a half and then we get our license when we’re 16 if we’ve got through the hours and the driving school. And I’ll, And I’ll be 15 and a half in March.

Interviewer: Ok. When’s your birthday?
Caitlin: September 18th.

Interviewer: Mine’s the 15th. So it’s like my half birthday’s in March too! So I figured your birthday was in September. Happy belated birthday.

Both: [laugh]

Caitlin: Thank you!

Interviewer: You’re welcome!

Caitlin: You too!

Interviewer: Thanks! 22’s not as much fun as 16 so have fun with 16 when it comes around.

Um, oh shoot, what were we talking about? Oh we were just talking about like the awkward situation of you know, somebody saying to your face, you know, out of the blue like, I don’t want to be your friend anymore, what would you do? Would you take it out on the girl at all in any way? Or like would you let her fizzle off and die.

Caitlin: [laughs]

Interviewer: or would you kind of like…

Caitlin: I’m not really sure cuz that’s never really happened to me before but, like, it would just depend on the situation, like if there were fighting before she said that, probably no, just be girly and you know—well she’s da da da da da and everyone has their secrets about their friends, you know, when like sleepovers or whatever, cuz that stuff happens and so that’s stuff that can eventually leak out, you know, and…um, I don’t really, I don’t think I’d ever go and talk to her again like even to just be mean and you know how girls like call you and are like I wanna fight you and stuff. I don’t think that I would ever try and fix it either, though. But if it were out of the blue I have no idea how I would respond to that. Cuz I, I mean I’d probably talk about it
with the rest of the people who were still my close friends but it probably would be more of a painful thing than a “I’m mad and I wanna get back at you type of thing.”

[pause]

Interviewer: Um, ok. What kinds of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate? In order to push you over the edge and do something right back to her?

Caitlin: Hm. Well, last year there were two girls and one of them was dating my ex-boyfriend. And I had a new boyfriend and when I broke up with my boyfriend my ex-boyfriend broke up with her. And so she blamed me cuz it was at the same time. So she thought that I stole her boyfriend or whatever. And so she got, you know, her best friend and some other people to turn against me. And um, one of the people that she turned against me was texting one of my friends and saying, you know, don’t trust Caitlin she’s a big flirt she’s gonna steal your boyfriend, she’s such a bad person and all this. And like, she told me about it. She’s like, she texted me and told me this. And I was like hmm. And then something happened, and like they were talking about it and she was still pretending like she was my friend, like she hadn’t said that. And she came up and was just talking to me and I was like well, um, you’re really fake and you just said all this stuff and I know you said it, because of my friend, and I don’t like you at all.

Interviewer: Um hmm

Caitlin: And then after that we just kind of, haven’t ever talked and we secretly hate each other and stuff just cuz she’s just really immature and it was just uncalled for, for her to say things she didn’t know anything about.

Interviewer: Um, do you think that it would probably be the case that more often than not, if a boy’s involved or you know, someone that you liked or whatever, um, that you probably more likely, you’d probably be more likely to get back at somebody?
Caitlin: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Caitlin: Just because like, I mean, like the first thing that people always ask when a girl is upset is usually like “is it over a boy?” And that kind of like, makes me mad sometimes because then you know, if it’s not over a boy I’m like, well why would you think that? I’m not, you know, that pathetic. I have other things in my life besides guys.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Caitlin: And it just makes me mad to think that like, that kind of stuff happens. So when people like “you stole my boyfriend” and I’m like, “why do you think that a guy is all I care about?,” you know, I’ve got other things going on, I don’t even want to date him again. You can have him if you want him, you know?

Interviewer: Yeah

Caitlin: So that stuff kinda makes me mad, too, cuz it’s so stereotypical to think that you know, girls are going to fight over boys all the time. And that’s part of the Emily thing too. With cuz her boyfriend was—I always kind of thought he was a jerk, but he seemed like he was different around her. So I kind of let it go because I thought, you know he’s just doing that because he’s around her friends, and uncomfortable being mean. But then like the Emily thing was kind of settled but I was really sick of her boyfriend because he was just being mean and he caused, like he called one of my friends a whore and during the fight um, between Emily and Allison he would scream at like, just profane things in the hallway at Allison. And then, like one day I was walking in front of him and he was like “I’m gonna kill Melissa” and stuff and I—he was kidding, you know? Like I’m gonna kill her and stuff, but he wasn’t on good terms with Melissa, good enough terms to say something like that, and that just kind of made me mad too.
And so I was like, I’m done. I’m not going to be around him anymore and I’m—I’ll you know I’ll be friends with Emily but you know, I’m not going to be around him anymore. And that’s kind of what set up the whole Emily thing again, when she was like “you’re talking about my boyfriend and you said you liked him and now you’re like well I don’t and you hate him and stuff and you never told me about it” and I was like—cuz I was talking about it with one of my friends, like I was venting I was like I don’t wanna be friends with him anymore and Emily got on my friend’s account and read it. And she was like I can’t believe you would say that, and I was like—and I haven’t talked to her about it so she doesn’t know, you know, my side of the story, but I don’t really care.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Caitlin: But it’s just like, I was just tired of it, and I said that I didn’t have a problem with her and it was just her boyfriend but because it was her boyfriend she got really upset. And she was like I shouldn’t have to choose between my friends and my boyfriend and all this stuff. And then she chose her boyfriend.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Caitlin: I’m not really surprised though. And we’re all just kind of waiting for him to dump her and then her to come back, like “I’m sorry.”

Interviewer: Yeah. So with you, if somebody were to bring a boy into the mix or whatever, that would make you real mad because um, it’s like attacking your identity kind of? Like, not that he’s your identity but that, exactly the opposite,

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: like he doesn’t make your identity

Caitlin: Yeah
Interviewer: and that’s what would make you mad?

Caitlin: Yeah. Just assuming that my world revolves around a boy or you know, even just one person that so much that it would mess up who I am or cause me to get in a fight with anybody just kind of makes me mad. Like I don’t have my own brain and I can’t make my own decisions.

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Do you think it’s possible that some girls feel exactly the opposite way as you? So like if they’re—if you’re attacking their boyfriend like, he is their identity

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: so they feel like they’re attacking them?

Caitlin: Yeah

Interviewer: Crazy how that all works

Caitlin: Oh I know. It’s just confusing. Cuz I, I think I see things real different from most other girls, and so it’s hard for me to relate to girls. But all my close friends are girls and then like I mean it doesn’t really upset me as much to fight as the he-said-she-said stuff. But the he-said-she-said stuff is what they can handle and the fighting is just kind of makes them upset, so it’s kinda different.

Interviewer: So would you say most girls are um, not like you, like generally? [pause] Are you, like are most girls—how do I put this—do you think you’re a representative sample of like most girls?

Caitlin: [laughs]

Interviewer: You know what I mean? Or would you say like no, I’m pretty different?

Caitlin: I, I think in my mind I’m kinda different just because things that upset most girls don’t really upset me the way I, the way it seems like they should. Like all this fighting stuff—it stresses me out, but that’s just because I’m watching it happen to them. Because I feel like
sometimes I’m just on the outside looking in and it’s not really affecting me as much. But because I don’t see Brittany or Emily cuz I don’t have classes with them, so it’s not like, I’m not gonna say I’m better than all this because I’m in it, too, but it just doesn’t affect me as much as other people that I’ve noted.

[pause]
Interviewer: Alright, and last question, um, if you were in that situation, where, like, somebody had pushed you over the edge, and you were ready to retaliate, what would you do?
Caitlin: I don’t know, I mean cuz there’s a lot of like in my head there’s like a lot of like moral and emotional conflict, like I have a pretty good sense of what’s right and what’s wrong, like I would never fight Emily just cuz she’s smaller than me and that’s not a fair fight, and you know, that kind of stuff. But there was a point where I was like I really want to punch her in the face.
Interviewer: Yeah
Caitlin: make her shut up.
Interviewer: You wouldn’t be afraid to get physical if it came down to that?
Caitlin: I don’t think I’d be afraid, but there would be a lot of like, conflict going on in my head. And then, I’d think back on it and I’d regret it and then like the next day I’d be like well I’m glad I did it. I shoulda—I did the right thing and then the next day I’d be like, well
Interviewer: Mm hmm
Caitlin: I coulda not punched her, whatever, you know, but there’s just times, like that I want to do something but I know I’m supposed to do something else and it’s kinda confusing cuz you know I have two older brothers and my parents are like, well you need to be the bigger person and that’s good, but it’s difficult being a teenage girl when you’re constantly trying to live up to what was said before you I guess.
Interviewer: Um, would you be more likely to do something more indirect? So something kind of behind the back or something more direct like consult your friend, you know, talk about it, or, or do something, you know mean or whatever?

Caitlin: When it, when it’s like mad, like with the fighting, I, I tend to like stay away and be angry and just talk about it with my friends and I don’t really go and confront them unless there’s something that needs to be said. Like with the girl that thought that I stole her boyfriend or whatever I was like dude, I didn’t steal your boyfriend, you’re immature for saying that, and I told her that because I didn’t want people to think that I was like that because that’s not a very good, you know that’s not a good thing to have said about you. But like the stuff with Emily, the people she’s telling aren’t really people that I talk to anyway and it’s not gotten to the point where I need to say anything. But I always make sure that it’s something that I would say and I know that anything that I have said I’d say to her if the situation ever came up. Or at least I’d try to make sure that everything I say would be just as equally said to her face. It’s difficult sometimes, and I usually just stay away. And just kind of do my own thing. And it’s kind of easier to forget about it that way unless problems get dragged up. And maybe that’s why it’s hard cuz I, cuz Melissa and Emily and Allison and Emily are still, you know, tolerating each other kind of, and I don’t think that they’ve ever you know just dropped someone. And I don’t think they realize how much easier it is to just let it go. Because they have, you know they want to be civil, and they’re, they want karma in their favor and stuff like that. And it’s just, it’s easier for me to just drop it, you know, move on. I don’t talk to Emily or Brittany. I mean I even, I told Melissa that I would be around when Brittany was around to make it easier on her so she wouldn’t have to choose, cuz for a while there’d be like Caitlin weekends that she’d hang out with me and then she’d hang out with Brittany the next weekend and so…
[tape recorder moves]

Interviewer: Just kidding, it’s alright. I thought I heard something, but I’m like ultra paranoid about the machine, but anyway, um, yeah you were saying about Brittany

Caitlin: so then one day I was like we can all hang out together but even when we were all together I didn’t really talk to Brittany, and I didn’t really, you know, not even, like I wasn’t mean, really I just kind of didn’t really acknowledge her either like I didn’t

Mother’s voice: Want me to go away?

Interviewer: We’re just wrapping up.

Mother’s voice: Ok

Caitlin: So I just kind of act like she’s not there but still acknowledging her at the same time, like you know, I don’t really know how to explain it, like if she says something funny I laugh, but I don’t really, you know, talk to her and like conversations will go from Brittany to Melissa to me to Melissa to Brittany and they don’t really go between Brittany and I still, but it’s still, we’re still hanging out or whatever. I just don’t, I kind of ignore everything that’s going on cuz it’s easier for me, cuz I worry about you know, this conflict in my head, that, you know, I’ll want to scream at her again and I, then it’ll just ruin things again.

Interviewer: Well that’s all I have actually, I’ll turn the machine off.
Megan, age 10

Interviewer: So, the thing I’m looking at for my senior project is this idea of social aggression, which is any behavior that, um, seeks to damage social standing, social status, other relationships, or your own self esteem. So things like gossiping and backstabbing and even rolling your eyes when somebody says something—that can all be considered social aggression. Um, do you understand that definition?

Megan: Yes

Interviewer: And ok. So we, like you pretty much know what I’m talking about when I say social aggression right? Ok. Just wanna make sure cuz I’ll use that term like here and there. Um, so to begin, let me ask you, um, when girls get angry at your, at their friends, do you think that they do socially aggressive things?

Megan: Well, I could sorta say because like my class started out not liking this one girl because she seemed sorta mean and had a bad temper. But we started to get to know her a little more and what we, at first we liked her, but she got a little upset and ill-tempered and stuff.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: and so then we all got a little annoyed with her. And we started to think she wasn’t doing well because she was, she always got—and she was put, our computer class teacher was going to give us a party if we did well but she was kind of pulling us down a little bit so we got a little annoyed with her

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: and because of standing these things

Interviewer: mm hmm
Megan: and she went by things so quickly and she acted like she did them all but I read them like right, she did them all. So yeah, I could say yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, the definitely do. Cool. Um, what kind of things do girls do to each other when they’re angry? Like specifically, what do they do?

Megan: Well, they roll their eyes, they sort of talk behind their back

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: they say like, I don’t know, that’s basically it. Sometimes they uh, they don’t actually go face to face and insult each other automatically but they send like people to do it, with a friendship I bet.

[pause]

Interviewer: Do you think the girls who are hurt by social aggression respond at all?

Megan: Well, they, I don’t really think so. I think they just act normal and things. They probably go to their parents and talk to them.

Interviewer: Have you, um, ever been a victim of social aggression yourself?

Megan: I think I might have. At lunch, uh, probably.

Interviewer: What happened?

Megan: Well, see, sort of like, I don’t know what exactly, but I, I think, she, she called me a name and I didn’t like that, so yeah.

Interviewer: And who was there? Just you and her, or

Megan: Well yeah like every kid’s doing everything after school, but she’s just one that just [mumbles] the day that she called me

Interviewer: mm hmm. Um, and you said it was at school with like a lot of people around?

Megan: mm hmm, yeah it was, that day, was there
Interviewer: Ok, and how did you feel when that happened?
Megan: I was not happy.
Interviewer: Yeah? How often do things like this happen?
Megan: Not very often like, Andrea’s a little messed up, like a couple of kids in my class did it to each other because this one girl was, they were all pretty mad, and everyone in our class like wasn’t happy with her or anything because like she was grumpy and then she started bossing the whole entire thing I think, so yeah.
Interviewer: Um, in the instance where this girl called you a name, how did you react?
Megan: I didn’t really want to go back to that school.
Interviewer: Yeah?
Megan: Yeah.
Interviewer: Did you like do anything specifically to her or did you like say something bad about her or did you
Megan: I
Interviewer: anything like that?
Megan: I just talked to my mom and she said I had to go back
Interviewer: [laughs] Yeah, moms always say that right?
Megan: [laughs]
Interviewer: So you didn’t like retaliate at all like towards her? For saying anything like that?
Megan: No.
Interviewer: Ok. Have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends at all?
Megan: I guess I sort of have because of like I said to you the girl that was mad she—like when we tried to help her she would get all grumpy, sometimes she’d get mad and she’d take like a lot of locker space so if we’d need to tell her something she’d be like ok gosh

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: like in a real grumpy tone

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: but we looked at it like nobody else really liked her

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: so that was pretty socially aggressive toward her

Interviewer: Um, eventually no one liked her. How did it get to that point? Did they like start talking about her?

Megan: A little

Interviewer: And is that how you found out no one really liked her?

Megan: Well yeah but then she started acting nicer so we started liking her more. [pause] I think she might have realized she was being mean or her mom noticed it or something like that.

Interviewer: mm hmm. Um, was there like a specific instance that you can remember where you think like “yes I definitely did like something to my friend, I talked bad about her, I tried to get people

Megan: Yes

Interviewer: to not be your friend,” can you remember that instance?

Megan: Well, there’s—well yeah. Like, she went up to our table, I wasn’t too happy because she was sort of lazy

Interviewer: Ok
Megan: so I started to do a little bit of my eye roll

Interviewer: mm hmm. Did you do that like among other people or was it—
Megan: It was—

Interviewer: just you and her?
Megan: Like I don’t say, I’m not sure we were noticed or anything but…I think one of my classmates might have noticed but I think she just sort of agreed with me

Interviewer: [laughs]
Megan: but I don’t think I’m the one who started it. I think, like, my friend started it because she sort of just wanted to hang out with me a lot and Andrea had left the school that year.

Interviewer: Um, have, if one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful to you, and why?
Megan: like [mumble]

Interviewer: Yeah, like say somebody was gonna say something bad about you. Like what would be the most hurtful? What would be the worst thing that someone could do?
Megan: I go to school with like the rich kids and [mumble] the most common thing [mumble]. So I’d probably be a little like timid if they said oh she doesn’t have this, like this or she doesn’t stand a chance or I don’t know something like that maybe.

Interviewer: ok. Um, and what would your response be?
Megan: I’d probably say something like it doesn’t matter how rich we are because we’re all basically the same people, you just have more money. I guess we could like afford a house that’s big but we don’t but

Interviewer: mm hmm. Would you like do anything to kind of like make sure people knew that? Like would you say things to people that would make sure that that point got across or would
you like say something bad about someone else so that, you know what I mean? Like, like we
can kind of say--
Megan: like if was something really bad I might like talk to one of my friends about it
Interviewer: Ok. So like you wouldn’t try to make someone else look poorer or try to make
someone else feel bad at all?
Megan: I don’t know—I might have. I probably wouldn’t do it on a regular basis but maybe if I
was having a bad day or something I might say something.
Interviewer: If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t going to be your friend
anymore, or something kind of along those lines, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a
rumor?
Megan: Well I’ve had my friends say that because they—when they say I actually say that, but
sometimes they’ll just say ok. But a rumor might be a little more hurtful because I can sort of
take that if they don’t wanna be my friend.
Interviewer: Why would it be more hurtful if rumor—why would a rumor be more hurtful?
Megan: Because then every kid would think that and it’s sort of like this, they would sort of turn
on me.
Interviewer: Do you think there’s like a likely chance that others would turn on you if somebody
was spreading a rumor? Like, do you think that it’s pretty likely that kids would--
Megan: I don’t think so. It depends on like the person. If someone’s like loyal to them then
they’ll probably believe you
Interviewer: mm hmm
Megan: but if it wasn’t like that girl who was being stupid, then I think I would probably trust the
other girls in my class.
Interviewer: mm hmm [pause] um, how would you respond in a situation um, where a friend told you she didn’t want to be your friend anymore?

Megan: I’d say something like “ok, if you don’t want to be my friend you don’t have to but if you do want to be my friend, just to come again”—I might, it depends if you’re like mean to me, but…

Interviewer: mm hmm [pause]. Would it upset you a lot or, would you just kind of shrug it off?

Megan: well, um, it maybe, but the thing is, if it was one of my really close friends I would probably be a little shook up and sad

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: but if it was one of my friends that was sort of a little mean to me at times, I probably wouldn’t be like too upset.

[pause]

Interviewer: Um, what kind of things would a girl have to say or do, um, no, yeah, would have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate, in order for you to do something socially aggressive?

Megan: like really say something really mean about me

Interviewer: mm hmmm, like what kinds of things would that be?

Megan: like I wouldn’t exactly know, I’d just probably get a little upset with a big insult like you’re stupid or something with like a little mad. Things like that.

Interviewer: mm hmmm. Is your intelligence something you definitely don’t want insulted ever? Like is that really important to you?

Megan: Well because I think I am sort of smart, and—it just gets me annoyed when people like, they don’t even think about how you feel or if you’re actually smart or not.
Interviewer: mm hmm. [pause] Sorry I’m taking a bit of time to jot things down. [pause] Um, what kind of things would you do to retaliate? Like if someone were to give you that big insult, say Megan, you are stupid, if that said that to you what would happen? Or if somebody were spreading a rumor that you are not as smart as you thought you were, what would you do to retaliate?

Megan: Well I’d probably tell one of my friends so they could like…and things, like talk to some of the kids to see what I should do and stuff like that and if—I’d probably also go to a teacher or a parent.

Interviewer: mm hmm. [pause] Um, I’ll backtrack a minute and um, can you think of a time, now that we’ve been talking a little bit more about social aggression and retaliation and stuff, can you think of a time either in your life or in a friend’s life where something really big happened? Like someone um sent a big rumor around or there was a big conflict between friends, can you describe any instances like that?

Megan: I’m not exactly sure but I’ve had like little, I’ve heard like people, like two of my friends they’ll talk to each other and they sort of both [mumble] me.

Interviewer: So how many little instances like that do you see usually?

Megan: I’d say about like one or two.

Interviewer: One or two?

Megan: yeah

Interviewer: Like in a week or…ever?

Megan: Ever

Interviewer: ok.
A Typology of Retaliation

Megan: Well, me and my other friend sort of do the, teased her, me and my other friend did that a little bit because she sort of thought she was the—[mumble] and things like that. And then my other friend got tired of her too so we started hanging out on the other field and she started feeling left out I think.

Interviewer: ok. What did she do when she felt left out?

Megan: She went up to us and said basically like you guys are leaving me out why aren’t you like playing with me and things?

Interviewer: mm hmm and what’d you guys say?

Megan: we just, I don’t know remember exactly what we said but I think we sort of just said you can play with us if you like um, so she would play with us but we’d like, we wouldn’t like, some of her ideas and stuff we didn’t really like and things like that but we always did she wanted to, so we started doing things that we wanted to do.

Interviewer: mm hmm. Do you think that social aggression-type things start happening at all when boys are involved? Like when people’s crushes get involved?

Megan: Well, I’ve had like, my, couple of my—are having a social aggression right now. Because they promised not to like boys until they were like in high school, but one of them like, likes boys now.

Interviewer: And what’s happening with them?

Megan: Well they’re still friends and things but I don’t think they’ll like call that the, like, forgot all about it and things.

Interviewer: What happened with the phone call?
Megan: Well, I think, like Lisa said she likes somebody and things like that but and, like the, my friend was like “you remember that promise that we made?” Because they were both—well my other friend was originally a boy hater because of a boy we had in our class. So I really…

Interviewer: And then that changed when she started liking someone?

Megan: yeah.

Interviewer: ok.

Megan: She has two people that like, one likes her but, yeah.

Interviewer: So has like, has her friendship suffered because of it?

Megan: No, I don’t think so.

Interviewer. No? Cool. Alrighty. Um—

Megan: Well I don’t really know because I’m not there for when she goes around and talks about that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. But they appear to be friends as far as you can tell?

Megan: [nods]

Interviewer: Cool. Um, have you had any instances, like, in um, I know you do tae kwon do and you have like all this stuff that you’re always doing—you’re so busy, your mom was emailing me schedules. Um, have you ever had a problem where somebody got jealous of like something you were doing well or maybe you got jealous of someone else when they were doing really well and that caused a problem between you?

Megan: Well like at school I got like a little upset that—I thought I did a good [mumble] and I was pretty upset about that.

Interviewer: and what happened?

Megan: I didn’t affect anything. But yeah.
Interviewer: How um, so when you have a conflict with someone are you usually quick to say like bring up the conflict and just try to resolve it face to face?

Megan: I’ve tried. Yes, I’ll probably try to do that. Because all my [mumble]

Interviewer: Yeah. Is that what you usually do, or what do you usually do to resolve conflicts?

Megan: That’s what I usually do, I’ll try to say like I’m sorry

Interviewer: Um, is that what you think most people do to, like when they have conflicts?

Megan: Probably.

Interviewer: Yeah? Cuz you mentioned earlier like girls go behind each others’ backs and things like that, like.

Megan: Yeah

Interviewer: Do you think that’s more common than how you approach things usually?

Megan: Probably, cuz I don’t normally go behind girls’ backs I don’t think.

Interviewer: Yeah? Um, cool, well—

Megan: I’ve done it a couple of times though

Interviewer: tell me about those times. What happened?

Megan: Well, it gets sort of annoying, one of my friends gets so annoyed because she thinks she’s so perfect at like—I’m not sure but I think she might be jealous of some of the things I do because I’m a faster writer than she is and things like that.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: But I think she gets a little jealous because—and when it comes to math class she acts like she’s better but I think I’m just as good I just need a little more help with it. And then I’ll figure it out.

Interviewer: mm hmm. And um, how do you communicate about that stuff? Does she—
Megan: She’ll like point out like the problems and I say I’d rather have the math teacher correct me if you don’t mind. And so then it just gets annoying, like I don’t even know why she’s looking at my work.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: and the other things is she likes to follow us. Like she sort of follows me—I don’t know what, she tries to like latch on to me sort of like, sometimes I think she’s kind of lonely, like do you have a best friend and no one else can be your best friend notion.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Megan: except she will have other friends. I think she just think she has to have one specific best best best friend.

Interviewer: mm hmm, yep.

Megan: And I think she wants me to be that one now because her other best—[mumble]. And I just get so annoyed by that.

Interviewer: Um—

Megan: It’s sort of stopping now though. It’s getting better.

Interviewer: After you get annoyed what do you usually do?

Megan: Well one time I went to talk to one of my other friends about it and things

Interviewer: uh huh. What did you say to that friend?

Megan: Well, I didn’t really think my other friend could be so bossy and she’s like I don’t know and stuff. And she, what exactly she said I think it was something like I don’t know. And I said like cuz I sort of thought she could be sometimes because after all, she corrects me in math and I just get so annoyed by that.
Interviewer: mm hmm. And then um, when you asked your friend if you thought your other friend could be bossy and stuff like that and you had that conversation what did that friend do?

Megan: Well, she just, she kept it a secret for me, which was nice.

[Pause]

Interviewer: And did it ever get back to the other—the one who was following you all the time—about what you said?

Megan: Well, she doesn’t do the math thing as much anymore, she’ll do it every once in a, she still like latches on to me.

Interviewer: And what are you doing now,

Megan: we still—

Interviewer: now that she’s kind of stopped, with the latching?

Megan: We have the whole group so I sort of, we just, we all hang out together but.

Interviewer: So do you just ignore it or does it make you annoyed still?

Megan:  I just ignore it now.

Interviewer: mm hmm.  Cool, um, can you think of any other stories like that where you’ve have like a similar situation where a friend has been annoying or you’ve annoyed another friend or something like that?

Megan: Well, one friend got on student council at school and I mean, I wrote a speech and a thing. And she says that she like helps the school and things. But I get a little upset because she’s got the whole class thinking she’s the perfect one and things. And that

Interviewer: And you wrote the speech right? So she’s getting credit for something you did?

Megan: oh no no. I wrote my own speech and she wrote her own speech.

Interviewer: Oh ok.
Megan: But yeah, I wrote like a couple drafts of that speech and things and I thought I worked pretty hard on that one. And I thought I had some good ideas.

Interviewer: Ok. But she won anyway?

Megan: yeah.

Interviewer: And that upset you? And what did you do?

Megan: I didn’t really do anything I just sort of congratulated her and things.

Interviewer: mm hmm. Do you still harbor any like resentment about it?

Megan: Not really.

Interviewer: Well that’s good. Um, but does it bother you that whole school seems to think that she’s doing great things or is awesome cuz she’s on student council

Megan: Not really anymore.

Interviewer: Ok. [pause] Cool can you think of anything else as far as like, anything else that would be helpful for me to know about like the way that girls get back at each other for doing something socially aggressive?

Megan: Not really, not that I can think of.

Interviewer: No? No? Ok, well cool, and that you for talking to me about it. It was really helpful for me.
Samantha, age 10

Interviewer: So now you’re in fourth grade, that would make you ten?

Samantha: [nods]

Interviewer: yeah? Good birthday, you’re out of the single digits. You know, starting to get older. No? Not really?

Samantha: My sister just had a baby.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Samantha: So I’m an aunt now.

Interviewer: Congratulations! Are you excited?

Samantha: Not really.

Interviewer: Not really? Oh no! When did she have her baby?

Samantha: Thursday

Interviewer: Oh so it’s a brand new baby. Is it a boy or girl?

Samantha: boy

Interviewer: Have you seen him yet?

Samantha: [nods]

Interviewer: Aww…isn’t that crazy to think that he came out of someone’s body?

Samantha: [laughs]

Interviewer: That’s crazy. Do you like babies?

Samantha: Yeah but they took pictures when he came out.

Interviewer: Ew! That’s so gross!

Samantha: [laughs]
Interviewer: I don’t want to see that. I don’t want to know, I don’t want to know what they look like! [laughs] Cool. Do you baby-sit a lot; have you been babysitting for neighbors or anything like that?

Samantha: [shakes head no]

Interviewer: No? It’s a good way to make money if you’re interested. Spending a Friday night sometime, you know, hanging out with other people’s kids. It’s fun. Awesome, well I’ll go ahead and start asking a few questions. I’ve got a little script here so hopefully we can stay on track. And don’t worry you don’t have to answer all these questions because I have like different questions for different scenarios, so you won’t have to answer all these questions, I promise you that. Cuz that’s a lot of questions, yikes. Cool cool. So the first thing I want to talk about, I mentioned this term social aggression earlier, and um, basically I want to make sure that when I say that you understand what I mean. And um, that it’s like any behavior that tries to make another person feel bad about themselves or tries to make them not popular anymore or somehow tries to make their social status get smaller, something like that. Um, it can include things like gossiping like talking about people behind their backs, whispering and fake whispering and things like that, even just eye rolls and saying “whatever,” not, trying to get people not to be friends anymore, that’s all kind of social aggression. So if I throw that term around you know what I’m talking about?

Samantha: [nods]

Interviewer: Yeah? You think so? Ok, cool. Do you think that when girls get angry at their friends do you think they do socially aggressive things?

Samantha: I don’t know.

Interviewer: You don’t know? No? Have you ever seen it before really in school?
Interviewer: Ok that’s cool, that’s cool. Um, usually like friends trying to make one of their other friends feel bad for any reason or…?

[pause]

Samantha: maybe, maybe not

Interviewer: How old is your sister?

Samantha: One of em’s 16, one of em’s 14

Interviewer: Do any of your sisters ever say anything to you that make you think that they’re trying to be mean or something like that?

Samantha: They are mean, yeah

Interviewer: They are mean? What do they do?

Samantha: um, [pause]. I don’t know.

Interviewer: You don’t know? Do they ever try to steal your toys or try to get you not to play with them?

Samantha: They steal my I-pod.

Interviewer: Oh man! That’s like hardcore stuff. I wouldn’t want anyone doing that stuff. Do any of your friends like steal your stuff at all?

Samantha: No

Interviewer: That’s good. Um, do you have a really small group of friends or a big group of friends at school?

Samantha: mmm kinda in the middle

Interviewer: In the middle? Do you have like three or four close friends? Five or six close friends?
Samantha: Three close friends…[mumble]

Interviewer: Ok that’s cool, that’s cool. Are there a lot of different groups at school?

Samantha: mmm yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah? What, what groups are there? Do they have titles, or...is there a popular group, a sporty group, or

Samantha: mmm [laughs]. There’s the cool group

Interviewer: Yeah?

Samantha: and…um…uh…I don’t know the rest

Interviewer: And everyone else? The cool group and everyone else? That’s cool. Um, you have any—what makes the cool group cool?

Samantha: um…

Interviewer: Do they have neat clothes or

Samantha: um…

Interviewer: Does that make them cool or it is something else?

Samantha: I don’t know.

Interviewer: Do they have a lot of people in the cool group?

Samantha: [shakes head]

Interviewer: No? How many people are in it, roughly?

Samantha: seven or eight

Interviewer: Ok. That’s a pretty big number of cool kids. Um, have you ever seen *Mean Girls* the movie?

Samantha: yeah

Interviewer: Are they like those girls at all? Sorta?
Samantha: yeah

Interviewer: What do they do that makes them kinda like the mean girls?
Samantha: um…I never talked to them before. I don’t know.

Interviewer: Have you ever watched them—watched them, like do things to their friends? Or have you heard any rumors about what they do?
Samantha: no

Interviewer: No? How do you know they’re like the mean girls?
Samantha: My friends tell me.

Interviewer: Oh, your friends tell you? What do they tell you about them?
Samantha: um…they make fun of people…and people with glasses they call them four-eyed geeks and…I don’t know

Interviewer: [laughs] Those are two really good examples of social aggression. When you make fun of people like that’s definitely something you would call social aggression. Calling people with glasses four-eyed geeks, that’s definitely mean-spirited, so, yeah. Um, do you know anything else about the cool people? Other than that they call the people with glasses four-eyed geeks?
Samantha: um…no

Interviewer: Um, so how do the people with glasses or people who are hurt by the cool people, how do they respond.
Samantha: I don’t talk to them.

Interviewer: You don’t talk to them? Have you ever been hurt by social aggression at all? Has anyone ever said mean things about you like that?
Samantha: I don’t think so
Interviewer: You don’t think so? So your friends are pretty like, they’re always nice to you and you never have fights or anything?

Samantha: [shakes head]

Interviewer: You’re lucky, no conflicts with friends? That’s cool. Um, have any of your friends ever been made fun of before?

Samantha: mmmm…. [pause] not for sure

Interviewer: Not for sure? Um, you can’t ever remember a time when one of your friends got upset because she was called a mean name, or anything like that?

Samantha: Well my friend, her friend got mad because they called her a name—I don’t know what it was

Interviewer: Ok. Do you remember anything more about when that happened, who was there, why it happened maybe?

Samantha: [shakes head]

Interviewer: You don’t remember who called her the name?

Samantha: [shakes head]

Interviewer: But it wasn’t one of your friends?

Samantha: [shakes head]

Interviewer: Ok, um, so what did your friend, when she was telling the story about her friend, how did she tell the story?

Samantha: It was a long time ago…

Interviewer: It was a long time ago? How long ago was it?

Samantha: about a month ago
Interviewer: A month ago? Yeah that’s a long time to remember. So do things like that happen often at all? At school?

Samantha: Not anymore

Interviewer: Not anymore? Did they used to happen a lot?

Samantha: [nods]

Interviewer: What was that like?

Samantha: um….

Interviewer: You’re fine, just think about it [pause] What changed? What made it happen not so much?

Samantha: the teachers

Interviewer: The teachers? What did they say?

Samantha: They let the children that, the teachers that um my friend—they um got in trouble by the teachers and…

Interviewer: What happened to the people who got in trouble?

Samantha: They got a detention and all sorts of stuff.

Interviewer: What happened to the people who were being made fun of?

Samantha: They—the teachers told the people who got made fun of that um, that um they should just let it go and not talk about it.

Interviewer: Yeah? Did they do that?

Samantha: [nods]

Interviewer: Yeah? So they didn’t get upset after that when the teachers told them not to be upset anymore? They just didn’t get upset anymore or did they still have, were they still a little hurt?
Samantha: I don’t know

Interviewer: You don’t know? If you were in that position would you still be kind of hurt?

Samantha: A little

Interviewer: Yeah? Yeah, um, if one of your friends was spreading a rumor about you or saying mean things about you, what rumor would be most harmful to you? What would hurt the most?

Samantha: I don’t know

Interviewer: You don’t know? If someone called you a name what name would be the worst thing? And you can say it out loud cuz like I said no one’ll hear ya. Except me, and I’m cool.

Samantha: mmm [pause] I don’t know

Interviewer: What are some of the meanest names you’ve ever heard somebody be called?

Samantha: um, I would have to say fat

Interviewer: What makes that one of the most hurtful?

Samantha: huh?

Interviewer: Why is that the most hurtful, you think? Because it’s not true, or because people think fat people are lazy or because people think fat people are ugly, or…?

Samantha: [shrugs]

Interviewer: You don’t know? You just know that it’s not nice? Ok, I can buy that. Um, if one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t going to be your friend anymore, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor about you?

Samantha: I think so

Interviewer: It’d be more hurtful? Saying it face to face would be more hurtful? Why would it be more hurtful than spreading a rumor?

Samantha: [laughs] [shrugs]
Interviewer: Um, if everybody heard a rumor that one of your friends didn’t want to be your friend anymore, um, would that be more hurtful?

Samantha: not really

Interviewer: Not really? You wouldn’t really care? Why’s that?

Samantha: I don’t know.

Interviewer: Do you generally care what other people think at all?

Samantha: sometimes

Interviewer: When are those times?

Samantha: um…[pause]

Interviewer: Don’t know? That’s ok. What kinds of things would a girl have to say or do to you in order for you to strike back, in order for you to retaliate, or…try to do something mean back to her? What would she have to do to make you do that?

Samantha: talk about my mom

Interviewer: Talk about your mom? Why would that be the most hurtful? [pause] Is your mom still alive?

Samantha: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? Do you live with you mom?

Samantha: mm hmm

Interviewer: And your mom’s you—is she really special to you?

Samantha: [nods]

Interviewer: Is she like your favorite person in the world?

Samantha: actually yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? What makes your mom so special?
Samantha: um…[pause]

Interviewer: Is she nice?

Samantha: [nods]

Interviewer: cool.

Samantha: When we don’t [mumble]

Interviewer: [laughs] Most mothers aren’t nice when you don’t clean. Trust me I know.

Samantha: and she gives us, she tells us five times that we have to clean our chores. Or she’ll get mad. And if we clean it the first time she won’t get mad.

Interviewer: Cool, that’s fair. Um, if somebody talked about your mom what would you do?

Samantha: um…I’m not for sure

Interviewer: Would you be like a mean girl?

Samantha: mmm not that mean

Interviewer: Um, do you think if—do any of your friends like boys yet? Do you have a crush on anyone, or do any of your friends have crushes?

Samantha: [shakes head]

Interviewer: Not yet? No cute guys at school? They don’t get cuter till later.

Samantha: exactly [laughs] yeah

Interviewer: Um, do you think like, sometimes boys make girls be mean to each other?

Samantha: mmm [pause]. Sometimes

Interviewer: Sometimes? What other things do you think make girls mean to each other?

[pause] Grades or clothes or spending time or not spending enough time together? [pause] Don’t know? That’s ok. Well cool, so you said you’ve never had a fight with a friend before?

Samantha: [shakes head]
Interviewer: No? And your friends have never had fights with friends before? Or have they?

Samantha: [shrugs]

Interviewer: Not that you know? And people at school generally don’t fight or get bullied or anything?

Samantha: not until the fifth graders

Interviewer: Only the fifth graders? Well cool, that’s all I need. Thanks for talking.
Shaliah, age 12

Interviewer: One thing, I’ll probably be throwing around this term called social aggression, which is just a really fancy way of saying gossiping and backstabbing and even little things like rolling your eyes and saying “whatever,” and trying to get people to not be your friend and things like that. Um, any behavior that tries to make someone feel bad about themself, or tries to decrease their social status, like try to make someone not popular anymore, or you think this person’s getting too popular and you want to preserve your popularity so you knock em down a few notches so you make sure you’re still popular—things like that. Does that make sense to you?

Shaliah: Yeah

Interviewer: Ok. Uh, I just want to make sure if I use this term “social aggression” that you’ll know what I’m talking about. Um, it’s all those behaviors, so anything that you can think of and be like uh, that’s mean, and my friend did that to me once, that’s social aggression. Um, just to make sure that I’m making this stuff up, do you think when girls get angry at their friends that they do socially aggressive things?

Shaliah: yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? Do they do them a lot, or

Shaliah: yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? What kinds of things do they do?

Shaliah: Probably tell your secrets or make up lies that’s not true and then you have to hear about it and they just go around telling a whole bunch of stuff that may not be true when some stuff probably is true.
Interviewer: Right. And they’ve done that. Crazy. Um, how do the girls who are hurt by social aggression usually respond?

Shaliah: They probably like just hide it or confront it or don’t tell nobody. And then if like somebody does come up to em they’ll probably just like deny it and stuff.

Interviewer: Do you know why they usually do that instead of talk about it?

Shaliah: Well, like sometimes if somebody comes up to em and wants to talk about it, like if it’s another kid or something, he could probably fake it by mistake and spreading it around

Interviewer: So they like don’t want to make it worse?

Shaliah: [nods]

Interviewer: Ok, that’s interesting idea, never thought about it that way, but it makes sense. Um, have you ever been a victim of social aggression?

Shaliah: [nods]

Interviewer: Yeah? You remember what happened? Who was there? Kind of like who, what, when, where, why?

Shaliah: Um, I told one of my friends a secret I never told nobody else and then this other girl that I didn’t like—she didn’t like me because wasn’t, my friend wasn’t hanging out with her, but she had moved so she started hanging out with me more—and she had been going around saying hurtful stuff, like how my family’s bad and how like, I don’t have my room clean or nothing and just stuff like that. And then Monica—my friend she come back tell me and she just like tried to take care of it herself, but when Monica found out she was taking care of it she started saying stuff about both of us and then things went crazy.

Interviewer: So does stuff like that happen a lot?

Shaliah: yeah
Interviewer: Yeah? How did you respond?

Shaliah: Sometimes I try to take care of it myself but when like the girl I was talking about when they like wanna fight or something I just walk away.

Interviewer: Um, when you say you take care of it yourself does that mean you confront them or do you hide it or do you spread a different rumor about them?

Shaliah: I used to spread a different rumor about them but then my mom and my sister sat down with me and talked about it. I just like go to that person and talk to them about it.

Interviewer: Yeah? Have you had the opportunity to confront any of your friends before? Can you tell me about it?

Shaliah: sometimes

Interviewer: Yeah? How does that usually go?

Shaliah: Well my two friends it went good cuz after we all sat down and talked about it they [mumble] no more

Interviewer: That’s good. Real good. Um, how long ago were you spreading rumors about other people?

Shaliah: When I was…either 9 or 10.

Interviewer: Ok. Nine or 10 like up to this point since you’ve been 12? So like a couple years you went that route and then your mom talked to you and said you shouldn’t do this? Oh ok, and then you started confronting?

Shaliah: [nods]

Interviewer: Ok. Cool. Um, does—when you spread the rumors, back in the day, when you were 9 and 10, did those girls do anything back to you?

Shaliah: Yeah they were spreading rumors about a whole different thing.
Interviewer: Ok, so a completely different issue?

Shaliah: [nods]

Interviewer: Ok, um, and how did you feel when all this was happening?

Shaliah: I feel like how they feel when they’re upset with me when I say rumors that I’m spreading. Or I hear a rumor that they’ve spread I feel upset.

Interviewer: Yeah. If one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what would, what rumor would be most hurtful to you, and why?

Shaliah: talking about my mom

Interviewer: Yeah?

Shaliah: Cuz I do not like nobody talking about my mom

Interviewer: Why’s that?

Shaliah: Just talking like if somebody talks bad about my mom I get really mad

Interviewer: mm hmm.

Shaliah: I don’t know what it is or nothing. I just get really mad.

Interviewer: Is you mom really close to you, really special to you? [pause] Um, do you feel like if someone attacked your mom they’re attacking part of you?

Shaliah: Yeah cuz me and my mom are close.

Interviewer: My mom’s my best friend. Is your mom your best friend?

Shaliah: [nods]

Interviewer: I find that with a lot of people. A lot of girls. Their mom’s their best friend.

Shaliah: With dads they like don’t know what to say or nothing

Interviewer: Yeah. Moms are always right. If someone did attack your mom in a rumor, what would your response be?
Shaliah: I’d get really really mad. Cuz when I was in fifth grade there was this girl that talked about my mom and had made me so mad where I had to stay in the principal’s office for an entire week cuz I would not get over it. And then just kept telling my other friends I got this thing and she wanted to fight me and everything else. And then when my mom and my dad found out about it they had to come up to the school and the girl’s grandma came back and I’m the one she didn’t [inaudible] because I’m black and stuff like that. And that made me mad too.

Interviewer: So the other girl was white? Or..

Shaliah: yeah

Interviewer: that’s terrible

Shaliah: And me and that girl used to be really close friends. But her grandma never just liked me

Interviewer: Um, so, would you—would you like spread a rumor about that girl, would you confront that girl? Something like that, if she happened to attack your mom?

Shaliah: What girl?

Interviewer: Fight her, or?

Shaliah: We did end up fighting.

Interviewer: Yeah, you did? Like fists, or like biting, kicking, on the floor?

Shaliah: yeah

Interviewer: Um, so was there a lot of blood and stuff?

Shaliah: No

Interviewer: ok. Pulling hair?

Shaliah: Yeah she tried that on me
Interviewer: uh huh? Um, if one of your friends told you to your face that she didn’t want to be friends anymore, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor? Or would a rumor be more hurtful?

Shaliah: if she spread the rumor

Interviewer: Why is spreading a rumor more hurtful?

Shaliah: Because it could be something that’s not true. Or it could be true but she just wanted to [mumble]

Interviewer: Then um, is it also about everybody knowing, that makes it hurtful?

Shaliah: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? But face to face with just you and her…if you were face to face and she said she didn’t want to be friends anymore, what would you do?

Shaliah: Um, well I could deal with really little things. Like, I wouldn’t want to be friends with her. But like if she like gets mad and she says you know I don’t want to be friends anymore, I’ll be like “fine”

Interviewer: Yeah? It just depends on the relationship I guess? But you wouldn’t like do anything vindictive, I mean--

Shaliah: No

Interviewer: --to that person at all? Ok, and if she spread a rumor would you be more likely to do something mean in response? Because it was more hurtful?

Shaliah: Well I think that it depends on what the relationship is and if the rumor spread to other people.

Interviewer: Yeah? What kinds of things would a girl have say or do to you or about you in order for you to retaliate?
Shaliah: Well one, talking about my mom.

Interviewer: Right.

Shaliah: And then there’s this girl talking about my dad [mumble] and just talking about my dad…

Interviewer: Family’s really important? Is it the like most important thing in your life?

Shaliah: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? What would be second?

Shaliah: um, [pause] don’t know

Interviewer: [laughs] cuz family’s just so important?

Shaliah: yeah

Interviewer: Um, and if someone did talk about your family, what would you do? Tell me--kinda something we talked about a little earlier, but…

Shaliah: Well I think it’s like how deceptive that person is….I think just like how like, saying like something about the car you ride in or something, I really wouldn’t care.

Interviewer: Ok. Would a rumor be more hurtful anyway though?

Shaliah: Yeah. But something like that I wouldn’t care.

Interviewer: How much would someone have to talk about those little things before you thought ok, this is enough?

Shaliah: Um, at least probably five or four

Interviewer: Ok. Do you have a lot of major bullying, conflicts arise out of big issues like talking about family or a lot of the little things like the shoes you’re wearing, the clothes you’re wearing, the car?

Shaliah: the big things
Interviewer: The big things more so? In your school, in your experience?

Shaliah: yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? Do you think that happen a lot to people? People always end up in fights or do most of them fizzle out?

Shaliah: fights

Interviewer: Yeah? How many times do you have fights in school?

Shaliah: Well in middle school and stuff like that I had a fight like seven times.

Interviewer: Wow. Throughout all of middle school?

Shaliah: [nods]

Interviewer: So like how many fights in a month or in a week usually at school?

Shaliah: In a month, at least 25. But that’s a lot of fights

Interviewer: Wow.

Shaliah: And in a week, at least 10.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewer: And do they all end up with blood or…?

Shaliah: [nods]

Interviewer: Wow. So fights usually don’t just like happen, right, they just--?

Shaliah: No they just say something. There’s this boy and um, we’re going out and everything, but there’s this other boy that started talking about his mom and he got mad. And they, he came to the school one day and they just started fightin cuz he was talkin bout his mom.

Interviewer: Wow. Are these fights just between guys or are they between girls?

Shaliah: Girls

Interviewer: Wow. Really?
Shaliah: There’s more girl fights at our school than boys fights.

Interviewer: How do most of them start out?

Shaliah: The girls tell like the secrets and stuff. [pause] But we did have like a couple of boy girl fights. [pause]

Interviewer: Ok.

Shaliah: And then one where there was two girls and this boy he told this girl that she had a pretty ring…Snickers she didn’t and he was going to hit her in the face so she had a ring on the next day. So the two girls, neither one of them broke it up, the Snickers, so he got mad and he pushed one of the girls down and broke her arm.

Interviewer: Wow.

Shaliah: Cuz he stomped on her arm

Interviewer: Over a Snickers?

Shaliah: Cuz the girl [mumble]

Interviewer: Wow. So what do you this about all this? The gossiping, the telling secrets, and fighting? Do you thinks it’s, it is what it is so you deal with it? Or do you think that it’s stupid or that it’s kinda fun?

Shaliah: I think that it’s stupid.

Interviewer: Stupid?

Shaliah: Just because like if you get mad at somebody doesn’t mean you should tell their secrets.

Interviewer: Yeah. If you were gonna spread a rumor would it probably be something about someone’s secret? Or something else, just like a fake story?

Shaliah: a fake story
Interviewer: Yeah? Ok, cool. Um, have you had any recent conflicts with your friends lately? Just like the story you were telling me earlier?

Shaliah: Um, well my one friend got mad at me because she liked this boy that I’m going out with now. He asked me out before she asked him out so she got mad that we’re going out.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you think a lot of fights happen over boys?

Shaliah: uh huh

Interviewer: Yeah? Do more fights happen over boys than over all the little things, or shoes and clothes and cars and grades—whatever?

Shaliah: no

Interviewer: No? It’s all kinda even?

Shaliah: Yeah

Interviewer: Ok. Do a lot of the big conflicts, do they arise out of talking about other people’s families, or, what are the big conflicts usually about?

Shaliah: Probably families.

Interviewer: Yeah? So it’s pretty common in school, like everyone really cherishes their family?

Shaliah: mm hmm

Interviewer: Ok, well that’s really all that I wanted to talk about. Do you have any other thoughts about like conflicts with girlfriends, how you, how you fight with each other, how you retaliate? That you think I should know?

Shaliah: Um, like if it’s between a girl and a girl, they end up fist fighting.

Interviewer: Ok. Great, thank you so much.
Interviewer: So the first thing I want to talk to you about is uh, just to make sure you understand this idea of social aggression. It’s a word that people have been talking about lately and if I use that word I want you to understand what I’m talking about. It’s any kind of behavior that seeks to damage social standing or social status or self esteem. So, if you see a popular girl at school and you don’t want her to be popular anymore, you might spread a rumor about her and that might not make her popular anymore. Something kind of like that. Usually it can include things like gossip, spreading rumors, um, rolling your eyes and saying “whatever,” you know—
Chrissy: Talking behind your back?
Interviewer: Talking behind your back exactly. Trying to get people not to be friends with this other person anymore. Anything like that can be considered social aggression. So, um, do you understand what that means like if I say that word? Ok. We’re totally on the same page, which is awesome. Cool, so, and now what year are you in school?
Chrissy: uh, fifth
Interviewer: You’re in fifth grade, so are you 11?
Chrissy: Yeah.
Interviewer: That was a good year for me. Are you enjoying it so far?
Chrissy: mm hmm.
Interviewer: Yeah?
Chrissy: I don’t like my school teacher. She’s evil.
Interviewer: Why?
[interuption, had to show another kid where the bathroom was]
Interviewer: So you were talking about your teacher?
Chrissy: Yeah cuz my third grade teacher was more…ok, I’m just gonna start with one thing and that could go into details and I could talk for hours and hours about this. Um, every year the third graders do the juice box derby.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Chrissy: We bring in juice boxes and we like made em into race cars. And we race. She said that we were too mature for that so we didn’t get to do that.

Interviewer: hmmm

Chrissy: But everybody always talks about do you remember juice box derby and we’re like yeah, we didn’t get to do that.

Interviewer: That sucks, that’s too bad. Maybe you can make a juice box car today and have your own race and be like, totally won.

Chrissy: [laughs]

Interviewer: That’d be cool. Well awesome. Well hey, I uh have a couple of questions for you, so we can probably just get started. Um, so I talked a little bit about this idea of social aggression right and just to make sure what I think is social aggression is what you think is social aggression and to make sure it actually exists, my first question is: when girls get angry at their friends, do you think they do socially aggressive things?

Chrissy: Well, um, mostly, ok uh scratch that. Yes and no, it depends on what kinda person it is.

Interviewer: Ok

Chrissy: If it’s one of my friends, then yes.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Chrissy: Yeah. But not as bad as like—we don’t really talk about em behind our backs we just kinda give em the cold shoulder.
Interviewer: Yeah?

Chrissy: And don’t talk to them

Interviewer: Yeah?

Chrissy: Just kind of until the other person apologizes, but I mean you shouldn’t apologize you know…

Interviewer: Yeah? So other than like giving the cold shoulder and things like that, what other kinds of things do girls do when they get angry at their friends?

Chrissy: Well there’s this one girl, who’s decided to give the cold shoulder. She’ll like uh—I don’t know how to explain it. Her name’s Danielle and she’s, she’s like…but um she, she’ll spread rumors, pretty much, the social aggression thing. She’ll try to get people against you, get on her good side and whatever. Like that.

Interviewer: Sure. How does she uh go about that usually? Getting people against them and things like that?

Chrissy: Well, first um, I don’t know like some like popular—we’re in different classes this year, but last year what she would do is she would like she would start—there’s two boys and Nate and Tariq. Yeah, and she would start by pretending to whisper. And then, so…

Interviewer: She whispered to the two boys?

Chrissy: Yeah and then she’d be like [whisper noises] and like they were gonna play with her, but then they were like nothing and they’d walk away. You know, stuff like that. And she’s I don’t know, I don’t know. I haven’t spoken [mumble] strongly.

Interviewer: Hm. So how do you, how do the girls who are hurt by social aggression respond usually?
 Chrissy: Um, well if it’s me I would just like—ok. I, you know, if it were me, with Nate and Tariq, one of us, like one of my best friends so really they’d keep it from me and then they’ll end up not true friends, so really, I don’t know, you know? If it were my best friend Abby she would like cry and stuff. She wouldn’t like it at all. Me, I’d just kinda ignore it.

Interviewer: It sounds like you have been a victim of social aggression then. In the fairly recent past, right?

Chrissy: yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? What was, what happened, who was there, can you think of a specific instance where…yeah?

Chrissy: This make take a little while.

Interviewer: That’s fine! Take your time. It’s perfectly, it’s great so…all the details you can think of

Chrissy: Ok. Well in the middle of last year I became friends with a girl named Olivia. She was like, one of my best friends. She was awesome. She was totally like me, wasn’t into boys, like stuff like that. And then one day um, yeah Andrew sent her a note that said she like blank. And like what do you mean? And like blah blah blah. And they like started “going out.” [with quote gesture] Which is really stupid but…and so she was like, I was like, um, Olivia, didn’t you just say blah blah blah, and she was like, “oh you know, but blah blah” and so it just it kind of like…like when you get poison ivy and you scratch and it makes it worse. And she kept lying to me all year. And then so a little bit toward the end she started getting Nate and Tariq on her side and they--I don’t know, I don’t know just—and then well, she would just talk about me like, behind my back and stuff. Um, so yeah, it hurt. It hurt.

Interviewer: Did you know she was going to do this?
Chrissy: And one of the lies was something like, it changed every time she scratched at it it would change. The lie. The first lie was “I just wanted to be like you and wanted you to accept me.” If you noticed, I accept anybody as my friend, and then, and then it turned into “Well I just kind of changed my mind.” And so know, so on. Eh. We just kind of wave at each other in the hall now.

Interviewer: So you mentioned that it felt really bad. Can you explain just a little bit more about how you felt?

Chrissy: Uh, I felt like punching her in the mouth. Is that ok?

Interviewer: Yeah that’s fine.

Chrissy: Punching her in the mouth and that sometimes I just wanted to slip into a hole and go away. Or push her in a hole and go away. I don’t know.

Interviewer: How often did this happen? Where she would you know lie to you or say something and you’d get upset, you know, that cycle of things, how often did that happen?

Chrissy: Every time she would apologize and then I would catch her lying. Pretty much every week.

Interviewer: So like a year that went on?

Chrissy: Uh actually, a little bit like a quarter of the year.

Interviewer: Ok.

Chrissy: Not very long. Maybe not even that, a short time. I don’t even know when it started. [pause] Ok it might have been in March. Uh no, no, scratch the quarter of a year. It was only two months.

Interviewer: And where are Andrew and Tariq now? Are they still your friends?
Chrissy: Uh, Tariq is my friend kind of. We don’t really hang out cuz we’re in different classes. Andrew’s in my class. I think he’s under the impression that we’re best friends [mumble]. But it won’t be turning out [mumble] what happened to Nate. Did I?

Interviewer: No.

Chrissy: Alright. My best friend, one of my best friends Tyler—there’s a new kind of [mumble] and his best friends, well Tyler is best friends with them also. And they’re bullying him to choose between me and Zach and you know all of them. He’s choosing them. He doesn’t want to be my friend because I’m best friends with Abby. And pretty much because no one likes Abby, that they’re, I don’t know, it’s just stupid. And I’m just frustrated I don’t know.

Interviewer: So what happened? Like what’s kind of happening with this group, I mean, when someone says something to somebody else what is that conversation like?

Chrissy: Like what do you mean?

Interviewer: Um, do they talk bad about each other is that what usually happens or do they spread a rumor or do they give cold shoulders or do they do the eye roll, some kind of nonverbal message that we don’t really think we should be friends with you, you know what I mean?

Chrissy: Well, not in…it’s mostly girls that do that really. But no…he just kind of like thinks it’s stupid. He, he’s like—today he said you don’t understand you’re not a boy. I know when they’re bullying me. And I’m like [mumble]…and he formerly liked Abby. And um so she started, he asked if they could be boyfriend-girlfriend, and she said no. So he was kind of ticked about that but…eh. [pause] I don’t know he tells me stuff and didn’t want me to tell Abby until like a certain time, and if like, like that he didn’t want to tell Abby that he wasn’t going to be friends with us anymore. I told her though, um, but I didn’t tell her till later on when we talked
about it. He told me not to tell on him and stuff. Even though you know, I should keep his
secrets but still, that’s not right.

Interviewer: hmm

Chrissy: Are you getting where I’m going with this because—

Interviewer: [nods]

Chrissy: Ok, because sometimes I just start talking about other stuff.

Interviewer: No you’re totally fine.

Chrissy: Ok good.

Interviewer: So um, kind of going back to that instance you were talking about um

Chrissy: Olivia?

Interviewer: Olivia, yeah and that whole boys liking and trying to stay friends, stuff like that, and
she’s you know, doing all that crazy stuff to you, how did you react? How did you retaliate,
even?

Chrissy: well at first, um, I was just kind of shocked, and so I gave her the cold shoulder and
then later on she just, it got worse and worse. I’m like, “What the heck?!” And a couple of times
I got, ok, this one time that I caught her with a big lie I, I, I don’t remember exactly what it was
but she apologized to me and it went on about a week and then like I caught her—I caught her
and then I was so upset because I thought it had actually ended our fight. But I got so upset I
called her a backstabbing liar, and I yelled to her and I said that I hated her, and I called her a
backstabbing liar. So yeah I reacted.

Interviewer: So you said that to her face?

Chrissy: Yeah. I said it.

Interviewer: On the phone or like actually to her face?
Chrissy: Well last year we had an awesome teacher. And like we would go to the coatroom if we needed to talk about something to our friend. And so I told her I had found out and then I, she tried to shoot her coat thing and I said “NO!” And so that’s how it went. But I started pushing.

Interviewer: Ok. Cool. Have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends?

Chrissy: No. I only did it to Danielle when she was being my friend and I didn’t really do it at all to my, spreading rumor.

Interviewer: So you just like facilitated a rumor?

Chrissy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. Um, have any of your friends ever done socially aggressive things to other people?

Chrissy: Other people…well, Danielle. [laughs] She’s a victim of that thing, but she like is also, what would you call it, if you start it?

Interviewer: An aggressor?

Chrissy: Yeah. An aggressor. She’s also an aggressor. Well now she’s a victim, but…

Interviewer: How does she aggress towards people?

Chrissy: The eye roll…pretty much everything. The eye roll, rumors, talking behind your back, you know. Pretty much the whole thing

Interviewer: Can you think of a specific instance where she aggressed toward someone or like a story that kind of encompasses those elements?

Chrissy: Um, I can, yeah, but I can, yes. Um, I can’t tell you exactly what started it but it was between Abby and Danielle. And I think it was over Tariq, to be…yeah, stupid. It was over Tariq and um, well, it started Friday and Danielle started doing the eye roll thing and then one
day she backed Abby up against a brick wall and like kneed her in the stomach. I was like
“Danielle, what the heck?!” And then um, so they got in a big argument after that.

Interviewer: Did Abby like Tariq, is that the deal?

Chrissy: I think Abby thought he was cute and then later on, to get Abby back, Danielle decided
to be boyfriend and girlfriend with Tariq, and I think that maybe that really ticked her off.
Because, I can’t really explain. I just have no like, really, I can’t relate to any of this. But like
the boy and girl stuff. But I think later on the year Abby started liking him, and she thought he’d
like him, or her, whatever. And so when Danielle did that joke, she got real ticked.

Interviewer: So she didn’t really have feelings for Tariq at all? She just wanted to…?

Chrissy: Yeah…

Interviewer: Hm.

Chrissy: And all these girls--Abby and Danielle they were all new last year.

Interviewer: ok.

Chrissy: Is this thing on, is it rolling?

Interviewer: Yep, it’s pretty quiet.

Chrissy: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, has anything happened since with Danielle at all or with any of these other girls,
like has there been any cycle of retaliation at all between them?

Chrissy: No. They’ve been separated.

Interviewer: It ended?

Chrissy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. If--

Chrissy: Just the two girls
Interviewer: Oh, do you want to talk about it a little more?
Chrissy: No not really. Because, we were only in fourth grade.
Interviewer: [laughs] alright. If one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful to you and why?
Chrissy: Uh, ok. If somebody spread a rumor about me, you know, I’m not really sure. Uh, what would be most hurtful? [pause] Well…I can’t think of this, I’ve never thought about it. Um, that, can we come back to this?
Interviewer: Yeah sure.
Chrissy: Ok.
Interviewer: We’ll probably come back to something like that in a minute anyway. So just think about it. If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t going to be your friend anymore or something kind of along those lines, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor?
Chrissy: um, no.
Interviewer: So a rumor would actually be more hurtful?
Chrissy: Yes. Because that’s just kinda, its, I mean like, saying like I don’t want to be your friend anymore, or something along those lines, it’s just, I mean, it’s pretty much their loss. It’s hurtful, but like, it’s your fault. To say like I don’t want to be your friend anymore, it’s kinda like babyish, cuz that’s what little kids say.
Interviewer: How would you respond in a situation where someone said to your face I don’t wanna be your friend anymore?
Chrissy: Well, I might say your loss, and, I’d say your loss and I might like ask them why and then if it was something stupid, like they didn’t like my hair or something, I’d say, ok, and then
I’d probably go home and cry. It’d be upsetting but then I’d get over it the next day. I don’t know. That’s never happened to me either. You’re asking me questions that have never happened before. That’s ok.

Interviewer: Do you think you would ever retaliate against her at all? Like, spread a rumor, try to get other people to not be her friend or…?

Chrissy: Uh—

Interviewer: Something like that?

Chrissy: It depends on what the situation is. Cuz like if it’s something that’s bad or stupid, then, I might. It just depends. It really just depends. Most of the time I’d just do what I said.

Interviewer: What would be like a situation where you would definitely retaliate against her and try to get other people not to be her friend?

Chrissy: Well like kinda like it one situation, they she gathered people behind my back cuz they thought I was, they were in a group and then they thought I was out, because like, if it was just a girl, like we were close and whatever, um, then I would probably retaliate uh, I would because, you know, those are probably the group of my best friends. Or were my best friends, because I would probably have I have some other friends, back up friends I guess. You would call it. And I have friends that would be behind me always, except today.

Interviewer: What happened today?

Chrissy: Eh…it’s kind of stupid but it was weird. And there’s this girl in class named Maggie. And she like um, she like, she number one was a very bad liar, and number two, she’ll say stuff and try to sugarcoat things that she says. Um, and, I I don’t know what she wants. But um, like, today, me and Abby we had homework help because the teacher is weird, uh, we had something that we didn’t bring in and so I was like ok. And it was a picture. I brought it in but I had lost it.
And I, somebody took it or something. And it was an original so my mom got really mad and I asked her today if I could have a little extra time and she was like, “Yeah but you’ll still have 5 points taken off of it. And so I was like what, 5 points per day?” And she was like “I told you yesterday that you could go look in the magazines and find a new picture” and I’m like “I don’t remember that.” And she’s like, “Yeah, and you had all night to look for another a new picture.” Yeah, I could remember that. But, today I got another picture and it’s a really cool picture actually. And I wrote everything in time for the presentation. But I finished my spelling, so yeah. And then, she’s, I still had one more tale but I nothing to do with homework, I, it was just stupid. Um, but yeah, she left out ten minutes to kind of finish other stuff and so uh, I would, me and Abby went over to the tunnel where we found Maggie, with Tariq, Kristin, and Madison. And I’ll tell you what. Kristin and Madison—Madison’s like one of my best friends since like first grade. And they were all talking in tone and laughing at one another. We came in and were like “Hi guys!” And they’re like “AHHHH” and they stopped talking abruptly and just ran off. And I was like, “ok” and so we just kinda followed em. And we kind of just like, how would you say, I’m very…curious, I’ll just say, that I’m very curious of other people what’s going on and so I can actually laugh cuz uh, “what are you talking about” and they’re like “nothing.” I’m just like “Madison!” And then later on Madison really like was weird. She was like we just needed some privacy. I was like, “ok,” so we started walking away. And I was like, “you think they’re talking about us?” She was like, “I don’t know, would Madison do that?” “I don’t know, would she?” And then, um, [choking up] they started to come closer, and I don’t know, they came over. But Madison didn’t say “we just want some privacy.” Like, like we’re just talking bout something we don’t want you to know, it was more like, we’re talking about something, we don’t want you to know! And um, so uh, it was, so me and Madison, she had this
[mumble] and she remembers about [mumble]…and, she was my best friend, and they started
telling us “NO” and Tariq’s like “[big sigh] fiiine, you can join us.” And we’re like, “well, are
you just saying that cuz, like you know, let us?” or something. I I don’t know, I kind of forget,
but it was pretty much are you just saying that? Because Tariq…and then, she was like “well,”
and we kind of walked away. And then so me and Abby were like really angry. I was mostly
angry at Madison cuz she’s not like that. And then Maggie was like “[whiny voice] Are you still
mad at us? I don’t know what’s wrong.” And stuff like that, and I was like, “you know what’s
wrong!” And I, I don’t really know how to explain it, like I mean just with Maggie, mostly
Maggie, she just like, she will, um, I don’t know if she’ll talk about anybody behind your back, I
don’t know, I just kinda let stuff like that slide, but um, she like, she likes to say stuff like that
and then we care if we’re mad, and she come up to us and be like “are you still mad? You can’t
still be mad about that and blah blah blah.” I’m like, it was two hours ago, why can’t we? And
yeah. Yeah, it hurts, it hurts.

Interviewer: I’m sorry to hear that. Um, going kinda back to the question we talked about
earlier, uh, if one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful
and why?

Chrissy: Have I thought about what might be most hurtful? Or medium hurtful? Ok, one, would
be, it’s kind of stupid but like if I was spreading a rumor about one of my best friends, and that’s
kind of stupid, but yeah. That would be most hurtful. And something, I don’t know, something
that I like somebody, that [mumble]. If only you knew the people I was talking about you would
understand!

Interviewer: [laughs]
Chrissy: or if like, or Manny! Oh god, if, if someone spread a rumor like that I would slap them. Ok, well I’ll just say to you right now, but Manny is not the brightest ball. He’s smart about like science stuff, which is kinda cool, but like number one, he said he threw knives at his mother one time, and last year he acted like a dog the whole time, and I mean I think you have a problem if you wear diapers and he actually goes in them and you can smell them and it’s gross and disgusting, uh yeah. And um, well, I, I, you would just have to know him, I’m sorry. This is, this is probably making it difficult, isn’t it?

Interviewer: You’re giving me a lot of good information, a lot of great detail about these people so I feel like I almost know them.

Chrissy: ok. And he doesn’t, he likes reading which is like ok, but he doesn’t like the participating, at all. Um, at the beginning of the year we did this concentration game in a circle, which we don’t have anymore at all, it goes like “concentration concentration no repeats or..” And I was, and you have to go [makes hand gesture] and you have to say a word of the category that we had at the beginning in 5 seconds max, um, or you could like put in a circle.

Interviewer: Yeah

Chrissy: Well, every time it comes to him, he’ll do [freezes, does nothing]. And we just get mad at him a lot. Because…yeah

Interviewer: And that would be really hurtful, if someone said you liked one of these guys?

They seem to be kind of crazy.

Chrissy: Yes and and Eddie—he wants to be a farmer and like gangster. I think he tries to be a gangster because he thinks that’s how everybody else talks which is not. But he’s just this short weird dude I think girls get really strong with him, which actually [mumble]. And one time he was throwing pine cones at us and like chased after us and um, the bell rang, and he was like “ha
ha you can’t get me” I was like “I thought you said girls weren’t as strong as you.” Like, they are. And then there was this one thing, it was really stupid. Um, he said that, only, meaning me, he said the only person he could probably beat up is Danielle. And um, well, everyone was placing bets, like with money, and like, this is stupid, but I watched anyway. And he forfeited when she picked up a ball. And so, it was stupid. I don’t know, I don’t know. He’s just some weird little dude.

Interviewer: So if someone was spreading a rumor that you either liked Eddie or Manny, how would you respond?

Chrissy: How would I respond?

Interviewer: Yeah, what would you do, what would you feel, what might you do in retaliation/

Chrissy: Ok. What retaliation? Ok, well first, I would like, I would get all the information I could on who spread the rumor and when I found out I would confront them, I would confront them, and if I found out it was one of my friends I’d be like “What the heck?!?”…And if I did do retaliation for that then I would probably do like the cold shoulder eye roll thing, yeah. Can I have another cookie?

Interviewer: Sure help yourself. Would you ever like spread a rumor about that person, or would you try to get people not to be their friend?

Chrissy: No I’m not that kind of friend. I don’t spread rumors.

Interviewer: Ok, cool. Well that’s all I need actually. Unless you have anything else, unless you have any more stories you want to tell me, anything like that?

Chrissy: No, not really.

Interviewer: Ok, well thank you so much!
Laticia, age 16

Interviewer: The definition of social aggression, so if I use that term you know what I’m talking about.

Laticia: mm hmm

Interviewer: But it’s anything that, um, any behavior that someone does that tries to damage your self esteem, social standing, or social status in school, or something like that. It could include gossiping, backstabbing, or even little things like eye rolling and saying whatever. Those kinds of things. I mean it encompasses like this wide range, it could be fighting, like physically violent, anything. Um, so if I toss that term around like you know what I’m talking about right? Social aggression?

Laticia: mm hmm

Interviewer: Ok. Just wanna make sure you understand that. So my first question is just to make sure this stuff really does exist and I’m not just talking out of my head, um, when girls get angry at their friends, do you think they do socially aggressive things?

Laticia: mm hmm

Interviewer: Yeah? What kinds of things do they do to each other when they’re angry?

Laticia: Talk about each other behind each other’s backs or fight or phone, prank call em

Interviewer: Ok. Um, how do the girls who are hurt by social aggression respond? So when somebody prank calls or gossips how do the girls—

Laticia: Well—

Interviewer: --respond?

Laticia: How I respond, is I have a slight temper. I tend to cuss a lot, and I get angry quickly. Or sometimes I’ll just keep all my stuff bottled up in.
Interviewer: Ok. Do you ever uh, take it out on somebody else? Like if somebody hurts you do you ever try to spread a rumor about someone else just because it’ll make you feel better?

Laticia: No. I just hold it in.

Interviewer: Just hold it in? Ok.

Laticia: Cuz when it all comes out it’s bad.

Interviewer: What happens when it all comes out, when you explode?

Laticia: I tend to get in trouble

Interviewer: Yeah?

Laticia: I’ll throw things, knives, spoons, I don’t care.

Interviewer: Yeah? At school, at home?

Laticia: At home. At school I just tend to cuss a lot. Every curse word you can imagine I said it.

[laughs]

Interviewer: [laughs] Um, have you ever been a victim of social aggression?

Laticia: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? Uh, how, what exactly happened?

Laticia: It ain’t happened in a while.

Interviewer: Yeah? That’s good.

Laticia: I don’t know, cuz it was like in middle school

Interviewer: Ok.

Laticia: Me and my friends used to argue and stuff like that. We used to fight each other and [mumble]. We called each other every name in the book.

Interviewer: Hm.

Laticia: We’d call each other and be like hey, word keep it yeah!
Interviewer: So are you pretty face to face about it if someone’s buggin you or—

Laticia: Yeah

Interviewer: --you’ll confront em right away?

Laticia: [nods]

Interviewer: You don’t do a lot of the gossiping or…

Laticia: [shakes head]

Interviewer: No? Do any of your friends or anyone you know at school?

Laticia: [shakes head]

Interviewer: No? Ok. Um, can you recall any specific instance, even if it was like a small thing that happened with you and your friend? Kinda what happened, who was there?

Laticia: Me and my friends we ain’t like that. If it was me, me and my cousin Sharise and my friend Briona we would just argue till we got kicked outta class.

Interviewer: You get, you’d argue in the middle of class, or

Laticia: Like we’d just look at each other and start arguin’ and get kicked outta class. But we get detentions and stuff. And everybody was [mumble]…

Interviewer: Ok so when you were arguing you were just messin around?

Laticia: Yeah

Interviewer: You weren’t really angry at each other? Was there ever a time when someone was spreading a rumor about you, and--?

Laticia: [shakes head]

Interviewer: No? That’s cool. Um, how, if you ever think about those times where you have maybe been some kind of victim of social aggression, how did you retaliate?

Laticia: Um, I don’t know.
Interviewer: That’s ok, if you’ve never heard a rumor…Do ever have problems taking the blame for stuff?

Laticia: Yeah. Every day. Regularly. You could argue over a penny.

Interviewer: Really? They drive you crazy?

Laticia: Ugh…I got four brothers and four sisters. And me. Me and my younger sister live together and then the other two, agh, the other three, one of em’s gone and the other two live with their grandma. We’re all separated.

Interviewer: Do you ever have problems with your sisters?

Laticia: My younger sister. That’s about it. Me and my two, two—I’m older than them, we get along very well. There’s some things I ain’t know about her and she ain’t know about me.

Interviewer: What would happen if they found out? Or if she found out about some of those things? Do you think it’d be bad, or…

Laticia: Yeah she’d run and tell my grandma.

Interviewer: Yeah? Would she run and tell anyone at school?

Laticia: No.

Interviewer: No? Cool. Is she just really loyal like that? Or why do you think she wouldn’t tell anybody, your secrets?

Laticia: Who my younger sisters?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Laticia: I don’t know, she probably do but I just don’t know about it. I don’t really—we don’t really talk, cuz we don’t have any sisterly bond, we always fight.

Interviewer: Yeah? Do you have any close friends that you have that bond with?
Laticia: Uh, Sharise, is one of my best best friends, but we turn on, cuz we been friends since we be 9 or 10. We been friends since the third grade. And then she moved.

Interviewer: Oh, I’m sorry. Did anyone try to get between you and Sharise, ever?

Laticia: It would be like other friends, like she would be talking to me and other friend would come in try to talk to her, and like, you just cut off my conversation. That’s most of my friends, but other than that, no.

Interviewer: No, did you ever approach these people face to face and say excuse me, what are you doing, or did you just get angry—

Laticia: Angry, yeah

Interviewer: And talk about it later?

Laticia: Yeah but I’d say it in front of em. I just don’t talk to you, you mess with me.

Interviewer: What happens usually when you say what you feel right away?

Laticia: They just look at me like I’m crazy.

Interviewer: Do they ever talk bad about your behind your back, or?

Laticia: Yeah, and I confront em over it and they be like no I ain’t say that, and they be like lie, so I be like whatever. They off their hook and I—but they end up being my friend.

Interviewer: So you end up becoming friends again, usually?

Laticia: mm hmm. Cuz I always forgive my friends. If you look back on it, you be like it was real dumb, arguin over stupid stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yeah, none of those little things have ever escalated into anything to the point where--?

Laticia: [shakes head]
Interviewer: No? Well that’s good. Um, I got lost…if one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful to you and why?
Laticia: I don’t know
Interviewer: No? Have you ever done something socially aggressive to one of your friends?
Laticia: No.
Interviewer: Have any of your friends ever done something socially aggressive to someone? Even the little things like we were talking about?
Laticia: Talking about each other? Yeah
Interviewer: Yeah
Laticia: That’s about it.
Interviewer: That’s about it? Does anyone ever roll their eyes and say, get an attitude, or--?
Laticia: Except for my friend Sharise, she, she don’t, she likes to fight it. She fights.
Interviewer: Like physically? With—
Laticia: Yeah
Interviewer: --hands, feet, stuff like that?
Laticia: Yeah, she’ll fight you over anything. If you say something bad about her, she, and then she’ll let you do it for a while, but when she gets tired of it, she’ll fight you. She probably will. You’s gonna bang it out for like, a while.
Interviewer: And then what usually happens?
Laticia: Nothing
Interviewer: Nothing?
Laticia: So she don’t just, she never did fight in school. We always fought outside of school. And away from the property cuz you can get arrested for that.
Interviewer: How come you guys are more interested in fighting with your hands or instead of words, you know?

Laticia: I have no clue.

Interviewer: No?

Laticia: That is, I don’t know.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Laticia: We been like that the two of us since she was little.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Laticia: Never, she don’t talk it out, she just fights.

Interviewer: Awesome, um, uh, try to recall one of those times where, maybe Sharise, or one of your friends was like trying to retaliate against someone, who was there, what happened, why did she react that way?

Laticia: I don’t know

Interviewer: Yeah? Can’t think of a time when anybody would do that.

Laticia: mm [tone of “no”]

Interviewer: No? Ok. Um, uh, we talked a little earlier about what kind of rumor would be most hurtful and why, but you couldn’t think of anything that someone could say that would really rock you, you know, to the point where you like can’t deal with it.

Laticia: I have no clue.

Interviewer: No? Anything about like you or your family or your grades or anything like that—

Laticia: Actually, uh actually I’ve told people that year I got…I be after everybody, I don’t care cuz I don’t like that class but then, I just say whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah? You just throw yourself out there?
Laticia: mm hmm

Interviewer: All the time? You’re not afraid of being rejected or anything or?
Laticia: No.

Interviewer: That’s good. Uh, if one of your friends told you to your face she wasn’t going to be your friend anymore, or something kind of along those lines, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor about you?
Laticia: No cuz I be like I don’t wanna be yo friend either, bye!

Interviewer: [laughs] Would spreading a rumor actually be more hurtful if you found out about it through another person?
Laticia: I would be mad, I would be sad, but then I’m a have to say that I would bang it out wich you. I’m a have to fight you. Mmm basically you supposed to be my friend. I’m supposed to trust you. You can trust me but you no friend if you gonna spread a rumor about me that you know deep down inside wasn’t true. That’s on you. That is on you. Do what you do.

Interviewer: Yeah?
Laticia: [mumble]

Interviewer: [laughs]. Um, how would you respond? If, if that happened, that someone told you face to face that..?
Laticia: They would get punched in the mouth.

Interviewer: Punched in the mouth?!
Laticia: Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow. Nothing else?
Laticia: Then, then we start fightin.

Interviewer: In the middle of school?
Laticia: Yep.


Laticia: Even though you get in trouble for it afterwards, I don’t know. They started it--

Interviewer: Are you scared of getting in trouble at all?

Laticia: No.

Interviewer: Why’s that?

Laticia: Cuz when I was in middle school I was in detention everyday. I don’t know. I’m used to it. But I haven’t been in trouble since middle school. [pause] I I was like, since I got to high school I been more mature. But when I was in middle school, boy, I was like real stupid. And I was, I was bad news.

Interviewer: What made you, what made you wanna be so angry?

Laticia: I don’t know man. It was, just things that people say cuz I had a, I had a more things to take out. When you get smart with me I just have to take it out. I don’t care if you’re an adult or not. I don’t care. But that’s what gets me in trouble. Because I been with everyone but my mom. I don’t care if you’re not touching me, I don’t care if you are touching me, I make sure you never touch me again. And then my grandmom be like why you do that in front of me? I be like no, they started it, they tried to say something to me and like they know I got a slight temper and I don’t play that. No, I don’t do that.

Interviewer: How often do you usually get angry?

Laticia: oooh. About…I would say everyday.

Interviewer: Every day? What do people do that make you angry?

Laticia: I don’t know…hmm…if you’re buggin me, if I’m doin somethin, I could be doin that and then if I’m sittin up in my room, but I don’t wanna be bothered, why you botherin me? That’s
annoying and frustrating. But I don’t really associate with my family no more. I’m tired of that, I don’t talk to them. I just, when I get home I be like hi how was your day and that’s it. And I just go right upstairs. And lock my door. And they get so mad. Cuz they don’t—they wanna know what’s happening, but there’s stuff they don’t need to know. They don’t know what I like to do. They know one thing, is I like to sing and that’s it.

Interviewer: What do you like to sing?

Laticia: I like R and B and my favorite singer is Aaliah. That is my favorite …[inaudible mumble]

Interviewer: So you just like usually to be by yourself--

Laticia: mm hmm

Interviewer: and if someone is infringing on it that’s when you get angry?

Laticia: mm hmm

Interviewer: Yeah?

Laticia: But they get mad like, why don’t you wanna spend time with us too? I’m wanna stay in my room. I’m lazy, I don’t like to be messed with around people, like if I’m at home I’m cool with it, and you’re just sitting there y’all watchin me, that bugs me, and I and I I will I’m leavin and say bye bye, and I’m by myself And “how long you gonna gone?” Like [mumble].

Interviewer: K. Cool. Uh, what kinds of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

Laticia: If, I would have to…you can say anything you want to say. Don’t talk about my family. You can say anything you want about me. Don’t talk about my mom, my dad, my grandma, my brothers and sisters. I don’t know. Don’t talk about that.

Interviewer: Yeah? What makes you really upset about that?
Interviewer: I don’t know maybe I’ve…always been like that ever since I was a little girl. Cuz my father has never been there. I will always, ever since I was little. He’s like the in and out of prison-type. And my mom she she’s there, but she’s not there. Like I see her but I don’t talk to her. There’s stuff she don’t even know about me. And it’s like after all my mother’s been through, my dad has never been there; my mom has never been there; and I’ve lived with my grandma for about three and me and her don’t get along, and that’s what makes me mad. Like I’ve known you for my whole entire life, and I been livin since I was three, and there’s things you don’t even know.

Interviewer: What would make it, what do you wish you would have done to get close to you, or what do you think about your relationship you think could have been different?

Laticia: I don’t know I guess I’m just like, I don’t like being around, I don’t care, I don’t like bein around a whole buncha people.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Laticia: I think that’s like if we have a reunion I say hi to everyone how you doin. But then I’m like get outta my face. I don’t like it.

Interviewer: Is your family like the most important thing in your life, you think, or?

Laticia: mm hmm, I would say so.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Laticia: They’re….yeah they’re very important. I love em dearly. And I say things I don’t really mean. Like me and my sister Leah, we, we’re, we don’t, we’ve met each other three times in our lives. That’s it. How do you think she feels, and we’ve obviously separated, and I’ve found out stuff about her occupation that I never knew. Like wow, I did not know that. And everybody’s mad at me cuz I think it’s wrong. She She does basically—I don’t know what it is, [mumble]
and I always took up for her, but I won’t. But Kenya, I love her dearly, that’s my sister. I look up for her, but I don’t associate myself like that. We like water and oil, we do not mix. Like, we could argue over a chair. It don’t matter. Nah, like I would say….and my brother, my older brother we don’t, we know each other but we never met. Like my first time calling him was about…I had his number from the green book and I just took it and called him. Didn’t know what to think, that’s my older brother! That’s the oldest and we ain’t never known each other. It’s just a phone call. So I called him and he was like wow, this is so shocking, and we just laughed. Like I [mumble]…we’re very close. Even though we don’t, I don’t know what you look like, all I know is we’s brothers and sisters and if, we’re very close. Like when I first called him, I totally though he was gonna be like, I’m like man, he’s not gonna pick up, he’s probably gonna be like who’s this, like I don’t know you, know what I’m sayin, something, and I called him and I was like Quincy and he’s like who’s this, and like I was like Crystal, this is, uh, Crys’ fourth child. He was like wooooow. We just clicked. From the first time I spoke with him. And we call each other everyday.

Interviewer: That’s awesome. So if someone said something about like your family you would get real upset, right?

Laticia: mm hmm, very upset. Like, but I keep, but I wouldn’t show it though. When I get upset I don’t show nothin. Ever since I was little. I don’t know why I do that but I just keep it all bottled up in. Then, I like, I don’t know, I talk to myself. I don’t let it out to them I let it out in my room. Maybe by music but, by writing.

Interviewer: What do you write?

Laticia: How what I’m thinkin.

Interviewer: Like short stories or journaling or poetry?
Laticia: mm hmm

Interviewer: Cool.

Laticia: [mumble]

Interviewer: Do you ever, are you ever afraid that if people start attacking your family, they’ll be like attacking you? A part of you?

Laticia: mm hmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, if someone did start attacking your family through a rumor or to your face what would you do?

Laticia: Pick up a brick and hit em with it.

Interviewer: Wow. Really?

Laticia: Really. I don’t, I don’t care if it’s a rock, I’m gonna hit you. [pause] Why everybody around me everyday, sound it’s too violent, I’m not too violent. I’m only violent if you mess with my family, or you mess with me. S’only time.

[pause]

Interviewer: And you’ve never actually had an experience where someone attacked your family ever?

Laticia: When I was younger but I didn’t really, like get it. Like probably whatever. But now if it’s hurtin, like I would try to ignore it but deep down it’s like, that’s not good. To say something about anybody’s family is wrong, I think. Uh I say stuff about people’s families but I only be playin. I say stuff with my friends and we break out we laugh [mumble]

Interviewer: Cool. Is there anything else you want me to know about

Laticia: Is that still ok?
Interviewer: Yeah yeah, about people talking or backstabbin or retaliation at all? Anything in your experience where you’re like oh yeah Interviewer I remember this point?

Laticia: Not really.

Interviewer: Not really?

Laticia: No.

Interviewer: Alright well cool I appreciate it, thanks so much for talking to me.

Laticia: You’re welcome.
Rebecca, age 14

Interviewer: When girls get angry at their friends, do you think they do socially aggressive things?
Rebecca: Um, yeah, I think so. It depends on what they get angry about and how greatly that affects them and what that causes them to want to do something back.

Interviewer: What kinds of things do girls do to each other when they are angry?
Rebecca: Gossip, starting rumors, just, not a lot of confrontation, go behind their backs. Mainly just starting rumors gossiping, turning friends against each other sometimes

Interviewer: How do the girls who are hurt by social aggression respond?
Rebecca: Um, well I guess the way I’ve dealt with that is not to retaliate and do the same thing they did. If someone spread a rumor I wouldn’t do that back. If I was getting ahead in something I would keep doing it. If it kept getting worse, I’d confront the person or talk to an adult about it.

Interviewer: Would you vent to some of your close friends about it?
Rebecca: Yeah I would vent to some of my close friends.

Interviewer: How do you know you can trust them and know they won’t go telling the person you’re venting about what you said?
Rebecca: It’s just knowing who you’re friends with, if they come to you with personal stuff, you can feel safe enough to return the favor and put your trust in them

Interviewer: Have you ever been a victim of social aggression?
Rebecca: Yeah

Interviewer: What happened? Who was there? Where did it happen? How did you feel? How often does this happen?
Rebecca: Um, in seventh grade I switched schools and it was my first year at the school. I was hanging out with my first friend, Sarah. Apparently she didn’t have the best reputation and I wasn’t aware. All the girls were talking about me, and I got sucked into her problems. It was hard because people were talking about me and I was not aware why they were doing it. Everyone wants to have friends and it was rough having girls turn against you and try to turn everyone else against you. They were saying she had a bad reputation of jumping from boy to boy and being promiscuous and using drugs and alcohol and going to parties the cops went to, which wasn’t true, but I just kind of got pulled into that whole scene.

Interviewer: How did you react? Did you retaliate?

Rebecca: At first I was vicious back, just giving each other the stare down, and it just started to affect me. I went home and cried at night, talked to other friends I had who tried to smooth everything out with them (they were friends with some of the girls who were being mean) eventually the school counselor got involved and it got smoothed out.

Interviewer: Were any of those rumors or conflicts brought back?

Rebecca: Some have been thrown back out there, but mostly it was settled, I don’t hear about it as much.

Interviewer: Are you in the same school now?

Rebecca: Yeah.

Interviewer: Have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends?

Rebecca: Um, not intentionally, but I guess I’ve passed along gossip and stuff like that but I’ve never intentionally started a rumor or tried to hurt someone in any way.

Interviewer: Have any of your friends ever done anything socially aggressive to someone else?

Rebecca: Yeah, I’ve witnessed my friends take part in that.
Interviewer: What happened? Who was there? Where did it happen? Why did that person do that to her? What did she do to her before? How did that person feel? Has she done things like this before? How often has this happened since?

Rebecca: It was, we were at a party and one of my friends said she saw a girl making out with a boy who wasn’t her boyfriend and started this rumor about how she was cheating, which wasn’t true, it ended their relationship, which was unfair. I think she might have had a crush on the girl’s boyfriend, but she didn’t go after him afterwards. I don’t know why she started the rumor, she’s started other things before for fun. I’m not really friends with her anymore.

Interviewer: Is the likelihood for social aggression to occur stronger when guys are involved?

Rebecca: There is definitely more likelihood for social aggression with guys, It becomes a lot more sticky when guys get involved, they get in the way.

Interviewer: How did the girl who had the rumor spread about her feel, and how did she respond?

Rebecca: She was really upset because it wasn’t true, she was even more because her boyfriend broke up with her because of that rumor. I feel bad for her that it happened to her. I don’t know how she reacted really.

Interviewer: If one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful to do? Why?

Rebecca: Probably if it had something to do with me involving a guy or something sexually involving a guy, calling me a slut or something. It hurts to be called that, and it’s degrading, especially when it’s not true. It feels like a personal attack and it’s wrong for girls to start rumors about that stuff.
Interviewer: Is female sexuality a big deal to you?

Rebecca: Yeah I would say that.

Interviewer: What would your response be to having a rumor like that spread about you?

Rebecca: I would be deeply hurt by that, and I would talk to my friends about that. They would understand it was just a rumor and hopefully spread the truth and knock that other rumor out there.

Interviewer: If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t going to be your friend anymore or something like that, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor?

Rebecca: A rumor would be more hurtful because it circulates and everyone can hear it, twist it, and re-circulate. It travels and it grows.

Interviewer: How would you respond?

Rebecca: I would just try and figure out why they were feeling that way, try to save the friendship if I could, it sucks to lose a friend, I would try to preserve it as much as I could.

Interviewer: What kinds of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

Rebecca: hmm…Probably again back to if a girl was to call me a slut and spread rumors relating to that, there’s a good chance I could retaliate to something like that if it was a nasty, vile rumor that she spread. I wouldn’t really so much spread a rumor, but maybe find something personal to her and get under her skin in a way that only she would feel it, not necessarily to publicly humiliate her, but do something that would really tick her off.

Interviewer: Tell me about the nature of conflicts, how they start, end, what they’re like?

Rebecca: Girls especially in high school are sometimes downright horrible to each other. Conflicts can start either from something semi-big to flat out starting a rumor or have just a bad
day and saying something that ticks someone off. It can kind of escalate from anything.

Hormones, especially at this time, can escalate something to something really big. Sometimes conflicts can be resolved and friendship won’t be affected, or sometimes friendships end completely and the whole school is divided over who’s friends and it just gets complicated.

Interviewer: Do conflicts ever end up in physical violence?

Rebecca: Not really so much with girls I don’t think as much as it does with guys. Girls are more sneaky and catty about their fighting, they’re not as physical.

Interviewer: Tell me about your school. Are there lots of cliques, are they really well off?

Rebecca: I go to a catholic high school. It’s small; there are 80 kids in my grade. Everyone there is filthy dirty rich except for me and a few others. There’s not as many cliques as public just cuz of the size, but it’s kind of divided by the cool kids, uncool kids (nerds). There’s not a wide variety of kids that go to the school. Compared to public school, it was so vastly different. There were 700 kids in my class, so many cliques. It was more catty, more brutal at public school than at this school.

Interviewer: Despite the fact that there aren’t many cliques, have people tried to work up the social ladder?

Rebecca: At the school I’m at now, cliques aren’t exclusive. If someone wants to sit with us at lunch, cool, but probably we won’t hang out on the weekends. I don’t think we’re miserable, we’re pretty socially happy. In public school, they’d do everything they could, try so hard to be popular and the epitome of what everyone thought to be cool. It’s not as cutthroat at the school I’m at now. Girls tried dying hair, losing weight, changing clothes, anything to be cool.

Interviewer: Is there anything else I should know regarding social aggression, conflicts, or retaliation?
Rebecca: It’s just the golden rule—do unto others as you’d have done unto you. If you’re nice to someone they’ll be nice back, but if you spread a rumor they’ll do the same thing back and it’ll snowball. Two wrongs don’t make a right. It’ll keep growing and growing. That’s basically how the cycle sometimes works.

Interviewer: How do conflicts start? Are people just bored or do they have a legitimate reason?

Rebecca: It’s somewhere in between being bored and having a legitimate reason. I don’t think it’s all because of boredom, could be something small and stupid that starts something.

Interviewer: How do friendships who have just had a conflict negotiate that tension period?

Rebecca: Wait it out and it’ll smooth over, otherwise the friendship won’t be as close. You might hang out less and less eventually you’re just civil to one another to avoid any more conflict. You say hi how are you, but you don’t hang out or go any further than that.
Michelle, age 14

Interviewer: What I am studying for my senior project for my college is social aggression, which is this idea that um mostly girls, sometimes guys but mostly girls will kind of gossip and backstab to get back at each other and try to ruin friendships and stuff like that because they wanna make the other person feel bad or ruin their social status, or if a girl’s popular and they don’t want them to be popular anymore they’ll like knock em down a few pegs um, so does that concept kinda makes sense to you—

Michelle: Yeah.

Interviewer: like if I use social aggression you know exactly what I’m talking about?

Michelle: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok, cool. It can include lots of behaviors like gossiping or backstabbing which I mentioned or it could be something small like rolling your eyes and saying whatever or something along those lines.

Michelle: mm hmm

Interviewer: It’s like, the whole spectrum of stuff. Um, but yeah, you’re cool with that word social aggression, if I use that definition you won’t be like “what?”

Michelle: Yeah we use that definition at school.

Interviewer: Oh yeah? You guys are actually talking about social aggression?

Michelle: Yeah.

Interviewer: That’s cool. What are you guys talking about? I mean it’s great cuz we didn’t have that.

Michelle: I don’t know, we, we just started today.
Interviewer: Oh ok. That’s cool. Um, awesome, well, I have to tell you, I had my own personal experience with social aggression, so that’s why it’s really important for me to talk to people about it because I don’t want anyone to ever have to feel the same way that I felt when I was growing up and I had people telling such vicious rumors about me that I had no one to sit with at lunch. It was bad, so I just wanna make sure, you know, you can be totally open and honest with me, I’ve been there, I know everything about like the worst that it could be, so, feel free to just talk and we’ll have hopefully a good conversation and it’ll help me try to learn a little bit about how people retaliate and stuff like that, which is what I’m looking at. So to make sure I’m not just talking out of my head and you know, making things up, my first question is, when girls get angry at their friends, do you think they actually do socially aggressive things?

Michelle: Sometimes, not all the time.

Interviewer: Ok. Why do you think it’s only sometimes and not all the time?

Michelle: mmm…[pause] It’s because like if your friends get mad at you they could easily get over it cuz they’re bipolar. Or if your friends have ADHD.

Interviewer: When or um, sorry, what kinds of things do girls do to each other when they’re angry?

Michelle: They cuss you out. [laughs] They say I don’t wanna fight you. And if like they’re mad at me they’ll call me and tell me that they’re sorry for yelling at me.

Interviewer: Is it usually pretty face to face

Michelle: Yeah

Interviewer: most of the time?

Michelle: Yeah.
Interviewer: So there’s not a lot of like going through third parties at all? You’re not going to bring like Anna over here and say tell Michelle that she sucks and blah blah blah blah blah. They’re not gonna say that?

Michelle: No.

Interviewer: No? Ok. How do girls who are hurt by social aggression usually respond?

Michelle: Do like, they either walk away or say leave me alone.

Interviewer: Are they usually hurt?

Michelle: Not really—sometimes

Interviewer: Yeah? Most of the time they are just ok with it?

Michelle: [nods]

Interviewer: Have you ever been hurt by social aggression?

Michelle: [sigh] Um, I can’t say I actually have and I can’t say I actually haven’t.

Interviewer: Ok.

Michelle: Cuz when I was little I got beat.

Interviewer: Really. Tell me about that. Do you remember it? Since you were little you might not, but…

Michelle: Yeah I was little.

Interviewer: Yeah. Who was there, what happened?

Michelle: One of my best friends. Me and her were fightin over a cookie or something.

Interviewer: Yeah? And all of a sudden she started fighting you or you started fighting her?

Michelle: Um, her dad started fightin me cuz we were fightin over a cookie, or something, I don’t know.

Interviewer: Um, ok. How did you feel when that happened?
Michelle: I was upset.

Interviewer: Yeah? How often does it happen that you’re hurt by…

Michelle: It don’t happen that often.

Interviewer: No? So how did you react, or retaliate even?

Michelle: I was like nobody loves me and everybody hates me and always like, move away.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you act on any of those feeling at all, like, how did—like, sometimes we talk to ourselves like that--

Michelle: Yeah

Interviewer: and we think oh the world is over--

Michelle: Yeah

Interviewer: It’s terrible. Then what, you know, then what happened because of those feelings?

Michelle: And I, then I had to go to the house screaming and breakin stuff, not gonna lie, I’ll tell the truth.

Interviewer: That’s fine, please do. Did you ever do anything to anybody else?

Michelle: Um

Interviewer: Get em angry or upset?

Michelle: To make my friend upset anymore I never did anything to make a friend upset, ever.

Interviewer: Ever?

Michelle: Never.

Interviewer: That’s good. Did she ever do anything to make you upset?

Michelle: When we were little and we were fightin and she’ll start saying things she don’t mean, but then friends since kindergarten

Interviewer: Wow
Michelle: It happened like in preschool.

Interviewer: That’s a long friendship.

Michelle: Yeah

Interviewer: Um, so you haven’t ever really done something socially aggressive to your friends?

Michelle: No.

Interviewer: Ok…there we go. Have any of your friends ever done something socially aggressive things to someone else?

Michelle: Uh, yeah they have actually because they started to spread some dirty rumors.

Interviewer: Tell me about that, what, what happened?

Michelle: Well…one of my best friends got accused of sleeping with her brother.

Interviewer: Ok. By whom? Who started those rumors?

Michelle: Ryan.

Interviewer: Is that like a guy in class?

Michelle: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And obviously that made her really upset.

Michelle: Yeah it did.

Interviewer: And how did she react?

Michelle: She said y’all need to quit spreading rumors or I’m not gonna be your friend anymore.

Interviewer: And then did she spread another rumor about him or someone else?

Michelle: No she did not.

Interviewer: Did she do anything to react at all to, on anybody else?

Michelle: No. She was angry for a couple of days.

Interviewer: Ok. Did she mostly bottle it up? Or did she talk to you guys about it?
Michelle: Well let’s see, I calmed her down.

Interviewer: How did you do that?

Michelle: Uh, we went to like a big party.

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Michelle: [mumble] Cuz she got to see her cousins she ain’t seen in like seven years.

Interviewer: Cool.

Michelle: I didn’t tell her we were goin there. It was a surprise to her.

Interviewer: Cool. Um, so how often do things like that happen--

Michelle: Not that often

Interviewer: with your friends? No?

Michelle: Not that often

Interviewer: Ok. Um, did she have any other kind of reaction, besides bottling it up and you cheering her up? Was there anything else that happened with her? Especially with this Ryan guy, like did, between them did they fight at all or just..?

Michelle: They got in a little argument, but…

Interviewer: Did it just kinda fizzle away?

Michelle: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did it change the way she approached anything, ever?

Michelle: Uh, not really.

Interviewer: If one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful to you, and why?

Michelle: Well the most hurtful one would be to me is they saying something bad about my dad cuz my dad’s dead.
Interviewer: What about that makes that so terrible to you?

Michelle: Cuz I’ve not had a dad in six years. And I miss my daddy, my daddy used to do everything for me. I was spoiled by my dad.

Interviewer: So he was a huge part of your life?

Michelle: Yeah.

Interviewer: Would he be, is he someone that you would almost kind of associate with the inner part of you?

Michelle: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah?

Michelle: I talk to him everyday. And if we didn’t have like spring break, I’d go to his house the whole spring break. And I visit him every time I go home, cuz after school and then after school my dad’d come get me.

Interviewer: Wow

Michelle: He was supposed to take me bowling in 2002 for my birthday but I had strep throat. That’s the year that he died.

Interviewer: I’m sorry to hear that.

Michelle: That’s ok because one year I had to go down to Kentucky for Christmas and I had to turn around and come back Christmas day cuz they told me that he died.

Interviewer: Oh wow. That’s terrible. I’m sorry to hear that.

Michelle: More questions? [squirms, complains]

Interviewer: There’s just a few more. If someone did say something about your dad, what would your response be?
Michelle: I’d say y’all need to quit spreading rumors and saying bad stuff about my dad or I’m gonna fight you.

Interviewer: Would you actually, like physically fight them--?

Michelle: No.

Interviewer: Or would you..? No? Would you threaten then?

Michelle: Threaten, yeah.

Interviewer: Would you ever spread a rumor about one of them?

Michelle: No I would not.

Interviewer: No? Would ever try to get, um, people to not be their friend anymore?

Michelle: No. I’m not a backstabber.

Interviewer: And no one’s ever actually done that to you before?

Michelle: No.

Interviewer: backstabbed you like that?

Michelle: No.

Interviewer: If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t going to be your friend anymore or something along those lines, would that be more hurtful than if somebody spread a rumor about you?

Michelle: No it wouldn’t be hurtful because that’d get out, they’d cover it up and say “oh I am your friend I’m just playing around.”

Interviewer: Ok. So a rumor would actually be more hurtful?

Michelle: Yeah.

Interviewer: And how would you respond in a situation where someone did say I don’t wanna be your friend anymore, in all seriousness, if they said that?
Michelle: I’d say ah well, I’ll just get, I got plenty more friends. I don’t need you.

Interviewer: Would you ever, would they just kinda fizzle away from your life or would you make sure that nobody else wanted to be their friend either, or?

Michelle: No.

Interviewer: Would they just—

Michelle: Kinda fizzle away. Say I don’t care I don’t need you anymore. [mumble]

Interviewer: What kinds of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

Michelle: I don’t know that one.

Interviewer: No? And what kind of things do you think you would do if somebody said the worst thing they could about you or your dad or your family, or whatever—what would be your retaliation to that?

Um, I don’t know.

Ok. Is there anything else you want to tell me about with girls—

Michelle: Not really.

Interviewer: And the way they? No?

Michelle: I used to be in gymnastics and I used to be in cheerleading.

Interviewer: And you never had any experiences in those where people were--?

Michelle: I don’t tell anybody I’m talented.

Interviewer: No? Are you, why’s that?

Michelle: Cuz I do a lot of stuff in school I’m not allowed.

Interviewer: What do you mean?
Michelle: Like if they ask you to do a back flip and you can’t do it in school cuz there’s not enough room.

Interviewer: Yeah. You’re not afraid of anybody using it against you at all?

Michelle: No. But I was in it all my life. Except I dropped this year cuz it got so full.

Interviewer: Ok. Cool. Well I appreciate it, thanks so much for chatting with me.
Interviewer: Don’t worry not all these questions I’ll ask you. It’s different scenarios for different people, like. So, we’ll skip around a little bit. Um, cool, so first thing I want to uh talk to you about is if I throw this term social aggression around, I want you to know exactly what I mean by that. It’s any behavior that, usually girls, but sometimes guys, will do to friends, or people that they know, try to destroy their reputation, or make them feel bad about themselves or hurt their social status, something like that. So things like gossip and even just rolling your eyes and saying whatever, you know, all these behaviors can be social aggression. Backstabbing, giving the cold shoulder, trying to get people to not be their friend anymore, all these behaviors are lumped under this term social aggression. So if I use this fancy term will you know what I’m talkin’ about?

Chelsea: [nods]

Interviewer: Ok, cool, we’re good then. Um, yeah like I mentioned I had a personal experience in high school with social aggression. It’s something that’s very close to my heart so feel free to just chat open and honestly and we’ll have a good ol’ time so. Um, first thing I want to ask you, so I’m not makin this up, when girls get angry at their friends, you think they do socially aggressive things?

Chelsea: Sometimes.

Interviewer: Sometimes? So like when do they do it and when do they not?

Chelsea: Like when they’re mad at somebody (?)

Interviewer: Ok. And what kinds of things do they do?

Chelsea: Like, like try to push away out of everything.

Interviewer: Push away out of everything?
Chelsea: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do mean by that?

Chelsea: Like if my [mumble] they start shoving me.

Interviewer: Ok. Right to their face?

Chelsea: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything covert that people do? Like talk about somebody behind their back or…?

Chelsea: [nods]

Interviewer: Yeah? [pause] When, obviously some people when they get real riled up they’ll probably push you up and down in your face when they’re really mad, when would they do kind of the less, more that covert kind of social aggression stuff?

Chelsea: I don’t know.

Interviewer: Yeah? Would it be just like little things?

Chelsea: Yeah

Interviewer: Or worse things?

Chelsea: Little

Interviewer: Little things? Ok. Wait, how old are you again?

Chelsea: 12.

Interviewer: 12, oh wow, you’re like a really young seventh grader, you must be really smart, at school.

Chelsea: My mother didn’t think I was in the right grade. But then they came in and measured my capabilities.
Interviewer: Ok wow, that’s cool. I was a really old one. I should be a grade—I should have graduated already. So that’s ok. Oh well. Um, cool. How do girls who are hurt by social aggression usually respond?

Chelsea: Like they won’t talk to anybody.

Interviewer: Do they usually retaliate at all?

Chelsea: mmm I don’t know.

Interviewer: Have you ever been the victim of social aggression?

Chelsea: [shakes head no}

Interviewer: Never? You’re lucky. No one’s ever talked bad about you?

Chelsea: Not that I remember.

Interviewer: Not that you remember? Do you have friends who that’s happened to? What happened, like do you remember a specific instance when that happened?

Chelsea: My friend, she was kinda my friend and she thinks she’s all that and then Reilly came over to her and told her that she wasn’t all that she needed to stop and that she was being mean and stuff.

Interviewer: Oh wow, and then what did she do?

Chelsea: She didn’t do anything.

Interviewer: Did she try to say something bad about the other girl?

Chelsea: [shakes head no]

Interviewer: Ok. How often does stuff like that happen?

Chelsea: Not very often.

Interviewer: Ok. Um, this is where I bounce around and figure out where I have to go…[pause] um, have any of your friends done something socially aggressive to someone else?
Chelsea: mmm one has.

Interviewer: Yeah? You remember what happened?

Chelsea: My friend Reilly she’s in my grade this year. And so Iyanna she goes around and she thinks that she can boss people around and that she’s all that. So when she comes over Reilly she ain’t afraid to tell her she ain’t all that and she need to stop.

Interviewer: Why does the other girl think she’s all that?

Chelsea: [shrugs]

Interviewer: You don’t know? What does she do that makes her think that?

Chelsea: Try to be bossy.

Interviewer: Yeah? Does she, did she ever do anything to Reilly after Reilly said that to her?

Chelsea: uh uh [no]

[pause]

Interviewer: um, if one of your friends-‘scuse me—spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful and why?

Chelsea: Uh…I don’t know.

Interviewer: Don’t know? That’s ok. You can think about it, come back later. Um, if one of your friends told you to your face that she didn’t want to be your friend anymore, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor about the same thing?

Chelsea: No.

Interviewer: No? So a rumor would be more hurtful?

Chelsea: Yeah

Interviewer: Why’s that?

Chelsea: Cuz more people would know, like, and she didn’t know about [mumble]
Interviewer: But it still doesn’t happen a lot at your school that people--

Chelsea: No.

Interviewer: --tell a lot of rumors? How would you describe conflicts in general at your school, conflicts between friends?

Chelsea: mmm [pause] like I don’t know people think that they’re playin around but if they don’t know you’re playin around they go around startin “why y’all trippin” and they be like askin her about it.

Interviewer: Yeah? You can go ahead and keep those. So does that kind of stuff happen a lot?

Chelsea: mmm not really.

Interviewer: There’s generally not a lot of conflicts?

Chelsea: [shakes head no}

Interviewer: That’s cool. So how do people resolve it?

Chelsea: I don’t know.

[both laugh a little]

Interviewer: You don’t know? That’s ok. Um, what kind of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

Chelsea: Like call me names

Interviewer: What kinda names would be most hurtful?

Chelsea: Like cuss words and stuff.

Interviewer: Why would cuss words be most hurtful?

Chelsea: I don’t know.

Interviewer: And if that happened, someone called you a cuss word, what would you do, if that were…?
Chelsea: I don’t know.

Interviewer: Yeah? Would you not be their friend anymore?

Chelsea: No

[pause]

Interviewer: Would you ever get someone to not be their friend?

Chelsea: No.

Interviewer: You don’t care, be like whatever?

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: I don’t even want to deal with you anymore?

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: yeah? Are most people like that at your school?

Chelsea: [Shakes head]

Interviewer: No? What are they like?

Chelsea: Like they with their friends that they talk to and don’t mess with anyone else, that’s like nobody else, like a lot of eighth graders…[mumble]

Interviewer: So are there a lot of different cliques at your school? No?

Chelsea: Well, yeah kinda.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Chelsea: But we’re like, [mumble]

Interviewer: And among the groups that are girls, are they groups that are like three people big or are they usually like five or six?

Chelsea: Five or six.

Interviewer: Ok.
Chelsea: Usually five or six.

Interviewer: How do you know which group you’re a part of, how do you figure out where you fit in?

Chelsea: I don’t know. It’s probably like …

Interviewer: Are most of your friends from school girls you’ve grown up with?

Chelsea: mm mm [no]

Interviewer: Ok

Chelsea: I was supposed to go to one school but I had to get [mumble] and I didn’t know anyone [mumble]. But now I know like everybody in the school.

Interviewer: Ok. How did you get your really close group of friends?

Chelsea: mmm one of the ones I hang out with in my grade, and I hang out with one of em, cuz I have class with em so..

Interviewer: Ok. Do you like do any sports or other extracurriculars? You mostly know em from class?

Chelsea: Yeah.

Interviewer: Like yo, you’re gonna be in my class so we’re gonna be buddies?

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: That’s cool, that’s cool. Do um, have you had an experience where you don’t see some of your old friends as much anymore because you don’t take the same classes?

Chelsea: Mm hmm

Interviewer: How do you, how do you work that out, like, do your friends get upset or?

Chelsea: One of my friends um like this one girl at the beginning of the year. Now she has like everything in front of me so we just hang out at lunch.
Interviewer: Yeah? That works out pretty well?

Chelsea: Yes.

Interviewer: You guys chat, talk about your day. Do you guys talk about other people? At lunch at all?

Chelsea: No

Interviewer: No? Just talk about what’s goin on at school?

Chelsea: Yeah

Interviewer: That’s cool. Um, awesome. I’ll just go back to that question real fast that you’ve had a chance to think about. If somebody spread a rumor about you, what would be most hurtful?

Chelsea: I don’t know.

Interviewer: Yeah? I think mine would be something like you’re a stupid idiot, cuz I think I’m pretty smart, or I don’t know. If I thought I was really good at something and somebody smashed my dreams and actually suck at that, it’d feel like hurt.

Chelsea: [laughs] But I don’t know. [mumble]

Interviewer: Oh yeah? That’s cool.

Chelsea: She’ll be here tomorrow.

Interviewer: Are you guys close?

Chelsea: Kind of. Cuz like we don’t hang out like all the time, but when we’re at our house we do.

Interviewer: Cool. How far away do you live?

Chelsea: [reveals a specific road]

Interviewer: I’m not too familiar, is that like 5 minutes, 10 minutes?
Chelsea: About 5.

Interviewer: That’s not too far. You guys come here after school like what, 3:00?

Chelsea: Bout 2:30

Interviewer: 2:30? You guys hang out, then go home?

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: So when you’re here, where does your sister go?

Chelsea: At my house

Interviewer: Ok. Yeah.

Chelsea: My brother’s here too. [mumble] brother’s in third grade.

Interviewer: Are you guys close? You and your brother?

Chelsea: Mm mm [no] We fight a lot.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Chelsea: [mumble]

Interviewer: What about your sister and your brother, are they close?

Chelsea: [nods]

Interviewer: Yeah?

Chelsea: They might fight sometimes but they only play around, cuz they like run around and stuff and they’ll like make things out of blankets and like hiding things and stuff.

Interviewer: That’s cool.

Chelsea: Might be because they’re younger.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Chelsea: [laughs]
Interviewer: I just have one more to ask. If someone were to say something bad about your family would you be really upset?

Chelsea: [nods]

Interviewer: Yeah? That’d be a pretty tough rumor. I love my brother. I wouldn’t want anyone to mess with him. Although he’s 20 years old so he can kind of fend for himself, but [laughs]

Chelsea: I went to my dad’s house this weekend

Interviewer: Yeah?

Chelsea: But my sister didn’t go cuz she had her best friend’s birthday party.

Interviewer: Oh that’s cool. Did she have a good time?

Chelsea: She went to sleep when she got home cuz she got up really early and went to bed really late.

Interviewer: Yeah

Chelsea: [laughs] yeah.

Interviewer: That’s funny cuz that was always me. At the, at the slumber party. Although sometimes I’d be like first to bed. See you later! But I always got up first. So I’d always hang out with like my friends’ moms and stuff, and we’d like make breakfast and just chat cuz like all my friends were still sleepin at the sleepover.

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah, it was a good time.

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: Cool, so is there um, anything you like special that you think about the way people handle conflicts at your school that we haven’t really talked about yet? Cuz we haven’t like hit anything beefy about the way girls fight at school, but..
Chelsea: Like, they don’t really fight like some of the different [mumble] that more mature
[mumble] go in tell everybody [mumble], they fight.

Interviewer: Do they actually fight like with their fists

Chelsea: Sometimes

Interviewer: Or do they yell at each other, do they kick, do they—

Chelsea: Sometimes they yell at each other, sometimes they like get everyone to fight.

Interviewer: Yeah. But that doesn’t happen very often?

Chelsea: Mm mm [no]

Interviewer: No?

Chelsea: There’s only like one or two fights this year.

Interviewer: Ok, I’ve heard that some of the schools are talking a little bit about social
aggression. Fighting and stuff at school. Have you guys had any of those programs yet?

Chelsea: We had a bullying one today.

Interviewer: Yeah? That’s a lot of what I’m talking about, bullying. Do you see a lot of that at
school?

Chelsea: mm kinda.

Interviewer: Yeah? When does that happen?

[pause]

Chelsea: Like when girl does some, like really popular and then like the dorks, they go up to em
and say you need to think I’m all that cuz you’re not and all that.

Interviewer: So a dork will say that to a popular girl or a popular will say that to a dork?

Chelsea: No a popular girl will say it to a dork.

Interviewer: Yeah. That’s usually the way it works.
Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: And then what does the dork do?

Chelsea: She’ll say don’t say anything mean to me.

Interviewer: Yeah. And then, why do you think the popular girls, like do all the popular girls usually do that?

Chelsea: No.

Interviewer: No? Just like one?

Chelsea: Like two or three.

Interviewer: Yeah. Why do you think they do that to the dorks?

Chelsea: To get attention.

Interviewer: Ok. [pause] Does it work?

Chelsea: Not really. Sometimes.

Interviewer: Do people like to talk about the popular people a lot?

Chelsea: [shakes head no]

Interviewer: No? Like whatever?

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: So what makes them popular?

Chelsea: They have a lot of friends.

Interviewer: Yeah? A lot of actual friends or a lot of people they think are their friends?

Chelsea. A lot of actual friends.

Interviewer: Is it easy for anyone to be popular? Like could you be popular tomorrow?

Chelsea: [shakes head]

Interviewer: No? [laughs] Why’s that?
Chelsea: I don’t know

Interviewer: You don’t know?

[both laugh]

Interviewer: I wasn’t popular in school. [pause] Do the popular girls talk a lot about other people?

Chelsea: mmm…not really.

Interviewer: No? Do you know any of the popular girls?

Chelsea: [nods]

Interviewer: Yeah? Are they nice?

Chelsea: Kinda.

Interviewer: Kinda? So they’re kinda mean too? What do they do?

Chelsea: like when we were little kids, they don’t really see it like as [mumble]

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Chelsea: I don’t know, I’m not like, I’m not like friends with them or anything.

Interviewer: So you just kinda brush it off?

Chelsea: Yeah. [laughs]

Interviewer: So do you have other friends

Chelsea: Yeah

Interviewer: Like, they don’t worry at all?

Chelsea: [shakes head]

Interviewer: That’s cool. Have you ever had like a, or have you ever seen a friend have a really bad experience with a girl friend who made them feel terrible?

Chelsea: [shakes head no]
Interviewer: No? That’s good. You’re lucky. And you still have no idea what rumor would be most hurtful?

Chelsea: I don’t know. [laughs]

Interviewer: That’s ok. If someone did spread a really bad rumor about you what would your response be?

Chelsea: I don’t know, but I would tell them it’s not true and that the other people who are my friends and that they will still be my friends.

Interviewer: That’s pretty much right. You pretty much got it down.

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: You know how the system works.

Chelsea: [laughs]

Interviewer: Cool. Well thanks for talking with me, is there anything else you want to tell me about as far as girl friends the way that they fight or kinda harass each other at all?

Chelsea: [shakes head]

Kenya, age 13

Interviewer: So what grade are you in?
Kenya: 8th

Interviewer: So you’re 14?
Kenya: 13 going on 14. My birthday’s the [reveals date].

Interviewer: So it’s coming up!
Kenya: Yeah, I can’t wait.

Interviewer: Yeah? 14’s like a really big age. It was a really big birthday for me. Just kind of like, I don’t know
Kenya: More involved, you’re more involved in stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, it’s good. You should be excited. You’re only two years away from driving, and four years away from voting—I guess that’s pretty exciting—
Kenya: yeah

Interviewer: --as you get older. Things to look forward to. I’m 22 so I don’t have anything to look forward to.

Interviewer: I know I look like I’m what, 17?
Kenya: Maybe 16 or 15.

Interviewer: Yeah. I know, I get it all the time. When I was younger people used to say you look so old for your age. And I was like thanks. And now people say you look so young, and I’m like oh, well thanks.
Kenya: [laughs]
Interviewer: I guess that’s alright. Yeah cool, well the first thing I want to talk about is, just to
make sure that um, you understand what I’m talking about and I’m understanding what you’re
talking about

Kenya: Yeah

Interviewer: is the idea of social aggression. It’s like a big academic term that they use to
describe behavior that tries to make people feel bad about themselves basically, tries to make a
popular girl less popular, makes people have a bad, you know, status at school, stuff like that. It
can be gossiping, backstabbing, even rolling your eyes and saying whatever, a cold shoulder, um,
trying to get people to not be people’s friends anymore—

Kenya: yeah

Interviewer: It’s like all the same stuff, as far as what I’m concerned with, studying for
academics, um, so, if I say social aggression, you understand what I’m talking about right?

Kenya: Yeah

Interviewer: Ok cool. Also, I mentioned in passing earlier it can also be termed as bullying, so if
you think bullying makes more sense to you than social aggression, we’ll go with that, that’s
fine. But um to make sure that um, I’m not just making this stuff--

Kenya: [laughs]

Interviewer: out of my you-know-where—

Kenya: Yeah

Interviewer: I’m gonna ask you when girls get angry at their friends, do you think they actually
do socially aggressive things?

Kenya: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah?
Kenya: Yeah.

Interviewer: Like a lot of the time or?

Kenya: Yeah backstabbin.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Kenya: Yeah.

Interviewer: A lot at school?

Kenya: uh huh [pause] and gossip

Interviewer: Yeah. What usually instigates this stuff? Like starts it?

Kenya: It’s either over a boy

Interviewer: Ok.

Kenya: Or just people going back and saying stuff that people that somebody said which they didn’t really say. And gettin whole worked up about it just cuz they want to see somethin happen.

Interviewer: Are they bored? [laughs] Are they bored, just wanting to stir up trouble?

Kenya: Yeah. I call it childish.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, how do you think the girls who are hurt by social aggression respond?

Kenya: Usually they just walk away or ignore em and then people start callin their phone and stuff and just ignore their calls. It don’t go affect people cuz it’s not really, it don’t be really that serious. But then if it do get that big it will affect people. Go to the counselor or somethin.

Interviewer: Do parents ever get involved?

Kenya: Yeah, they gotta press charges.

Interviewer: Whoa! This is serious stuff.
Kenya: If it really get that big they’ll press charges or even say don’t hit or don’t fight or just walk away…

Interviewer: So when it gets to the point where people are pressing charges, are people actually fighting like rolling around on the ground—

Kenya: Yeah

Interviewer: punching? Kicking, fighting, that kind of stuff?

Kenya: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that actually happens at school?

Kenya: mm hmm!

Interviewer: Wow, how often does that happen?

Kenya: Oh my goodness there is like so many fights. There’s like arguments, so, right before Christmas break, there was like five arguments over backstabbin stuff. He said this, he said that. That happens. And then, I got into a fight cuz somebody said that this girl did somethin to my cousin, and then I got into a fight and her mom pressed charges on me. And all that. Yeah. So it happens a lot.

Interviewer: Wow. like once a week, twice a week, or?

Kenya: Bout three times a week.

Interviewer: And usually does like the whole school get involved or is it just kind of a--?

Kenya: It’s just like, you know like, you know how like they have the punk group and the—

Interviewer: Yeah

Kenya: And the popular group, and stuff like that—it be between the popular group and the punks. No added and stuff like that. Or it be the popular on popular.
Interviewer: Ok. Which group are you in?

Kenya: Me? I’m in normal. I ain’t tryin to impress nobody but myself.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kenya: But I mean, I’m cool with everybody I go to everybody’s group and associate with em
cuz frankly I do have a reason to you know I don’t like you you’re ugly.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kenya: Get outta here.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kenya: I walk past, don’t do that.

Interviewer: Good for you. Um, have you ever been a victim of social aggression?

Kenya: No, not really.

Interviewer: Yeah? Have any of your friends?

Kenya: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember what happened?

Kenya: Two of my friends. No one actin like one. I don’t know, they get in this group all these
people just start trying like gang up on her. Tryin to fight her, and they’s gonna try to jump her, I
don’t even know what it was over, but

Interviewer: Did it fight out—er, did it fight out—did it start out as something small that got big
or was it always kind of a big deal?

Kenya: It, it wasn’t even, it wasn’t even really nothin. It was real stupid. I bet it was over boys.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Kenya: But yeah, somethin like that. [pause] But it was stupid. It was very childish. Definitely
through the eighth grade.
Interviewer: Um, so did this happen at school?

Kenya: Yep. Happened at school. Got IO school, another one got ISS, in school suspension,

Interviewer: Ok.

Kenya: and then another one got, I mean ER.

Interviewer: Ok. And how did your friend feel?

Kenya: She was, she was actually, she wasn’t even sad, she wasn’t sweatin it or nothin. Just like
well, they don’t like me. We all gettin friends somethin like that.

Interviewer: Wow.

Kenya: So knockin things out with me and this other girl, my best friend, that happened with me
and my best friend.

Interviewer: Cool. And did this girl react toward the other person at all? Did she retaliate against
her?

Kenya: What does that mean?

Interviewer: Um, did she strike back, you know, did she--?

Kenya: Arguin. She start arguin back wit em.

Interviewer: After the fight was over did she say anything bad about these girls or spread rumors
or--?

Kenya: Nah. Quit it. It stopped. It all stopped. They don’t like each other but it all stopped.

Interviewer: Is there still kind of tension between them?

Kenya: Yeah there’s still like some.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Kenya: The girl don’t hang around—it’s sad, they used to be so close since like sixth grade. And
then they hang with other people.
Interviewer: Wow. So did they both like the same guy?

Kenya: I think it was I think it was that…yeah.

Interviewer: Was he at least a cool guy, like interesting?

Kenya: umm…they say he was doing some things,

Interviewer: ah

Kenya: but they was doin some things and I guess they got mad, tried to call her out. Stuff like that.

Interviewer: Ok. Um, have you or any of your friends ever done something socially aggressive?

[pause] You mentioned getting in a fight earlier. What was that all about?

Kenya: Um, ah those fights, they’re just like when you’re with friends, and I heard this girl had kicked my cousin in her head and they supposed to be friends, and somebody told me that and they were mad, and I told her, well I ain’t tell her but I told somebody I was gonna fight her. And then, and then we came back from Thanksgiving break and then I fought her. Actually I let people, I got caught up cuz I wasn’t even gonna fight her in school, I was gonna fight her after school so something happened and can fight after school. And arguments come [mumble] but this teacher already felt that and so, you already kicked my cousin in the head and so I was like whatever bye. And I just fought her cuz you know I don’t live like, well, if I’m bout to fight, I don’t like to argue, you know how people just argue—like you this and that and now the teacher’s comin and you got in trouble for practically nothin. So why not get in trouble for stuff that make you plan on gettin in trouble? So I just fought her. And then, now I’m on probation.

Interviewer: Ok. Was it worth it?

Kenya: No it wasn’t at all. That’s why I had to drop some of my friends. Cuz my grades was, the people I was hangin out with they weren’t even really doin nothin but see every time I hang
out with em, my grades just go down and I get caught up in a whole buncha other stuff so I just, I let them go for a minute. I’m a go back to em, but I just let them go for a minute. Now I hang out with this girl. And I’m tryin to get A’s. Cuz I never get straight A’s and stuff. I’m gettin up there. I’m at B’s.

Interviewer: That’s great. So how do you just drop your friends, how does that work?
Kenya: Actually, I don’t even really like drop em like uh you’re not my friend. I don’t do that. Like I’m a have to put you on hold real quick. I’m a get back wit you as soon as I get my grades caught up, cuz I failin’ and I’m tired of gettin in trouble.

Interviewer: Sure. And you just talk about that on the phone or around school you say hey this is the deal or...do you..?
Kenya: Nah I just talk about it on the phone.

Interviewer: Yeah? Phone, just let em know what’s going on?
Kenya: Yeah, but don’t try to think I’m tryin to play you.

Interviewer: Right.
Kenya: Like tryin to be like me droppin you, me gonna be with somebody else, like you don’t even like me no more you always tryin to ditch me for her that’s not a complicate

Interviewer: Have they given you any problems about it?
Kenya: Nah I think they all aight. Cuz specially me and my friends are all on the same thing, we all on probation. They on probation for other stuff though, but yeah.

Interviewer: Ok.
Kenya: It’s over and put away. We don’t fight and argue, cuz it ain’t worth it.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Kenya: Specially when you not, specially when you gonna go back to em. It’s not like aight, be never gonna be friends again, get outta my life. It’s not like that.

Interviewer: Ok. With the girls you’re putting on hold for now, um, have you guys been friends a really long time, is that kinda what--?

Kenya: No, I hated her in sixth grade.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Kenya: mm hm

Interviewer: And later you’re best friends?

Kenya: Ever since we went bike ridin to the store, we just became so close. And we been friends since seventh grade.

Interviewer: Ok.

Kenya: But I’ll still have to put em on hold.

Interviewer: Do you usually change friends a lot?

Kenya: Everybody likes me, I don’t know have no problems with no one. I don’t even know what happened to the girl that I fought. Think she switched schools, she hadn’t been there in a while. But I’m cool with, everybody likes me, everybody tries to talk to me, I don’t diss on none of that like why you talkin. But I talk to em, and they don’t make fun of me but they try to make me laugh, so I just laugh at em. [mumble] Not to be mean or anything.

Interviewer: [laughs] Yeah.

Kenya: But yeah I’m cool with everybody. They don’t try to take it in a mean way.

Interviewer: Cool. Um, if one of your friends, if one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful and why?

Kenya: A sexual rumor.
Interviewer: Yeah? Why’s that?

Kenya: Because if I don’t I didn’t do it, or even if I did do it, it’s not their business to be spreadin it. Spreadin it, like it’s nobody else’s business but me and who I did it with.

Interviewer: Do a lot of like sex rumors run around school a lot?

Kenya: No.

Interviewer: No?

Kenya: No.

Interviewer: You just know that that would most--?

Kenya: Boyfriend and girlfriend, they don’t know...only one and that was the one I already told you about.

Interviewer: Right, right. Alright. Are you really proud of the fact that you’re like--?

Kenya: Laid back?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kenya: Cool with everybody?


Kenya: It’s been like this ever since I was little. I ain’t never had a problem with nobody.

Interviewer: Um, if somebody did spread, um, a sex rumor about you, what would your response be?

Kenya: I would confront em, I would call em out. And ask em like why did you spread this?

Even if I did do it or didn’t do it, it’s none of your business. And you need to keep minding your mouth or something like that.

Interviewer: mm hmm. Would you ever start spreadin rumors about that person?

Kenya: No.
Interviewer: No?

Kenya: I’d just say don’t talk to me. You’re fake, you’re two-faced, and whatever. Don’t talk to me.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um,

Kenya: [mumble]

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, if you were ever to spread a rumor about that person again, would it be completely unrelated to the fact that they spread a rumor about you? Or if—

Kenya: I, I—it wouldn’t even be related. It would be from a whole different case. If it was really someone [mumble]

Interviewer: If one of your friends told you to your face she didn’t want to be your friend anymore, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor?

Kenya: No. It’d be hurtful if she spread a rumor.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Kenya: Cuz like you don’t wanna be my friend, then like ok, fine I got more people. I ain’t gonna say no-you-don’t-wanna-be-my-friend-I-hate-you get-outta-my-face-I ain’t-never-wanna-talk-to-you…I’m a be like ok. I gotta get myself up anyway. I got people. I got family. So, you’re not holding me back in no way.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kenya: Cuz friends is the people that really care. The people that act like they care. That’s what friends is to me. I don’t care if none of em but the ones I’m really close to. And all my real real friends is my family, so, that’s that.

Interviewer: Cool. Um, what kind of things would a girl have to say or do in order to get you to retaliate? Like, is there anything that would make you strike back?
Kenya: Put your hands on me.

Interviewer: Ok.

Kenya: That’s all you got. I mean, if you arguin with me, I don’t even like to argue cuz I’m not even the type of girl to get mad. I don’t even get mad cuz it’s so low class.

Interviewer: [laugh]

Kenya: But if you put your hands on me, I’m a come back in a way, you don’t know when, might not be the time you put your hands on me, but I will come back. Not a rumor, but literally, we gonna bang it out.

Interviewer: And um, what kind of things would you do, like bang it out, like serious like floor on floor biting scratching pulling hair type stuff?

Kenya: I don’t bite. I don’t scratch. I’ll pull hair. If you got it I will pull it, but yeah. Punchin, but yeah, just punchin, I try to kick em, I wouldn’t try to sit on em cuz like that’s the easiest thing to do to somebody. But kickin and punchin, that’s all I do to em.

Interviewer: You never fight with words, never try to spread rumors?

Kenya: No.

Interviewer: So don’t say, you don’t roll your eyes and say whatever?

Kenya: I don’t do. Like if my teacher want to send me out to the office, I don’t slam doors.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kenya: That makes me mad when somebody gets sent out, you get sent out, get over it. Slammin doors is not goin make you feel any better or not gonna get you outta trouble. So I don’t slam doors. It’s just stupid.

Interviewer: Yeah? Um, so how, like how would you describe the nature of conflicts in general between people?
Kenya: The nature, what do you mean by that?

Interviewer: Um, like, what are they like, I guess?

Kenya: They’re joyful. For no reason, just joyful. Until somethin bad happens. Like this new girl came to our school and they just thought she was a goddess and tried to force her up or somethin. They started turnin their back on their real friends. No one, she used to talk about em behind their backs, the new friend, talk about em, talk about em behind their back. I just watched em, yelled it’s stupid, y’all really think what y’all getting yourself into, y’all be sellin out I guess. Yeah I don’t stay with people like that. I’m leavin, I gotta go.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kenya: I walk away.

Interviewer: How come you, how come you’ve always kinda been that way? Never get caught up in it?

Kenya: Cuz my mom taught me like that. Like she said that ain’t got nothin to do with you when it’s somethin real stupid. That you don’t even have to do nothin about, just leave, walk away. But other than that, if somebody say to you don’t say nothin to nobody else, cuz, that be startin trouble. That’s how I look at that. And if like if somebody gonna fight me never go in their territory, let em come in mine. And if they put their hand on me we gonna fight. But see my mom would make me fight if they came to my back door and put their hand on me. She would make me fight. Back. I would already fight back but she don’t like no scratches, me comin home with scratches or something. But if I was to get jumped I would come back. I would literally find them, and I would get all my cousins and stuff and we will fight. I don’t care if we be in a park or somethin, we will fight. Cuz I will beat you if you try to jump me. But I ain’t
never been jumped. I ain’t never really worried about stuff like that. You gonna jump me, jump me, just know that I’m a come back.

Interviewer: So how come you think some of the girls at school get caught up in the stupid stuff, talking bad…?

Kenya: They’re childish. Arguin. Their arguments be so lame. It is. They’re just, they’re just stupid, man. I can’t even explain it cuz it’s just so eh, so low class. I mean they got no respect for theyselves. To me, and that’s what that means to me.

Interviewer: Ok.

Kenya: Like I got bigger and better things to be worryin about than y’all childish kids, people. If the teacher starts arguin with me I will argue back with em, don’t know why but I will. But then I just, I’ll act nice, like can you please quit talkin to me? I will get up and go to the office. I’ll tell my teacher like I asked you please quit talkin to me cuz arguing gonna get me in trouble. I was actin nice to people, talking to you. And then they leave me alone in the back of the class. Or I just sit back down. I ain’t sad. It’s got to stay over. I don’t have to say nothin back. I won’t get my own self in trouble.

Interviewer: Um—

Kenya: But see they get paid for sending kids to the office. They get paid $5.

Interviewer: Really?

Kenya: When they send you to the office. At least that’s what all my teachers say. They always say well we need the extra money. We need the extra $5. They always tryin to say well we do care about you, no you don’t. Cuz if you did you wouldn’t really pay attention to that $5 you gonna get for sending a kid out for no reason. So, yeah.

Interviewer: I never knew anything about that before.
Kenya: They do it all the time at [school name].

Interviewer: Wow, um, going back to what you were saying, you have bigger and better things to worry about than all the childish stuff. Like what are the things that you have, that you worry about, or--?

Kenya: hmm. I like to have fun, I got my family to worry about, I don’t be on no games, like I said I gotta get my grades I gotta do stuff, I gotta get in stuff, I gotta get more involved in stuff. I gotta get outta here. Frankly, I got to go see the world.

Interviewer: Out of [name of town]?

Kenya: Yeah and I’m not bout to let y’all hold me back just by what y’all doin and sayin.

Interviewer: You should go see the world.

Kenya: Yeah like I want to go to Niagara Falls. I just, but I’m scared cuz it just reminds me of a big black hole in the world, and you just gonna die to think of it. That’s what I think of Niagara Falls but I still wanna go see it. It’s pretty on TV.

[interruption]

Interviewer: Well is there anything else you want to tell me about--?

Kenya: Nope that’s all.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much, it really helped.
Leslie, age 11 and Mallory, age 15

Interviewer: So just to make sure that, I’m not talking, like out of my ass here, social aggression does exist, right? I mean you’ve experienced this?

Leslie: Oh yeah

Interviewer: When girls get angry they do socially aggressive things?

Mallory: Definitely

Interviewer: Yeah?

Leslie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh, what kind of things do they usually do?

Mallory: Uh, like you said, they spread rumors, and they just talk behind people’s backs, and sometimes they think that people won’t hear it, and uh, it’s really annoying.

Interviewer: Mm hmm. What do you think Leslie, what do they usually do?

Leslie: They usually pass notes about everybody and then they’ll find out, like who sent it. It accidentally got to you, and then you saw everything that that person just felt, er that group of people or two people wrote about you and then kind of just get you angry and [laughs].

Interviewer: And they do that on purpose, you think?

Leslie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Leslie: Just to get you angry.

Interviewer: And then what do you guys usually do like in response if somebody were to pass a note about you or spread a rumor about you?

Leslie: Um—
Mallory: I usually just go to my friends and talk about it, usually. Um, or I go to my mom and talk about it. And stuff. I usually don’t get mad about it. Cuz I don’t really c-care about what people think.

Interviewer: What do you think Leslie?

Leslie: Um

Interviewer: Do you--?

Leslie: Usually go to my friends about it and then Mallory about it, and my mom, and I don’t let it bother me cuz if they know that it’s bothering me they’re just gonna keep on doing it. Because they know that it’s working. And if it’s bothering me then that means they’re winning, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Leslie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Um,

Leslie: Even if it is bothering me I just make sure that they know it’s not.

Interviewer: Yeah. When you talk to your friends about your frustrations with this other girl, whatever she’s doing to you, do those frustrations that you talk about with your friends ever get back to that girl?

Mallory: mmm

Leslie: That’s happened before.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Mallory: With me, I don’t think it ever has.

Interviewer: Yeah? So like with the, when that probably happened before, I don’t know if you can think of a specific experience that that happened, but what did that girl do back to you?

Leslie: mmm she just started a lot of really mean rumors. A lot. [pause] Oh yeah.
Interviewer: What, what did she, like what specific rumors did she start?

Leslie: Like that I was a bad person. And that I guess, I don’t remember exactly what she said but my fourth and fifth grade year was filled with it.

Interviewer: Really?

Leslie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is that when it started?

Leslie: With the same two girls. Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Leslie: Kind of sort of turned on me but this year I just said to myself you know what, really, that girl, she’s not worth your time. She used to be one of my really good friends, but

Interviewer: How did you guys, like not become friends anymore--

Leslie: Guys.

Interviewer: what started it? Guys?

Leslie: mm hmm

Interviewer: Alright there’s a big story there!

[all laugh]

Leslie: But I mean and then my mom always told me you can’t, you can’t not be friends with someone because of a guy but see I, I told that girl that but she didn’t listen to me. So, I was like if you’re not gonna listen to me then go ahead. Fight over a guy, but…

Interviewer: mm hmm. Did you guys both like him? Was that the problem, or

Leslie: No it was like, I was sticking up for my friend and (like I do too often) and it gets me no where. And she was sticking up for herself and…

[pause]
Interviewer: So is that when it all began, fourth/fifth grade, a lot of the social aggression stuff?

For both of you guys?

Leslie: mm

Interviewer: That’s like 10/11, usually age.

Leslie: Sadly.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you remember your first experiences with girls who were mean?

Mallory: Way too good.

Interviewer and Mallory: [laugh]

Mallory: Crazy. I think it was over boys too. I think it’s always over boys or a fashion thing.

Leslie: Yeah like you don’t have the latest in style something. [pause] Cuz that means you’re not cool if you don’t have it.

Interviewer: Do you have like the cool kids and everybody else?

Leslie: The cliques.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mallory: Oh yeah.

Leslie: Oh yeah!

Interviewer: What are they like?

Mallory: Jocks, preps, dorks.

Interviewer: Yeah. [laughs] That hasn’t changed.

Mallory: I kinda group myself with everyone.

[pause]

Interviewer: Does that ever get you in trouble being friends with anyone, do you know too much of other people’s drama, or…?
Mallory: mm sometimes, not a lot. Um, I usually don’t like to get involved with drama. And if somebody wants to talk to me about it I’ll talk it, talk with them, in confidentiality. And all that, but…

Interviewer: Does that ever bite you in the back? If you talk to people in confidence? Do sometimes they spread your secrets anyway?

Mallory: Sometimes,

Leslie: Yeah.

Mallory: It is not one of the greatest moments I’ve ever had.

Interviewer: Yeah. Is that like a big story that you have? What’s that about?

Mallory: Um, well, she doesn’t know but…

Interviewer: Oh, that’s ok…

Mallory: One night

Interviewer: Need earmuffs?

Mallory: No, that’s fine. I don’t care, she won’t tell my mom. One night I went out drinking with one of my friends and uh just something happened, I don’t even really remember, and just a bunch of just crap started about me and…you tell mom I’ll kill you [to Leslie], just kidding [laughs].

Leslie: [laughs]

Interviewer: Um, what kind of, um, rumors were they starting?

Mallory: Um, it was just like that I’m a dirty whore and that I was only, uh, trying to get the guys and trying to have sex, sex and stuff.

[pause]
Leslie: She was one of “those” [plus hand gesture] girls, like, like they were popular girls and yeah she’s just—

Mallory: I’m really not that.

Leslie: Yeah I know. But that’s what exactly what they called you.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do the popular girls are usually the ones called dirty whores?

Mallory: Basically.

Leslie: Yeah.

Mallory: Ones that’ll let boys into their pants and stuff [laughs] basically.

Interviewer: That hasn’t changed either.

Mallory: [laughs]

Interviewer: It was like that when I was in school.

Leslie: I’m not sure that’ll ever change.

Mallory: I don’t know.

Interviewer: I’m not sure it will either, actually. Um,

Leslie: But it’s still different back then and now. [laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Just in general, how do you think girls who are hurt by social aggression respond?

Mallory: I think they try to take it out on other people. I think they just start talkin behind other people’s backs. And they try to get back at other people because um, they don’t know how to deal with it themselves.

[pause]

Interviewer: Do find that true Leslie?
Leslie: Yeah, they just, they take it the wrong way sometimes. And you should just learn to, they should just learn that other, that person is jealous of you I guess, and that, I don’t know, yeah.

Interviewer: Um, do you think they ever take it out on family members?

Mallory: They might.

Leslie: Yeah.

Mallory: I know I have once or twice. On her [Leslie], my brothers.

Interviewer: Um--

Leslie: I think it depends on the problem, maybe. Goin through with that, or bein hurtful.

Interviewer: When they take it out on other people do they usually take it out on their friends, or other people that they don’t like?

Mallory: Probably other people that they don’t like. That they, um, have had a past with, like a past um, argument, and they still haven’t gotten over it.

Leslie: Yeah.

Interviewer: A story there?

Mallory: No.

Interviewer: Oh.

Leslie: That’s probably…[laugh]

Interviewer: Um, we kind of touched on this earlier, but have you guys ever been victims of social aggression?

Mallory: Oh yeah.

Leslie: Oh yeah. [laugh]

Interviewer: Can you remember a specific time, either a big moment or a small moment when you can remember the details, who was there, what happened, why you responded?
Leslie: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Leslie: I got—

Mallory: I’m goin, I’m goin through one right now actually.

Leslie: I got involved a couple times. I did. It was at a [school] football game. There was this rumor goin around and my,

Mallory: this girl

Leslie: this girl—

Interviewer: You can use names cuz I’ll change their names too. Just in case you get confused and you don’t know who I’m talking about. Everyone’s names will be changed.

Leslie: Ok. Well Jackie, she’s known for like the “drama queen” in the school, basically, and she, she can be nicer sometimes but sometimes she just turns out not to be such…yeah. [laughs] um, and one, it was 2006, and I remember it like it was just like last week. And um, she had a boyfriend, Mark, and he, he was hangin out with Julie cuz Julie was bein really nice to him that night and he didn’t wanna hang out with Jackie there. And there was a rumor goin around that Julie and Mark were making out behind the tree and that was not true at all and so she goes up to Julie says, “so I heard you guys were kissin and makin out with my boyfriend all night.” And um, they started to fight, and I was like in the middle of it and I tried to like stop em and it didn’t work and then, oh…and then um, Jackie she went way too far. She bit her lip and made it bleed. And she told her mom that, that um, Julie did it to her, like sometimes they’ll blame the other person even though it was really them. And everything Jackie did to Julie Jackie told her mom that Julie did that to her. And um, and then later on that night, Jackie’s mom grabbed Julie by the
arm and um, took away to the cops, er the police that was there that night. And we were there till about 1:00 in the morning.

Interviewer: That’s crazy.

Leslie: And they were interviewing. It was me, and Julie, well Jackie already went home cuz I don’t know why, I don’t know why they would, but.

Interviewer: Are you friends with Julie and Jackie, is that how you got in the middle,

Leslie: Um,

Interviewer: or were they standing around you and you got stuck, pulled in?

Leslie: They, well I was hanging out with Julie.

Interviewer: Ok.

Leslie: And that night, I’m friends with Julie, but not, not really with Jackie.

[pause]

Interviewer: And then what did Julie do back to Jackie later?

Leslie: She put her arms up, like in a cross, like this [demonstrates], just like, didn’t wanna get hurt, so she really didn’t do anything except push her arms back and forth to get Jackie to stop.

Interviewer: Did Julie ever do anything later, kind of after the fact, like talk about Jackie at all, or…?

Leslie: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Leslie: Everybody did.

Interviewer: Did--Ok.

Leslie: It’s still talked about.
Interviewer: Ok. So, but nothing, or did Julie do anything specific to Jackie um, that, I guess like, if a rumor was started about her, like what Julie the one that started it or were there

Leslie: Not really

Interviewer: other people at all?

Leslie: Not really.

Interviewer: Ok.

Leslie: After that Sarah was just kinda out of it.

Interviewer: Mallory, what about you? You were in the middle of one, you said?

Leslie: Oh yeah.

Mallory: Um,

Leslie: Can I?

Interviewer: Go ahead, eat!

Mallory: Well my ex-boyfriend, he had heard a rumor that I had had sex and he called me up and he was like, I heard that you and so and so had sex, and I was like what? And I found out that the person who told him was someone that I thought was my good friend. And we had previously had an argument, uh, [pause] I don’t even remember what it was over, something stupid. And uh, he I guess wanted to get back to me, back on me, and spread a rumor that I had had sex, and that’s one of the reasons why we broke up.

Interviewer: So the guy that started the rumor—

Mallory: His name was Anthony.

Interviewer: Ok. And he was just like, like a boyf- a friend, or you were dating him before?

Mallory: I have dating him before.

Interviewer: But now-er-you were just friends now?
Mallory: Yeah

Interviewer: Ok.

Mallory: We were just good friends.

Interviewer: Has a girl ever done that to you before, a similar situation?

Mallory: Yeah. Actually, my cousin did it to me.

Interviewer: Oh really? Were you really close?

Mallory: No. We’ll hang out every once in a while, but, after that, I haven’t really talked to her much.

Interviewer: You remember the instance, what happened? Who was there, why?

Mallory: Uh I think it was just me and her, and we were talking one night, and she got it all confused. Basically she thought that I had had sex too, so, and then she told all her friends which were all the preps, all the, um, all those guys and everything. But then I had questions, and everything.

Interviewer: had you guys ever had any kind of fight before, conflict before where she would wanna take something out on you like that or--?

Mallory: Not really, we were close up until about the sixth grade or so.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mallory: And then sixth grade, um, a bunch of students from the other school came over and she started hangin out with them more. So we just kinda grew apart, and I ain’t really talked to her much after that.

[pause]

Interviewer: And we talked a little bit about Leslie and Julie’s story and how she didn’t really do anything, did you do anything back when these rumors were spread about you?
Mallory: Nah, I just went and talked to her and my mom and my older brother, talked to them about it, and they said just to forget it, cuz it really wasn’t important. Cuz the truth is what I know and what I did, and I wasn’t too worried about it.

Interviewer: Did you ever, um, say something mean in passing, or I don’t know, give her the cold shoulder something later?

Mallory: Um.

Interviewer: Not necessarily immediately after the conflict? After the fact?

Well there was one time she tried to talk to me about it and I was like you know what, I don’t wanna talk to you about it. Cuz I know you just gonna say something else to all your other friends. So that’s really my answer to what happened.

Interviewer: Ok. Cool. Have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends before?

Mallory: No. I could never do that to any of my friends. My friends and I are close.

Leslie: Specially if I can’t remember what it means…

Interviewer: Oh it could be anything even if it’s just um, spreading, I mean it could be spreading a rumor but it could be kinda in disguise. Like maybe you have a friend Amy or something like that and Amy did something really mean to you and you might tell one of your friends God I can’t believe what Amy did today she’s such a bitch.

Leslie: Oh

Interviewer: Like something like that, that would be social aggression technically.

Leslie: Yeah I’ve sadly I have, but yeah.

Interviewer: Can you remember the moment?

Leslie: Yeah it was fourth grade [laughs] um, my best friend was going out with this guy and I did not like him at all. I knew he was just gonna be mean and nasty to her and he was. And she
was just no he’s so cute and so nice and he wasn’t. And he was mean to her and when they talked at this thing called latch season and and I got really mad and um, I just started talking to my other friend and I was just like “how can she do…” [pause]

Interviewer: Did that ever get back to your friend?

Leslie: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah? Then what happened?

Leslie: She got really mad at me and she, she started hanging out with Chris more just to make me mad. Started getting closer to him, so…

Interviewer: And then how did, how did the whole thing get resolved or?

Leslie: Broke up with him. [laughs]

Interviewer: Ok.

Leslie: And I, now she calls him not so much a good name.

Interviewer: Oh yeah? Are you guys close again?

Leslie: Oh yeah, oh yeah. [laughs]

Mallory: Who is this?

Leslie: Elise. We’ve been best friends since kindergarten. Probably done everything together.

Interviewer: And then, um, has that ever come up again, has Chris ever come up, have you ever used him as leverage before, when you’re talking to her, like well remember when you went out with Chris--?

Leslie: Yeah

Interviewer: That was really stupid—

Leslie: Yeah

Interviewer: or you know that was stupid?
Leslie: Yeah
Interviewer: Ok.
Leslie: Yeah when we talk about all of our stupid moments
Interviewer: Ok.
Leslie: Chris!
Interviewer: Ok. Can you guys ever remember a time either in your own experiences or your friends’ experiences where you had a situation of social aggression but it actually wasn’t about a guy, it was about something else?
Mallory: Wow, um
Leslie: mmm
[pause]
Mallory: Not really.
Interviewer: It’s all about guys?
Mallory: Well I can think of one about a guy but not, I don’t remember any about any girls really.
Interviewer: Yeah.
Leslie: Wow…
Interviewer: Or like attacking parts of their personality or, um, I don’t know, drugs could be one, or uh--
Mallory: Yeah. Um we have mmm—me and one of my soccer friends, Tamara, we were talkin one night and we brought up uh, either my cousin or might have been Bailey, but we were talkin bout her and she said that she was nasty and that she was like a dirty whore and stuff, and I was
like oh, let’s not get into this, so we changed the subject. So, I think that’s really all I can remember.

Interviewer: Ok, and now I have to jump [questions]. If one of your friends spread a rumor about you what rumor would be most hurtful and why?

Mallory: Um, probably the sex thing. That’s the one that hurt me the most. Um, because I knew it wasn’t true and my friends who thought it was true didn’t believe me. And I lost a couple more friends after that and I think that’s what hurt me the most.

Interviewer: What about you Leslie?

Leslie: Um, it would probably like if a friend spread a rumor about me that [pause] I don’t know how to word this.

Mallory: What’s it about?

Leslie: Well nothing, no one’s ever done that to me before. But if

Interviewer: That’s ok it could just be hypothetical.

Leslie: Yeah if um a friend spread it would be most hurtful if she called me like a whore or that. And like I’m really self conscious when it comes to my weight and stuff like that, and if she called me like a big fat liar, I guess it’s I don’t know why but it depends on the friend. [laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah?

Leslie: If they’re just a friend or a best friend or…

Interviewer: If a best friend called you something what is, what would you do?

Leslie: I would feel really really hurt. Very hurt.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Leslie: And if she really meant it, oh man.
Interviewer: Yeah? Um if someone were to call you guys the worst thing they could think to call you, what would your response be? You mentioned being hurt, would you do anything?

Leslie: Cry. [laughs]

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. And talking.

Mallory: I guess it's like what Leslie said. It just depends on the person that said it. If it's someone that I don't really care about then I won't do too much. But if it's someone I really care about, I'll go up to em and say “what is this all about?” And talk it out and stuff.

Interviewer: Do you guys ever go up to your friends and confront them face to face pretty often or is it not as often? And do more the sneaky behind the back stuff?

Mallory: I go up to my friend more often. I don't like to spread secrets, and, I like to, if I have something to say about my friends, I’ll go up and tell them to their face. Like if I don’t like them I will tell them myself that I don’t like them. And yeah.

Leslie: I’m too scared to. Sometimes I will, sometimes I won’t, sometimes I’ll tell them on the computer. I don’t, I’m sensitive. I don’t like to see my, even if they hurt me, I don’t like to see my friends hurt.

Interviewer: Do you ever hide behind the computer and text messaging a lot, more so than doing the face to face like we’re talking now? No?

Mallory: I think that the internet and all the electronic ways to do it is the stupid thing.

Interviewer: [laughs] Ok.

Mallory: And I think that spreading your stories over MySpace and Facebook and all that is really dumb. And there’s really no point to it.
Leslie: I’ve never, I’ve never really had a big problem when it came to that. That other thing I confronted Elise about that. Um, I couldn’t really think of anything I confronted about. I don’t know. [laughs]

Interviewer: If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t gonna be your friend anymore, or something along those lines, um, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor or would a rumor be more hurtful?

Mallory: Um, I think it’d be more hurtful if she spread a rumor. Cuz I’ve had that happen, just a couple weeks ago actually. Um, it’s the boy story again.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Mallory: My friend, Olivia, has this boyfriend and she believes that one of my other friends is trying to break them up, and it’s really stupid, but so she’s really mad at me for being friends with Jess, the other friend, and so she’s like mad at me cuz she thinks I’m playing both sides and that I’m helping Jess break them up and that I’m talking to Olivia about Jess and not really goin that way. Right now I believe Jess is the better friend than Olivia ever was, like…[pause] but she started, she sent a message to me on MySpace, and she was like you know what, if you’re gonna be friends with Jess then I’m not gonna be friends with you and I was like ok.

Leslie: The one who makes you choose, pick the other person.

Mallory: Yep.

Leslie: But sometimes it’s just [mumble] if you choose [mumble]

Interviewer: And if someone spread a rumor about you [Leslie] or talked face to face, which one would be more hurtful?

Leslie: Face to face where they wouldn’t be your friend anymore because knowing that all those good times that you have, good and bad, are—funny great awesome times that you have with
that person just went to a waste. Went down the drain and you can never have that fun or friend again. You couldn’t. That friend was out of your life.

Interviewer: Would it be more hurtful if they said it to your face that they didn’t want to be your friend, or

Leslie: Yeah

Interviewer: a rumor about it?

Leslie: I think my face.

Interviewer: Why would to your face be more hurtful than spreading a rumor?

Leslie: Oh, oh. I think the rumor actually.

Interviewer: Ok.

Leslie: Oh I thought it meant a rumor about

Interviewer: It’s ok. That was a little confusing.

Leslie: and meant a rumor about you and then you guys are still friends. Well it’s harder hearing a rumor because you’re always the last one to know. Everybody would know now. And probably be like acting “let’s go shopping” and I wouldn’t know yet, like it wouldn’t get to me. Like oh wow. Sorry I didn’t—

Interviewer: Oh no I was confusing, my fault. Um, and how would you respond in that situation?

Leslie: Um, I’d probably ask em why? Like what did I do, why are we going through this? Um, I’d probably talk to my other friends and my mom, definitely tell my mom when it gets to that point.

[pause]

Interviewer: How about you Mallory, what would you do in that situation?
Mallory: Um, I’d probably go talk to my parents, talk to my family about it, see what they would do, get their opinions about it. I might go up to my friends, ask em what’s going on, why, why are we fighting? Be like—I don’t really think I’d do anything like spread rumors-wise.

Interviewer: If somebody told you guys face to face that they didn’t want to be your friend, um how would you respond to that?

Leslie: Um…

Mallory: I’d ask why, I mean I, I’d need a reason why we aren’t friends anymore.

Interviewer: Um,

Mallory: But then if she gave me a good reason I’d say I guess that’s ok. My problem. If you don’t wanna be my friend then that’s fine with me, but

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Mallory: I wouldn’t do too much.

Interviewer: Yeah. [pause] Alright. And um, what kind of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

Leslie: She would have to really piss me off.

Interviewer: [laughs] And how would they go about doin that?

Leslie: She would probably, it would probably be over and over again, the same thing over and over again. Really makes me mad. Really make it hurt.

Interviewer: And Mallory, what about you?

Mallory: Um, again with me you have to like really make me mad for me to retaliate to anybody. Um, yeah I’d also say the rumors thing, if they were spreading it more than once then I’d probably go up to em and say what’s goin on, why are you doin this?

Interviewer: And then if it got to that point, how would you retaliate?
Mallory: Well I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t over exaggerate it at all. Um, I’d just talk to em about it and see what I did, see what they think I did, and I’d tell em the truth about everything and I wouldn’t go out full force, like cuss them out and stuff.

Interviewer: What about you Leslie?

Leslie: I would do the same thing

Interviewer: Yeah

Leslie: But [laughs] um if I just call them and, and see them and we’re probably good and they’d be like “this is a mistake” and I, knowing me I’d probably I usually take two days to try to make the best of things but then it just happens, I stress out about things a lot. And knowing me, if it turns into problems and what that girl said that I did and all the what I did would make me so mad that nope, not friends…sometimes it’s like communication. No I meant to do that, but

Interviewer: Um, as far as conflicts go with your friends and things like that, I’m trying to figure out how to word this so it’s not confusing—but things don’t just happen in a vacuum right, it’s not like something starts and ends and then it’s done, and then something else starts and ends then it’s done. Like how does it relate that this conflict builds on the next one which turns into the next one…do things just start and end, then the next conflict you go back to that first one and try to pull something out of there, or does it happen in a vacuum, does it start and end and that’s that, you don’t talk about it again? How does this work?

Mallory: Um, I think like, like people go back to the past and try not to uh, do it again and they like to talk about it and sometimes they over exaggerate a little bit. Um, and then I think that’s how it builds into even more conflict.

Leslie: Yeah
Interviewer: Yeah? So if you were having a conflict over a boy issue, like six months ago and then now your friend is pissing you off for a completely different reason, say she’s just like chewing with her mouth open all the time and you can’t take it anymore, and it’s like dude, and do you just like go back to that original argument and say something about that just to kind of spark something annoying?

Leslie: I wouldn’t.

Mallory: No, I think that’s just stupidity. I think that’s just trying to

Leslie: Trying to start something

Mallory: into, into..

Interviewer: Do you know people that actually do that stuff?

Leslie: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? How do you think most conflicts happen?

Mallory: Um, I think it’s the whole past thing, like they like to go to the past an think about it, um—and it’s also the rumors thing, um boys of course. There’s almost always a boy with girls who are fighting.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you think might be useful for me to know about the way girls fight and then retaliate and all that stuff?

Leslie: Um, when you tell, say, say you have like a friend that if they’re on the verge of you can trust them but you can’t

Interviewer: Uh huh

Leslie: And you tell them just because you’re not thinking about can I trust them, you just tell them cuz you’re so angry, and they tell another person, and that person tells another person—that’s usually how in my grade things work.
Interviewer: mm hmm

Leslie: And then, I don’t know.

Interviewer: So to build, how do you know that person is trustworthy? If they’re on the verge before, how do they make it to the trust point?

Mallory: Umm

Leslie: You really gotta know em

Mallory: Like

Leslie: Like

Mallory: Usually it’s just this feeling that you get, that you can always go to them for anything, um they’re always there to talk to you about it. Usually with me if they stay up with me to like midnight

Leslie: Talking about it

Mallory: Just to talk about it, I think that’s one reason to trust.

Leslie: And if my friends like telling stuff to my other best friend and then like all my friends are like in the same group of friends, in the same group, but actually, I’m in the group with the [certain school] kids and [opposing school] kids. Just my luck.

Interviewer: Are they rivals or something?

Leslie: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Yeah?

Leslie: The Bears versus the Bearcats.

Mallory: Yeah we’re big rivals.

Ok. And that spills over into stuff?
Leslie: Because I live, we live over by [one of the school areas] but with live in [the other school’s district]. And um,

Mallory: I think that when

Leslie: And I live by my [first school] friends so I hang out with them a lot but at school and at different times I hang out with my other friends and it still is a problem I guess.

Interviewer: Ok.

Mallory: I think that when the two schools combined I think there was some fighting over who’s friends with who, and, like, the playing time for sports. All that. I think that gets in people’s heads.

Leslie: Yeah.

Mallory: And I don’t think people—

Leslie: Especially football

Interviewer: There’s two high schools [A] and [B], and is [your school] in [A]?

Leslie: No..it’s [name]

Interviewer: Or is it separate from that? [pause] Like, you guys live in this town, right?

Mallory: We live in [a different town].

Interviewer: Ok so you don’t actually go, like what high school do you go to?

Mallory: [name]

Interviewer: Ok so that has nothing to do with this town. No, ok, alright. Totally clear now. And I have one last question. Do some of these fights ever end up in fist fighting, pulling hair, blood, stuff like that?

Mallory: I think it could be that way--

Leslie: It could, but it’s never happened
Mallory: If you keep bringing it up, but I’ve never been in a fistfight.

Leslie: Yeah, I’ve never been in a fistfight either.

Mallory: I think that if they just keep rebuilding, the conflict keeps rebuilding, and they confront about it in school and they both be really angry, then I think it will end up in a fistfight.

Leslie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well that’s all I had, again, unless you can think of something else off the top of your head where you’re like oh you should know this.

Leslie: Um, I don’t think so.

Interviewer: Ok cool.
Blaire, age 16

Blaire: I wish I wouldn’ta switched schools. I hate [the one I go to.]

Interviewer: Oh really?

Blaire: All the girls are bitches.

Interviewer: Oh that’s terrible. I went to Catholic school myself, I went to public school all the way up through middle school eighth grade—

Blaire: Yeah I did up to sophomore.

Interviewer: Then I switched. Pretty intense, I had no idea girls could do the things they could—

Blaire: Yeah

Interviewer: When I went to Catholic school, but just to make sure you understand the idea of social aggression, it’s just a big fancy term for saying gossiping, backstabbing, little things even, like eye rolling, saying whatever. That can all be considered social aggression. Cold shoudering, trying to get people to not be your friend, um, anything to decrease someone’s popularity or to try to make them feel bad about themselves, all that covert catty stuff, it’s all lumped together in one term called so-called social aggression, so if I say that social aggression, and you need like a refresher, it’s all that stuff

Blaire: Ok [laughs]

Interviewer: So if you need to say wait a minute, what did it mean again, like feel free asking, especially cuz a lot of these behaviors only have one term. Um and what I’m basically looking for is, a lot of research has been done about like what girls do and like the effects of it, like how it makes people feel bad and this and that but not a lot of research has been done on like how people retaliate, and you know one conflict it starts it escalates, it ends, and then what, does it just end there? Or does something come back to one of those conflicts later and try to bring
something back to try to start another conflict, and like all these different retaliation patterns, and if someone spreads a rumor about you, do you spread a rumor back, are you not gonna do anything, are you gonna pick a fight with them? I’m trying to like map all that kind of stuff out, so a lot of my questions are gonna be geared more toward retaliation stuff.

Blaire: Ok

Interviewer: Um, which, I mean, I’m sure you’re familiar with like the striking back, whatever you need to do to do that. And feel free to be open and honest. Cuz I’ve been socially aggressive like to my friends before, and everyone has. Um, I’ve been a victim myself so

Blaire: Yeah I’ve been a victim.

Interviewer: I know how it feels. We’re just chatting, nobody’ll hear it but me, and that tape recorder—

Blaire: [laughs]

Interviewer: And at the end when I report my findings your name will be changed so nothing that you say will ever be associated with your name.

Blaire: Ok

Interviewer: So like I said if you want to use examples of your friends and you want to use their names that’s fine cuz all their names will be changed.

Blaire: Ok.

Interviewer: So if that makes it easier for you

Blaire: I’ll just use their names because it’ll be hard to change them

Interviewer: Exactly, exactly, so that’ll work out just fine. I’ll get my questions here and we’ll get ready to roll.

Blaire: Ok.
Interviewer: Also I guess if you at any point say hey, how did, you know, what about your experience, you know, feel free to ask.

Blaire: Ok.

Interviewer: I’m an open book. Um, ok, my first question is, when girls get angry at their friends, do you think they do socially aggressive things?

Blaire: Like good friends, even if they’re like best friends?

Interviewer: It could be anybody, you could talk about acquaintances, friends, like best friends, whatever.

Blaire: Well, I’ve had it both ways, like I had a best friend, her name was Kayla, and she got in trouble for she got caught like having sex with this guy or something like something dumb and she didn’t want to be the only one getting in trouble. So, she went to my mom and told her that I like had sex too, like I don’t know this is a while ago, so I don’t really remember, like she made up a whole bunch of stuff that wasn’t even true just to get me in trouble. Just to bring someone else down, and we were like best friends, so.

Interviewer: And then does it happen between acquaintances too?

Blaire: Um, yeah. I don’t think as much. I think it happens with like closer friends, which is, shouldn’t be like that, but…

Interviewer: And if a friend was making stuff up about other people, um what other kinds of things do they do, socially aggressive things?

Blaire: Rumors is the number one thing, like once this happened, as this happened to me, I started being really mean actually and she, this sounds really bad but she like didn’t have like any friends after this happened. Cuz everyone was like I can’t believe you did that to Blaire. Blah blah blah and just like, she went to [my catholic school too], she switched schools cuz she
went to public school with me, and she didn’t have like any friends at all. So, bad part on me, but I made rumors up just cuz I got in trouble and it wasn’t my fault at all.

Interviewer: How are the girls who are hurt by social aggression, the victims, how do they respond?

Blaire: Well, as I was a victim, like, I started going through depression, like I still have it, cuz I been real hurt by people at [school]. I cut myself to get out of it, like I don’t know, but I think like a lot of people just like start rumors about other people. Like after I did this to Kayla like I haven’t really done that ever again, cuz, I know how it hurt. I know how it feels, now, so…

Interviewer: Do they do anything else besides spread rumors, do they have face to face confrontations, or any—

Blaire: Well the girls—

Interviewer: --to involve people at all?

Blaire: Most of my experience, the girls talk about you behind your back, and if you conf, like go up to them and ask them, cuz I’m that kinda person, I went to public school so I’m not scared to be like why are you talking about me or whatever, they pretty much deny it. And they like make up a whole nother story like why they brought it up or something like that, they don’t really come out and say, yeah I did it. Like I had this girl talk about me and one of my friends told me cuz they were in the same class. And he said, he like told her and I got her number and I called her and she just made up this whole lie and said that she was never talking about me someone brought my name up and…obviously I’m gonna believe my friend that told me about it, so, yeah.

Interviewer: And when stuff like that happens, when you do try to call somebody out and they lie to your face, what does that person do, in response to you?

Blaire: What if like, what would they say?
Interviewer: Yeah.

Blaire: They’ll just like try to get more mad and start talking more, like I cannot believe she called me and said that to me

Interviewer: And eventually this all like fizzles out, like it gets resolved, or does it never get resolved? Or how does it—

Blaire: Well this girl that I’m talking about now we have never been friends, ever. Because she I dated her boyfriend today for a few days in like seventh grade which is ridiculous, I mean it was in seventh grade it doesn’t mean anything so I was like get over yourself but, she keeps doing it all the time. But I’m kind of over it now. I’m just like whatever. We’re not in second grade anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah. And she just continues to bring up stuff?

Blaire: Yeah.

Interviewer: Like how often?

Blaire: Um, I really don’t know. Cuz I really don’t talk to that many people at [the catholic school] anymore. Cuz they just, well most of the girls, I talk to all the guys.

Interviewer: Yeah

Blaire: But the girls are just ridiculous.

Interviewer: Back when you were there, do you know how much she—

Blaire: Well I still go there, but um

Interviewer: Oh ok this is at [catholic school] not [the public school].

Blaire: Probably like once a week, more, I don’t know. At [the public school] no one ever talked about anyone, everyone was friends. But at like [catholic school] if there’s anyone new, cuz they
been together for so long, like if anyone else comes in the picture they just talk about em. They talk about their own best friends and don’t even care.

Interviewer: Why do you think they do that?

Blaire: Cuz they don’t want their group to split up.

[pause]

Interviewer: So they’ll talk about each other, hoping that their group doesn’t split up…

Blaire: Like if you get--

Interviewer: --but they’ll still say mean things about each other?

Blaire: Like if you get, like two of em together and cuz me and my friend Corey, like I take him home from school, he dates one of the girls that are in this group, and we used to be really good friends, and she, like if you get two, two of the girls like in a group, they’ll talk about one of the other ones and then if he, like, he went and told the other girl they were talkin about it they would just never say anything to her. It’s like eh, whatever. But if I said something about them, they would like freak out and go crazy.

[pause]

Interviewer: And have you ever been the victim of social aggression?

Blaire: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah? Do you remember the specific instance, off the top of your memory, do you remember what happened, who was there, why? How often it happened? Who, what, when, where, why of the whole thing?

Blaire: Um, well I’ll tell you this like happened the, this summer actually. I had a best friend named Kelsey, and we been best friends since we were like five. She lived down the street from me, still does, and um like, my mom’s like her mom basically, and she was over there getting
something and my mom caught her in a lie, cuz she’s like a, she lies a lot and so my mom just like called her out on one, and like Kelsey got like mad about it and like started telling my mom all this stuff, cuz like this summer I was like crazy, and like did a not of bad stuff cuz I was like bipolar depressed or something (we just found medicine for it) but um, she like told my mom all this stuff and, got me, like I was at work actually and my mom called me and started yelling at me like crazy, and I like asked Kelsey about it and she started lying to me. Like I called her on her cell phone and she started lying to me my mom was right, like, on, she came to my work, and it was just, I don’t know, it was hard like losing a best friend over something like that. Yeah. And now she like talks about me all the time. She goes to [catholic school] too.

[pause]

Interviewer: And then what did you do back to her?

Blaire: Mmm hmmm, cuz if I woulda done something like more people woulda turned against me at [catholic school] and I was going to that school, like that year, coming after the summer.

Interviewer: Did she go there before you?

Blaire: Yeah. Cuz she went to public school with me and then freshman year she went to [catholic]. And like her mom died two months ago from cancer, and I to, like that was my second mom basically cuz I was there every single day since we were five. And she started talking about me saying I didn’t even know her mom and all this stuff, and I was like you gotta be crazy, like I been in your house every single day, so she was talkin about me for that. For like being sad that your mom died. I was like I’m sorry!

Interviewer: So even when something new comes up, like, her mom’s death is obviously a point of contention with you guys--

Blaire: Yeah
Interviewer: Like is it still brought in, points of contention about your relationship--

Blaire: Yeah

Interviewer: Just because she’s still bitter?

Blaire: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. Cool. And that stuff happens with like good friends, what, like once a year maybe? More so, or?

Blaire: Yeah. Probably once a year.

Interviewer: Yeah. What about some of the smaller, like the daily in and out conflicts?

Blaire: Um, well this girl Nicole I was talking about she was hating me or whatever, whenever I see her in the hallway, just to like be rude to like, turn to someone and just, like, be like immature about it, and like start talkin about me and like say my name loud so I can hear it. Like look at me roll her eyes.

Interviewer: How come she does that to you?

Blaire: Um, she really doesn’t even have a reason to hate me, I’ve never done anything to her, it’s just that I dated her ex-boyfriend.

Interviewer: Ok this is the girl we were talking about, like up here. I’ll note that. And you say you don’t really do anything back to her?

Blaire: I mean I confront her.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Blaire: Because it’s just, so, she, whenever I confront her she never really does anything, doesn’t have anything to say. She’s just like whatever, don’t talk to me. And it’s like ok, stop talking about me. Like I feel like they don’t have any lives cuz they just talk about people. And that’s
all that [catholic school] is. [pause] Like since I been a victim of all this, I really don’t talk about people anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah

Blaire: Cuz I knew how bad it hurts and what people do, like to try to like get out of the pain or whatever, so…

Interviewer: What kind of excuses does she come up with to talk about you?

Blaire: Well when I called her that one day, cuz Corey told me she was talking bout me, she said that someone brought my name up in a conversation, like not even a bad conversation about me, just like, I think it was about swimming, and she just like started talking about me, she was like “well somebody just brought my, brought your name up, so I just happened, so I just had to say something.” I was like if somebody brings my name up do you have to talk about me, like, does it re, like, if somebody talking about me good, and then she has to like bring in something negative about it.

Interviewer: Ok. And you don’t really retaliate against her. How do you generally act, generally react to her?

Blaire: mmm, mean like I roll my eyes back and stuff to her cuz I mean

Interviewer: Yeah

Blaire: I’m not just gonna put up with it. I mean if it was just a one time thing I’d get over it but it’s like I feel like it’s every single day.

Interviewer: Do other people talk about these people?

Blaire: Yeah

Interviewer: That talk about you? What do you—

Blaire: But they’re friends, like,
Interviewer: Yeah

Blaire: It’s weird, like everyone at [catholic school]’s like friends, but they talk about everyone?
Interviewer: Yeah

Blaire: And then they’re like, still friends. I can’t figure it out. But if I talk about someone, like they would hate me.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what reasons do they come up with to talk about their friends?

Blaire: Just dumb reasons, like she’s a follower or something retarded.

Interviewer: And when they talk about each other are they confined to that social circle or does somebody from this clique talk about someone from this clique, and like, they’re all over the place?

Blaire: Well, it’s from different cliques but I think most stays inside their own clique.

Interviewer: Do you think that they’re just bored, and—

Blaire: Yeah.

Interviewer: that they have legitimate reasons or..?

Blaire: Cuz they don’t really have any friends outside their own little clique.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Blaire: Like I have friends from every school, so I really don’t care about them.

[pause]

Interviewer: Um, have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends? Like spreading rumors about Kayla, do you do--?

Blaire: Well when I get mad at one of my friends I’ll talk about them, but nothing crazy like I’ll go out of my way to make them miserable. [pause] But that’s just like normal I guess. If you get mad a friend you’re gonna talk about them. But now it’s like the whole world. Like usually
when I get mad at a friend I’ll talk about them to one of my other friends, but these girls like talk to every single person at [catholic school] to get like everyone against you.

[pause]

Interviewer: What purpose does that serve for them, to get everybody against you?

Blaire: Makes them feel better.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do they only get everyone against new kids or do they get everyone against anyone that they’re mad at?

Blaire: Anyone that they’re mad at. But if you, I like, I think it’s more like the new kids that they don’t like cuz they don’t get mad at the people from their own cliques, even though they talk about em. I don’t know, it’s weird. How they act.

[pause]

Interviewer: And you remember a specific instance where you were socially aggressive to someone, what happened, who was there, why, when?

Blaire: Um, this is kinda like little, but—

Interviewer: That’s fine.

Blaire: One of my friends made out with my ex-boyfriend, that like, he was like my first love and everything, so like, it made me like really upset, and I just like talked about her and to other people, but no one like hated her. That was probably like one of the…yeah. I’m not really socially aggressive. I used to be, I only remember it cuz it was like back—but now that I’ve been like the victim of it, I don’t really do it anymore.

Interviewer: Um, did it ever get back to this girl who made out with your ex that you were talking about her?

Blaire: I told her to her face—
Interviewer: Oh really?

Blaire: I’m not, yeah, and even if someone did tell her I wouldn’t have cared, cuz I called her and confronted her, I’m just, I’m just that kind of person.

Interviewer: How did she feel, what did she do?

Blaire: She felt like crap, cuz she was drunk when she did it. She wasn’t like sober or anything, so, but she was like I was drunk, I was like that’s not an excuse, you can’t use that as, I mean you knew that was my ex-boyfriend.

Interviewer: Did she like him?

Blaire: Mm mm [no]

Interviewer: Did she do it to get at you, or..?

Blaire: She just did it, I don’t know

Interviewer: She didn’t really have a reason, she was drunk, he was there, why not?

Blaire: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And did she retaliate against you at all for—

Blaire: Mm mm [no]

Interviewer: --saying anything?

Blaire: We’re friends now cuz this happened like a year ago, so…

[pause]

Interviewer: How come you were able to retain your friendship?

Blaire: Like be your friend again?

Interviewer: Yeah
Blaire: We just became friends like not that long ago, probably like two months ago, I don’t know, cuz I just kinda got over it. It wasn’t worth it. Like, we used to be really good friends, it wasn’t worth losin a friend over. So, yeah.

[pause]

Interviewer: If one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful and why?

Blaire: Um, that’s hard.

Interviewer: Yeah we’re bustin out the big guns.

Blaire: Um, like what would the rumor be?

Interviewer: Yeah like hypothetically if someone were to do the most damage to you, what would be most hurtful?

Blaire: Probably if I, if it was like one of my best friends, if I told them something that no one else knew, about like anything I guess, even if it wasn’t like huge but I told them not to tell anyone cuz it would like hurt me,

Interviewer: Yeah

Blaire: if anyone found out, that’d probably be the most hurtful. [pause] Like even if it wasn’t a rumor, it was like the truth, but them telling people…

[pause]

Interviewer: Anything particular that comes to mind that would be like a really terrible secret for anyone to know, or, I guess you don’t have to tell me your deepest darkest secrets or anything, but something maybe about your sex life, or if you were doing drugs, or something along those lines, or would it be something family-related, or--?
Blaire: Um, probably sex life and like when I, when I first like had depression stuff, like the first time I cut myself, I told my boyfriend Ben cuz that was the guy I like, first, like in love with or whatever, and, and I told Reagan and she told my mom and I guess it like, it helped, but like it hurt, too, that I, she promised not to tell anyone, and she did.

Interviewer: You said that it helped did it also hurt, did you and Reagan become better friends after that or are you not as good friends?

Blaire: Well we’re not as good friends anymore, not because of that

Interviewer: Ok. How come you aren’t as good friends anymore?

Blaire: Well we’re still like friends but she hangs out with the clique I’m not really as good friends with. But she lives like two houses down so we’re still like, we still hang out but not as much as we used to. Before she like came involved in this clique.

Interviewer: Has she ever talked about you or you ever talked about her?

Blaire: No.

Interviewer: She just kinda fizzled away?

Blaire: Yeah, like if we see each other we say hey and stuff, it’s not, we’re not like being, it’s just how friendships grow apart.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, how, in your friendships, how do you know when somebody becomes like a best friend where you can actually trust them, like how do you get to that point?

Blaire: I don’t know, it’s kinda hard now that I’ve lost two best friends

Interviewer: Yeah.

Blaire: From like telling my mom like I don’t know, like, so I really don’t know. Cuz that was my best friend since we were like five. So, I thought I could trust her and stuff

Interviewer: Right
Blaire: But, I have like a, my best friend now is, her name’s Laura, and like, she, I feel like I can trust her, I don’t know how, it’s like, she’s always there for me I guess. She’s been there through like everything, like all through my depression she’s helped me, and she’s close to my like parents so that’s, an issue, I know she wouldn’t ever do anything to me, like hurt me.

Interviewer: And she hasn’t?

Blaire: mm mm [no]

[pause]

Interviewer: If someone did spread a rumor or told like told one of your secrets to everybody, what would your response be?

Blaire: Oh if I heard it from someone else I would go up to them and ask them if they did and if they said, like I would probably go off, basically, and like when Kayla told my mom whatever I even though it was a lie I like started rumors about her. But if it happened now, I would probably be mean to that person, not go out and make people hate her, whatever.

[pause]

Interviewer: Do you think that people, your friends, would hate that person, because they hurt you?

Blaire: Yeah. [pause] Cuz like my friends hated Kayla but none of my friends hated Kelsey, cuz Kelsey is more like, with more friends with them than they were with Kayla.

Interviewer: And then like would those friends ever spread rumors about Kayla or Kelsey? Or something like that? Well maybe Kayla not Kelsey, but stuff like that?

Blaire: They did when this happened, since it was like last summer, but, it was bad.

Interviewer: If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t gonna be your friend anymore, or something along those lines, something hurtful—
Blaire: Yeah

Interviewer: Um, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor, or would a rumor be more hurtful?

Blaire: Um, I think a rumor would be more hurtful cuz it’d be goin out to other people. Other than her just coming up to me and saying, cuz it’s just between me and her, not everyone else.

[pause]

Interviewer: If someone did confront you with some kind of issue or told you that she didn’t wanna be friends anymore, uh, what would your response be?

Blaire: Um, not really sure. I’d be really upset but I don’t think, I guess eventually I’d get over it, not really sure. I never had someone actually like come up to me and say I don’t wanna be your friend anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah, it is kind of an awkward thing to say—

Blaire: Yeah.

Interviewer: I’ve never had that happen either, where you know, someone came up to my face and told me they had a problem with me. But deep down I’d have to respect em a little more than if she spread a rumor about it.

Blaire: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think you would be likely to talk bad about a person who came up to your face and brought forth an issue, or would you just let it rest and like, alright?

Blaire: I’d probably let it rest. Well I would talk about it to like, my close, to like my best friends. Be like oh my god I hate that girl, or whatever. But I wouldn’t put it out in public, like not out to everyone to know, just like let it rest, but like talk about it to my really close friends. Cuz they wouldn’t spread it to anyone.
Interviewer: And what kind of things would a girl have to do about you or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

Blaire: Um, well somebody hasn’t really like done any, like I don’t really talk about people anymore, like out in public, but before, like, wait can you repeat the question one more time, I got confused.

Interviewer: Sure. What kind of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to retaliate?

Blaire: It could really be like anything, even if it was small, like, saying, like, even like, is your, your, somebody just said something about her hair looks bad or her outfit, like I would go up and be like why can’t you just say it to my face? Like do you really have to spread something like that?

Interviewer: So you actually confront them about it?

Blaire: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what kind of things would you do to retaliate?

Blaire: Like with Kayla, I spread it everywhere

Interviewer: Yeah?

Blaire: like what she did to me, I made everyone hate her. Like I don’t think she had one friend. That sounds so mean right now, like looking back on it, but, I don’t really regret it at all because it was so mean what she did to me.

Interviewer: How, how is she now, do you know? Do you hear anything about her?

Blaire: Well we go to the same school, so,
Interviewer: Ok.

Blaire: Um, she’s a sophomore, and I had gym with her, so I have gym in the morning with the freshmen and gym in the afternoon with the sophomores so I been with her this whole month for three hours every day, and I don’t know, but like we’re like cool with each other, we just don’t really talk, I guess. We’re on the same swim team and stuff, so we kinda have to be like friendly, but it’s not like hey, let’s hang out. It’s like, hey, what’s up, that’s about it. I hated her for like ever until this like past year. I still don’t like her but it’s not as bad as it was.

[pause]

Interviewer: Um, well I guess, what are tell me about the nature of conflicts, I mean, that’s a really big question, but how do they start, what are they like in the heat of things, how do they end, at what point, um, is it finally over, is it never really over?

Blaire: Uh, it kind of depends on what the conflict is. If it’s like a little conflict I think that it’s more of a it’s between two people kind of a thing, not like, doesn’t get out to people and it’s just yelling kind of, and then, they usually end. Like they don’t go on for a while. But bigger conflicts, as like Kayla telling my mom that stuff, that went on for a year, and we’re still not even friends. There’s still like heat when we’re around each other.

Interviewer: Do small conflicts ever end up escalating into something big?

Blaire: Yeah. Cuz more, like, it could be like a little conflict and then one of em’ll bring in something like from a long time ago and just make it huger.

[pause]

Interviewer: Do any of these conflicts ever end up in physical violence usually, or is it mostly behind the back?
Blaire: It’s mostly behind the back. When I went to public school though, don’t wanna be mean, but like white trash, they would like fight about it, but mostly girls just behind the back stuff and guys are the ones that fight about it.

Interviewer: Ok. Um, is there anything else I should know, I guess about how people continue on conflicts, how they retaliate, or…? Again, that’s a really big question, and you’re doin really well handling the big questions, which I really appreciate.

[pause]

Blaire: Um, I’m not really sure, um,

Interviewer: That’s ok.

Blaire: I’m not really sure.

Interviewer: Ok cool, well I guess that’s all I have. I don’t think I have any other questions.

You did a good job.
Jillian, age 13

Interviewer: So basically my project, I’m sure your mom probably explained it a little to you. I’m looking at social aggression, which is like, everybody, all girls have experienced it at some point, you know,

Jillian: [laughs]

Interviewer: it’s just a fancy word for gossiping, backstabbing, any behavior that tries to make someone feel bad about themself or damage their social status, so they’ll be popular, and you know, she thinks somebody else is getting popular and she doesn’t want that girl to be popular she might spread a rumor about her to make her not popular anymore, you know, things like that. Um and it can include anything from gossiping and backstabbing to even just like rolling your eyes and saying whatever, cold shoulder, trying to get people not to be their friend, um, anything, and I know when I say that you probably know what I’m talking about, right?

Jillian: Yeah.

Interviewer: You’re like yeah, right I know, but I just wanna make sure if I use that word then you’ll understand, like everything that it encompasses.

Jillian: Yeah.

Interviewer: Cool, so how old are you, are you 12?

Jillian: I’m 13.

Interviewer: 13 ok.

Jillian: Yeah

Interviewer: I’m terrible at guessing ages. I’m better if I you told me like what grade you’re in and you said, seventh?

Jillian: I’m in eighth.
Interviewer: You’re in eighth? Well that’s close…

Jillian: [laughs]

Interviewer: I’m better at that…

Jillian: I’m one of the younger in my grade.

Interviewer: Ok.

Jillian: So

Interviewer: Yeah I was always like one of the older ones, so, um, well good deal. Just to preface, I guess, if you have any questions for me about what I’ve gone through, I’ve gone through social aggression pretty badly before, um, so, my life’s an open book if you wanna ask me any questions, that’s fine, and feel free to be open and honest with me like whatever your experiences, whether you’ve been hurt or whether you’ve hurt someone else, it’s totally cool I’m not here to judge, just here to gather information.

Jillian: [laughs]

Interviewer: Feel free to just, and we’ll chat away!

Jillian: Ok.

Interviewer: So my first question is, when girls get angry at their friends, do you think they do socially aggressive things?

Jillian: I think they do, well I usually, I’ve seen a lot of drama but I really don’t usually engage in it, but yeah I’ve seen it because well my softball team, we go and we stay in this hotel, so there’s this a bunch of girls 14 or 15 girls in one hotel and there’s always a lot of aggression like wooo and stuff and so, I’ve seen a lot of like very very rude words said to each other.

Interviewer: Like what?
Jillian: Oh, lot of curse words actually, well cuz I’m on an older team and oh my goodness there’s a lot of like bickering back and forth. [sigh]

Interviewer: Yeah?

Jillian: Some, like, I’ve never seen like physical aggression but I’ve seen like the raising of the voice and stuff. [coughs]

Interviewer: Oh that sounds bad. [laughs]

Jillian: Yeah, getting over it.

Interviewer: Oh…well that’s good. You’re in the early batch, cuz there’s a lot of people that are just getting sick now.

Jillian: Yeah.

Interviewer: Hopefully you’ll be able to get it all cleared out pretty soon before everyone else gets sick.

Jillian: [laughs] Usually I see it over guys a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Jillian: Cuz well, I have a couple of friends, and they’re well I don’t, you’d say they were in the more popular group or whatever and like, they like this guy, but their best friend is dating the guy that they like so they always bicker back and forth and do nasty things behind their back.

But oh my goodness, I’ve had that happen to me before

Interviewer: Yeah?

Jillian: So…but…

Interviewer: Do you have like a story you can tell about maybe like the girl that’s dating this guy, like exactly what the girls are doing with each other and stuff like that?
Jillian: Yeah. Um, well, my best friend is dating this guy and they’re like, it is so adorable but my other friend has a crush on him, and so, my friend embarrasses my other friend in front of her boyfriend, like telling him everything we do at sleepovers and parties. I feel, I feel really bad for her, and so and she went behind her friend’s back and talked to her boyfriend, and said that she has a belching problem and that if he tried to make a move she’d burp in his face, just nasty stuff like that, trying to get them to break up. But, oh my goodness.

Interviewer: Did your friend do anything back to this girl?

Jillian: No, my friend she’s usually really really quiet and not really the more aggressive kind, she’s really sweet and innocent and everything, she, she just lets it go and everything and tells her boyfriend that it’s not true, but we all tell him that it’s not true. So, but she’s like, she’s one of the sweeter kind. She doesn’t engage in anything, so…

Interviewer: Does the girl who is telling her, this other girl’s boyfriend all this stuff, does that girl get mad at you guys for siding with your friend?

Jillian: No she doesn’t know that we side with my friend [laugh] so but we just think it’s really wrong, there’s something, there’s something very wrong going on with that girl. She used to be really nice, but she’s become really vicious lately. So

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Is there any reason you can see?

Jillian: No. We, we been trying to find out for a long time, but…w, we know her parents are very overprotective and so we’ve come up with a hypothesis, uh, I cannot talk today, hypothesis that she’s rebelling against her parents and she’s doing all these things. She got her hair dyed black and she cut it all off because she had this beautiful long blonde curly hair and she dyed it, so, but…something’s very weird going on with her, so…but…ugh…we we’re my friends, we’re not
really in the most popular crowd or whatever you’d call it. We’re more towards being geeks, so…

Interviewer: Ok, so am I.

Jillian: Yeah we still got a lot of drama, being geeks. So…ugh…

Interviewer: Do you perceive more of the drama to be happening with the popular crowd?

Jillian: Yeah, there’s a lot, um, actually there’s something going on right now that I heard, because I have a couple friends that are in the more popular crowd that um, and they like, a whole bunch of drama because this girl was saying rude stuff behind this girl’s back and so, um, the girl found out and so she’s really angry, and she’s, she’s known for fighting, but it’s mmm, there’s a lot of it, cuz people going behind people’s backs, cuz that’s just what happens. It happens more with like popular people, so. [coughs] Oh my goodness.

Interviewer: Do you know why?

Jillian: Mm no!…no, it’s I think it’s just cuz certain people think they’re better than other people, and they just, like, I don’t know, they think they’re better than like all the other girls and they try to get all the guys and so, cuz, like, they’re all like really really pretty, and they just think that they’re the best and everybody loves em but really everybody hates em cuz they’re just really mean. So, actually today um, at track conditioning there’s these really really like uh, rude seventh graders and like everybody loves em and they’re not really pretty. One of em actually went behind my back because I was dating this really cute guy and at a party and made him dump me two days after my dog died.

Interviewer: Oh no!

Jillian: Yep, and it was over the phone and he made his best friend do it.

Interviewer: How did she get him to do that?
Jillian: I don’t I am not sure, she’s skinny and beautiful, and, but, it was at this party and she was all flirting with him and I’m just not that kinda person that I like, like I don’t know, how, like, I don’t, I don’t know how to explain it, I’m just like not the kinda person that would like put myself out there all in front of a guy, all over him. And since, and she just did that and I didn’t realize the guy was a jerk, but yeah, so…[sigh] [coughs] It’s just, oh my goodness.

Interviewer: And then like, how did you respond when he, you know, when you found out that she did that and he broke up with you?

Jillian: Oh, well, whenever he did it over the phone, I was, I was pretty angry. And then I got to school and I hear that they’re dating. It was on Monday and I hear that they’re dating. Oh my gosh, but everybody was so angry at him for doing that. I just, I just didn’t really like talk to him anymore cuz I was so angry and so I just pretty much ignored him. And then I get this note from him one day saying like why are you, and he said why are you ignoring me and everything, and I was like ha, I wonder why

Interviewer: Yeah

Jillian: But, he’s more the popular crowd, but…it’s just…mmm, sometimes it makes me angry that they get all the guys but, I like, I had a crush on this guy once, oh my gosh, he was so ador, he was so cute and um, my friend knew about it. And one of my friends accidentally slipped it out to one of the really rude seventh grader people and so, the seventh, the really mean seventh grader was um, flirting with him so much in front of me, cuz my locker was right next to him, and she would just flirt and flirt just to make me angry, but when, today, she was like hey Jillian, and acting all innocent, I was like, ok whatever, but, they’re just sneaky nasty, I don’t know.
Interviewer: And then, like what did you do? Either, well actually in both instances, when like what do you do, did you do anything to the girl who caused your boyfriend to break up with you or have you done anything to this seventh grade girl at all, whether it’s just like Jillian: I—I haven’t---

Interviewer: ignore her or facilitate a rumor about anything.

Jillian: I really haven’t. Really there’s just like laughing, and it’s just with all my friends and we just like laugh and well everybody, everybody hates them but acts like they love them for some reason, but um, and there’s just talking behind the back and laughing. That’s pretty much all I do, but I try not to, but sometimes it’s just hard not to, so, but if it would have been somebody else, like, uh, I know this one girl and she’s vicious, but if that woulda been her, oh my goodness there woulda been so much drama, and, she’s known for, the girl that is known for fighting, and that, she, oh my goodness there woulda been like a major catfight with her. So, but, eighth grade has been the toughest year for me with like all the bickering because people just aren’t mature about anything anymore, so I just ignore it as much as I can. But, [coughs]

Interviewer: Has there ever been an instance where you’ve been socially aggressive toward someone else?

Jillian: Well, um, I haven’t said stuff to people’s faces cuz I’m just not that kinda person I guess. But in other instances with other girls there woulda been. I’m just, I guess I’m not that kinda person. Cuz, because like, when that happened to me with, whenever she made out, my boyfriend dumped me, like um, everybody was so angry and they’re like Jillian you’re too nice. Why don’t you ever do something? But I just let it go and go right through me, cuz don’t let those things bother me [laughs].

Interviewer: Do they ever bother you anyway though?
Jillian: They bother me a lot, I just keep it to myself. Well actually I was on my laptop, whenever I get really angry I just I have this like hidden document that I can only get to, and I just write on it and write to get my feelings out, cuz that’s what I have to do. And then at sleepovers there’s a lot of crying. We need to get our feelings out because there’s just a lot of things said about us because we’re not the prettiest people in the world, but, it’s it’s fun, but I just go home and type and get all my feelings out so I don’t actually do something, so [coughs]

Interviewer: But generally, have you like um, kind of helped aided in spreading rumors, I guess, like if someone’s talking about them will you like kind of chime in say--?

Jillian: Yeah,

Interviewer: Yeah?

Jillian: Yeah I have done that. I hate to say it, but yeah I have.

Interviewer: That’s ok we’ve all done it.

Jillian: Yeah. [laughs] We, we’re all [incomprehensible]. [laughs] Yeah, I say I have, but…

Interviewer: Can you remember a particular time where like, recently maybe or even in the past where--?

Jillian: Yes, I have. Um, well, I’m, this girl has a crush on my boyfriend at the moment and so we were talking about it, and I had heard something about it that I didn’t, I didn’t know if it was true or not, I shouldn’ta said it, but I, I told, them, um, I told them something embarrassing about her, it’s really really bad. Now this whole thing’s going around the school that I, I didn’t start it I just added to it cuz I can’t keep my mouth shut, so, but I have added to drama a little bit, and yeah, so, but usually stuff doesn’t get out, I wouldn’t really call it a clique but like, like, out li, our little group of friends and stuff, usually stuff doesn’t go out of there but if I ever talk to my friends that are like more popular, stuff gets out. A lot. So…[coughs] Oh my goodness.
Interviewer: Alright. Generally, how do you think girls who are hurt by social aggression respond?

Jillian: Um, I have heard about this one girl over the summer, well it happened on the last day of school and it was, there was a really bad rumor about her and she gained 15 pounds over the summer. And I think cuz, well there’s just, I don’t, I don’t know, they just try to respond by fighting back and trying to defend themselves and spreading new rumors about the other person and uh, sometimes they’re just not very nice, and what I usually see is that they just grab everybody around them, find support and sorta like get people on their side or whatever you wanna call it and so they just have support and so they like can bicker against someone and feel larger than the person who started the rumor. I see that during softball a lot. And, yeah, and I just mainly think people do it, just start drama just to make themselves feel better, like, make themselves feel more prettier or greater than the other person. So, like…[coughs] [laughs]

Interviewer: What specific actions do you think people do, other?

Jillian: Um they talk behind their back a lot. I have done that, but um, and they, well, the whole like group and clique and stuff they just like talk about each other, and start rumors, and I’ve seen girls, this group of girls that were in a fight for two years and they just split up and never talked to each other. So, and there’s just a lot of bickering back and forth. So…[coughs] [sigh]

Interviewer: Um, if one of your friend—friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful and why?

Jillian: Um, probably the most hurtful rumor, well, I have this deepest darkest secret because I, I have a crush on my best guy friend since first grade, and they, and only one of my friends knows it, and if they ever said anything I would, oh my goodness, cuz I’ve had a crush on this guy since first grade and I’ve never told anybody or anything and so, um, it’s just, I don’t know, I wouldn’t
like it cuz I know for a fact he had a crush on me but it’d just be too weird cuz we’re just really good friends. That would be, ugh, I don’t...it’s just think about the fact of my friend saying that about me, and like, without my consent, and talking about that, oh I would be devastated because that would be really embarrassing.

Interviewer: What made you trust her with that information?

Jillian: Well we’ve been friends since kindergarten and she tells me all of her secrets and so one night we told, we were talkin about crushes and then I accidentally blurted it out, and I was thinking about it, well I can trust her I mean, and this was in fifth grade I told her and she’s just one of my best friends and since kindergarten we can tell each other anything. We talk on the phone so much and we sleep over at each other’s house every weekend or every other weekend. It’s like, we talk a lot and we’re just really good friends. And so, but we’re better friends than any of, me with any of my other friends. Yeah, we tell each other everything. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you know like a lot of anybody else’s secrets? That maybe you’re the only one that knows?

Jillian: I do. My—one of my best friends her name is, her name’s Ellen and she is so sweet and innocent and so quiet and I actually just met her in seventh grade, it was at a cross country camp over the summer and she is just so sweet and we just clicked, like that, so fast, we were like best friends by the end of the three-day camp. And um, she was so sweet and so one day I had a sleepover after one of the dances, it was a couple of weeks ago, and we were in the car and it’s like Jillian, you know, I been meaning to tell you something for like a long time and I just can’t hold it in any longer, so I was like what, and she was like, I have this big crush on this guy since the third grade and it was so cute because she’s really sweet. But he’s not the cutest guy but his personality makes him really cute and like I’ve had a crush on him since the third grade, it was
so sweet and she’s, she was better friends with another girl and um, so, um I just lost my train of thought, yeah she was best friends with this other girl since first grade, she never told, and she told, I can’t believe she told me and didn’t tell her other friend. I was very surprised.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jillian: I’m the only one that knows.

Interviewer: Would you ever tell that information to anybody?

Jillian: No. I, she’s too sweet I would never never do that. I’m just not that kinda person. I mean, I don’t know, it’s just, she’s so sweet and she just trusted me. I felt like oh my gosh I cannot tell her, I-I cannot tell anybody because she trusted me.

Interviewer: Yeah. If she made you really mad would you consider telling that information to anyone?

Jillian: Um, maybe to one of my other friends, bur, I don’t know, I guess I’d just need to let it all out, but it, Ellen’s not the one that would make me mad, that’s the thing, but if it was somebody else, then I might have considered but she’s so sweet, so, I, I could have done it to another person

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jillian: If I was mad enough, but

Interviewer: Ok.

Jillian: She’s so sweet.

Interviewer: If somebody did tell your deepest darkest secret about your crush that you’ve had for such a long time, how would you respond?

Jillian: Oh I would break down, cry, and I don’t, I would be so embarrassed, because I know he’s had a crush on me but we’re just really good friends now, but I, oh my gosh I would be very
angry but, again I’m not one of those person, people that will like actually start rumors. I will add to them, I will admit that, but I don’t I don’t start them usually. I, that would be very very mean and cuz oh my goodness, I don’t, I don’t know what I would do. Probably write it all down, cuz that, that always helps. So that’s probably why I’m usually not in too much drama. [sigh]

Interviewer: What would you do to the people who told it?

Jillian: Um, I….I would probably like tell her, tell her how I would feel, but, then, I….would probably be angry at her so I I probably wouldn’t like consider us friends like for a long time until we gained trust back from each other. But if it would have been somebody else, if it would have been another person, I probably would have um, written them a note or something saying I was really angry and we should probably take a break from each other for a while so nothing happens, so, but Ellen’s so sweet, I could never do that do her.

Interviewer: If someone told you face to face that she wasn’t gonna be your friend anymore, or if she brought forth a conflict with you face to face, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor about the same thing? Or would a rumor be more hurtful?

Jillian: I think a rumor would be a lot more hurtful because rumors aren’t true. But if she said something to my face about it then I could consider and possibly think about it, what I’m doing, and then I could change it. But rumors just add to more rumors and more rumors and so this pretty much everybody fighting, but….so…I just [sigh]

Interviewer: If someone did tell you that they didn’t want to be your friend anymore or something like that, how would you respond?

Jillian: I would probably um, I would probably say ok I’m sorry you feel that way, but if you would explain to me what I did wrong I’m sure we can get along again, but, um, like, one time,
A Typology of Retaliation

this, this girl wrote a note, er with my friend Faith and I, wrote us notes cuz we were friends for the longest time and she wrote us notes one day just out of the blue saying that she hated us and she never wanted to be our friend again, we’re boring and we’re too involved with running, and so, and so we, we actually approached her and we told her how we felt and that we didn’t like her like blowing up on us all the time. Cuz like we didn’t think we were doing anything wrong, she should have told us what we were doing what wrong. But ugh…I don’t…I just, would rather write notes cuz I think it would be harder to approach somebody face to face about a conflict if it was a really good friend, it’d be better to write notes so nothing actually happens, but I, it’d be tough going face to face, that’s for sure

Interviewer: Yeah

Jillian: But

Interviewer: What kind of things would a girl have to do or say about you in order for you to actually retaliate?

Jillian: Um they, they would probably have to say something about like my weight, or, or like my hair, or I don’t, or something like that, or the, well up until, like a couple months ago, that I never kissed a guy or something, and um, that I don’t know, I just, ugh, I would be so angry, because I’m definitely not the skinniest girl in my class and oh my gosh, that would be so embarrassing…if they told somebody I had never kissed a guy, but, that’s oh my gosh, cuz that’s just something that people do, they get underneath your skin, and ugh, do the nastiest things, so…

Interviewer: If you were to retaliate, what would you do?

Jillian: Um, I would probably I would probably just talk behind their back, cuz I know how rumors feel and I would never wanna do that to a person, but I, I would just talk behind their
back a lot, er, not a lot, but, so, and just talk to my friends about it, and we have a good laugh, and so, it’s just sometimes it just makes you feel better if you talk about em, if they did something to hurt you, so…

Interviewer: How do conflicts usually happen? Do they start from small things or are they big things?

Jillian: Usually one time, it was, it was, er it was on the softball team and we were all in the hotel room, and um somebody was doing a backbend or something and they fell and then somebody chuckled. And so everybody started getting angry at that person for chuckling. Cuz it was actually, it was actually kind of funny at the time, but one person chuckled and they got so angry and this whole thing started. So our coach talked to us about like stuff and not to like engage in it, but we’re eighth graders [laugh]. It’s gonna happen, can’t avoid it, it’s inevitable. [coughs] So..

Interviewer: The girl who was doing the backbend, is she like, really self-conscious, is that why she got angry people were laughing, or--?

Jillian: Um, no…I will admit she does know she’s a little bit on the heavy side, but she is so funny, she wouldn’t be the self-conscious one but, she, like, she, she was like doing a backbend, and I guess when she fell, the person that chuckled didn’t know that it actually hurt her, cuz she actually twisted her arm in a way and so she didn’t know it actually hurt her, and so everybody was angry for that person laughing and it all just started this big like clash and so they were all grabbing people trying to get people on their side and there was a lot of like, it everybody had their own little cliques for the moment and so they like fought and bickered back and forth pretty much on the phone, but, cuz [cough]
Interviewer: And the girl who had been doing the backbend and the girl that chuckled, had they ever had a conflict before, or was this like out of nowhere?

Jillian: Yes they had had many conflicts because one girl was a very, she’s not the nicest person but she’s in high school, well the girl from high school. And the, one girl’s not the nicest person in the world, and the other girl was wasn’t the nicest person in the world and they just didn’t usually get along all the time. But they just…and then the one girl, they seemed to be getting along, but the one girl chuckled and that just started the whole like chain of bickering back and forth.

Interviewer: Yeah. What were they fighting about? Before?

Jillian: I-I personally don’t know. I think it’s just personality conflicts really. Because they just they just really didn’t get along at first. And then the coach talked to em actually and, said, they said it resolved the conflicts, but still you can tell that they have problems with each other. So [coughs].

Interviewer: Um, hmm…let’s see, what can I ask…you mentioned there was not a lot of physical violence, is that generally true for your experience?

Jillian: Yeah it’s just like verbal, I don’t know what you’d call it, verbal harassment I guess, so…I’ve never seen a fight really. But I’ve seen the talking behind the back, and, and the rumors…I I was, there was actually another time in softball of course, well the two girls that were bickering before, they, I heard them, well I had taken one of the girls’ positions at second base and so they were so angry and um, uh one of the girls said I can’t believe she took my base and um, the other girl was like yeah, I don’t know what the coach was thinking, she said, that’s bull crap. So, and I heard them cuz I was standing right behind them. They didn’t know. And oh my gosh I bawled. But I talked to the coach to see what was really going on, and so, I don’t
know, I’m usually like I don’t engage in it a lot, so I just hang out with another girl on the team she’s really sweet, and, but we just watch it, it’s so funny to watch them. And it really is hurtful. I, and I don’t know why I never did it, but girls do that, and so [coughs]

Interviewer: Um, let’s see…I had a good thought then I lost it, that happens to me all the time.

Jillian: [laughs]

Interviewer: Um, oh, I was gonna ask you, like what’s your school like, are a lot of the people, is it a lot of white kids a lot of mixed race, a lot of wealthy, not so wealthy?

Jillian: Um. There’s, we do not have an African American boy, or girl in the eighth grade but there is one in the seventh grade, but we aren’t very racist at our school, but there’s there’s a lot of mixing with the wealthy and the less wealthy but nobody really cares at all because, well, all we, all people care about at our school is what you look like and what grades you get, and so, like if you get good grades you’re a geek, but if you’re pretty you’re popular, so, but [coughs]. That’s all we care about.

Interviewer: And is there anything else you think I should know about? How girls fight, the nature of conflicts, how they retaliate, stuff like that?

Jillian: Um, I do not know…I…I don’t think so, except mainly talking behind the back and writing notes, I mean rumors, that’s just pretty much it. I guess like when you, probably get to an older age there probably might be some physical aggression but I’ve never seen it. So, it’s just, like words hurt more than anything else, so, and that’s just, that just leads to a big chain of hurtful things said.

Interviewer: Ok. Good deal.
Gabby, age 14

Interviewer: So I just wanna explain a little bit of what I’m doing. I’m trying to study retaliation patterns to social aggression, which is just a really fancy way of saying someone gossips about you or backstabs you or rolls eyes at you, or tries to get friends to not be your friend, what do you do back?

Gabby: That’s what’s happening right now

Interviewer: Oh really?

Gabby: Been called a control freak, overdramatic girl today, so--

Interviewer: Ok well we’ll have a lot to talk about!

Gabby: --apparently. Apparently. Apparently I’m a control freak, I had no idea.

Interviewer: Well we’ll have a lot to talk about. But this idea of social aggression, is just a fancy a way of saying behaviors that try to make you feel bad about yourself or try to get you to decrease your social status, social standing. Little things like that. Um, like I said, it can include anything gossipping, backstabbing, um, rolling your eyes and saying whatever

Gabby: Mm hmm

Interviewer: That could be considered social aggression. Um, trying to get people to not be your friends, cold shoulder,

Gabby: People do the get people to not be your friends thing all the time, gets on my nerves.

Interviewer: Yeah, well we’ll have a lot to talk about with this too then! Um, but yeah, those are just some basic behaviors that are all encompassed by this term social aggression. So if I say that, you know what I’m talking about, right?

Gabby: Yeah.
Interviewer: Ok. Cool. Well, just to make sure I’m not makin stuff up, because I’m pretty sure I’m not, but hey, people are known to do crazy things.

Gabby: So true.

Interviewer: My first question is, when girls get angry at their friends, do you think they do socially aggressive things?

Gabby: Yeah. I think so.

Interviewer: Yeah? What specifically kind of things do they do?

Gabby: Well, like for example, if one person will be like oh well, you know so and so’s like, for example, a control freak and overdramatic, and, like I would be like, ok, well, and then I go and tell one of my friends what she said and that would kind of start the conversation about, oh my gosh she has no right to, no room to talk cuz here’s what she does wrong and

Interviewer: Ok.

Gabby: Basically just pointing out each other’s flaws to everyone else

Interviewer: Ok. Is that contingent on—oh are they good?

Gabby: No they’re loud.

Interviewer: Oh that’s ok, they’re probably no louder than the Cheez-Its I swear. Is that contingent upon like your level of friendship or is that the way it is no matter if these people are your best friends--?

Gabby: It doesn’t matter who it just, it happens, there’s really no way to avoid it.

Interviewer: Mm hmm. [pause] And then how to the victims who are hurt by social aggression respond?

Gabby: mm, it kind of depends on what kind of person you are. Cuz some people might talk back either to their face or to somebody else, or some people would just let it go. Other people
might write down what makes them upset and stuff and either show it to them or not. Lot of
people do the internet bullying thing back to each other. Fights happen over like MySpace and
stuff.

Interviewer: What usually happens on like MySpace, like how does that go if the fight was
occurring?

Gabby: Ok for example, my friend Kara, she, we, Kara’s and my messaging was just the simple
like hey how ya doing, whatever, and get into a conversation and she would bring up something
like oh well, I really wanna tell you something but I can’t tell you cuz I’m afraid you’ll tell
somebody, stuff like that. Like well why would you bring it up if you’re not gonna tell me? So
I’ll always be like oh well you can trust me, whatever, and this, she’s like actually no I can’t trust
you cuz the last time I told you stuff here’s what you did, blah blah blah. I’m like you know
what? No one asked her opinion, blah blah blah blah blah. Everyone just gets real angry with
each other on that. Lot of people post bulletins about each other too.

Interviewer: Really?

Gabby: Yeah. They’ll be like oh my gosh, this one chick and says, I won’t name em, but I’m
pretty sure you all know who I’m talking about, and like, she’s like so annoying, blah blah blah.
That’s cool, you’re a little…

Interviewer: Wow. I don’t belong to MySpace, I belong to Facebook, so I know like Facebook
stuff, but you can post bulletins on MySpace?

Gabby: Well like a bulletin basically is like when you write like, it kind of looks like email
format, so you write like the bottom with like a heading to it

Interviewer: Ok.
Gabby: And then when you go to your homepage, all of your friends’ bulletins that they posted are listed on there. So you can like click on one of the headings and read it, all of your friends lists can read it. So if you say something about them, every person on your friends list can have access to read that.

Interviewer: Oh my god. Interesting

Gabby: And so like some people you know do use names. Like one time my friend Brooke and I got in a fight and we stopped being friends. She was like oh my gosh I’m so relieved Gabby and I aren’t friends anymore, like, like feel so relieved, I’ve been trying to get that off my chest for like ever, and course two days later we’re friends again.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Gabby: But…

Interviewer: How did you guys become friends again after something like that?

Gabby: Well, the whole thing kinda started over a guy, so she was a little upset about that. But eventually I kind of apologized was like listen, this really honestly was not my fault. Like I didn’t ask him to go out with me, or whatever, break up with you for me, whatever it was that happened I can’t even remember, but, like, I didn’t ask for any of this to happen. And she was like oh well I know I understand, I’m very like, I been so like sad about talking to you, and I’m like I know me too and I get home and like no I actually wasn’t that sad, I’ll just go with that anyway.

Interviewer: Do you think a lot of conflicts start over boys?

Gabby: Oh my gosh all the time.

Interviewer: Yeah.
Gabby: Everyday. Honestly though, like the back story to pretty much everything that you’re ever gonna fight with girls about has to do with a guy somehow. Whether you’re gonna admit it or not.

[pause]

Interviewer: That’s funny. Anything else, like other reasons why girls would have conflicts with each other that maybe wasn’t a guy, like that one percent of the time?

Gabby: Yeah. Um well, schoolwork sometimes kinda. Like when you mess up, er, if you and your friends are in a group for a project and like one person isn’t pulling their weight or something and they’re like, well you’re irresponsible and you’re this and this and this and, it gets very annoying. So they don’t always know like people’s home lives and stuff. They don’t know, maybe they couldn’t type something they were supposed to. That kinda gets in the way of fights too, cuz if people have like not the best home life ever then they can kinda get more angry toward people than other people can, and they’ll kinda laugh at people without meaning to.

Interviewer: Do you know a lot of people who have bad home lives, like at school, or your friends or whatever?

Gabby: Yeah like one of my friends her mom is like kinda abusive to her and stuff, and like she talks to our guidance counselor about it and stuff, but there’s not really a whole lot that you can do about it. But she ends up crying a lot and people think she’s spoiled and think she’s real like dramatic because of that. But half of them don’t know why. So it’s pretty stupid to judge her because they don’t know what’s going on.

Interviewer: Yeah. Does she do anything back to people cuz they might call her spoiled or dramatic?
Gabby: She’s actually, she handles it pretty well. Just kinda like well if that’s their opinion of me then there’s nothing I can really do about it, and kinda admire her for that, because I probably would start talking about somebody.

Interviewer: Alrighty. Have you ever been a victim of social aggression?

Gabby: Oh my gosh, yes, like everyday. Everyone is, it’s just kinda like a vicious cycle.

Interviewer: They’re rockin up there.

Gabby: Ok…

Interviewer: The faculty band has a concert tonight

Gabby: Oh. Fun.

Interviewer: So they’re getting all warmed up.

Gabby: Like teachers and stuff?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Gabby: That’s kinda weird.

Interviewer: They’re very cute, like, in like old people sorta way.

Gabby: That’s funny. That’s like…mmm not very good.

Interviewer: But they’re sweet. Um, had a thought. Is there a time where you can specifically remember, whether it was big or small event, what happened, who was there, why social aggression happened?

Gabby: Ok, there’s been a couple a times when mmm trying to think of a real good one.

Interviewer: You can tell em all.

Gaby: Ok.

Interviewer: Great.
Gabby: Me and Marissa, she’s like one of my best friends now, but this is a couple of weeks ago. Her and my boyfriend Jeff were just like passing notes right in front of my face like all the time. And I’m just like what is it that you’re sayin to him that you can’t say with me right here? Like maybe you guys are like secretly dating or something, I don’t know. And then he would always tell me like, oh we’re just friends, she just really annoys me, and I’m like whatever, you’re like so full of crap. So, she could tell that I was a little upset about it, and so, we were at our Bible study at school and she was sitting up by herself on the bleachers, and I was like Marissa, you need to like join the group, and she was like well, and the, her vast response was like NO. And I’m not, ok well I’m one of the leaders, and yeah you do need to come join the group.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Gabby: And she was like, um, I have permission to be down here, and I’m like, from who, and she’s like Kara. So I go and ask Kara and she’s like yeah I gave her permission to be up there. I’m like oh ok, so I just let it go. I give her like 15 minutes and she’s still sitting up there, and she’s got her notebook, whatever it’s shut this time. And she’s just sitting there like this, and like staring off into space. And I’m like Marissa you need to come join the group if you’re not doing anything. She has the nerve to get off the bleachers, come up and say to me, Gabby, I was up there and I’m not sure if know what this is, but I was thinking. Yeah don’t know if that’s a concept that crosses your mind sometimes. I’m like excuse me?! And yeah, so she would do that kinda stuff and I’m like whatever. So later that day I’m walkin, getting my stuff outta my locker, and she comes walkin down the hallway because apparently I had told Sierra what happened and Sierra goes down and starts telling her Marissa you need to stop being such a jerk, we’ll just say that’s what she said, [laughs] so you need to stop being such a jerk and flirting with Jeff all the time and blah blah blah blah blah. And she comes down screaming at me, I do not
like Jeff! Blah blah, I don’t know why you gettin other people to fight your battles and stuff. I’m like, my exact words to Sierra were do not go up to Marissa about this because I don’t want things to get worse. Of course being a girl she goes and does it anyway. And so basically Marissa and I are having this big fight in the hallway, the teachers came out and were like girls go home! Cuz like, it was like the end of the day and the bell had already rang and stuff so we’re just like fine. So we left after the busses and yeah, that was one of the big ones. Trying to think--

Interviewer: And then what happened, like how did it get resolved? Did Sierra talk like spread other kinds of rumors or—

Gabby: mm Sierra pretty much after I told her let it go she pretty much dropped it but what happened was, oh I remember now! We were doing our choir exams, which is where we have to do this thing with either like you, two people, or three people, and do a song in front of the entire choir and get graded on it. Very nerve wracking.

Interviewer: mm hmm

Gabby: So I was up there and I did my song with um, oh well, two people, er one person, I forget who it is. Dana. That’s it, sorry, couldn’t remember, but, um, so I go up and do my song with Dana and was like, got back in my seat and was like oh my god that sucked so bad or whatever. And I get this note Marissa passes to me and I read it and it says, well, you’re only as good as you think you are and I know you’re mad and everything and trust me you weren’t that bad or anything. And I look over I’m like, listen I’m not mad at you, I’m just kinda confused like why is, like what’s going on, and stuff. We talked about it later I told her like listen I don’t know if the whole best friends thing is gonna work right now because it gets really dramatic with like the two of us being friends, cuz we’re both the kinda people like if someone starts an argument we’re not gonna walk away we’re gonna be like well if you wanna argue then let’s fight. She’s
better at that then I am, at walking away, but, so, yeah, we talked about it and everything and now we pretty much are best friends. Cuz we pretty much figured out how to make everything work and stuff, so, it’s all good there?

Interviewer: And have any of those issues ever come up in subsequent conflicts that you’ve had?
Gabby: mm, not really, I mean she still passes notes to Jeff but she tells me what they’re about and stuff so it doesn’t really bother me that much anymore.

[pause]
Interviewer: That’s a good story. Do you have any other good stories, that you’re dyin, that you’re sittin on?
Gabby: mmm, [pause] well there was this one girl named Emma and we weren’t like really really good friends. I was more on the preppy side of dressing and she was more into the Emo, rocker thing, whatever that is. I mean I just kinda wear whatever I want so I don’t really like labeling people that much, but that’s kinda how she perceived me as, so we, we were friends and everything but we weren’t like the way with all my other friends who dressed like that. So I mean we would talk every once in a while, and one time on the phone I was just like, I was just kidding, and I was like oh shut up Emma you’re such a fatty. And like, I was so kidding. But then it kinda occurred to me like oh, um, well Emma isn’t the skinniest person that maybe I shouldn’ta said that. And like she got furious, and like everything I would say she would have something like real contradicting to say about it, like everything that I said apparently bothered the crap out of her. And so, I don’t know how that worked itself out, but somehow, we’re not like worst enemies anymore, but she was really mad at me. She kinda got all her friends to not talk to me as much, and I was like, ok, what did I ever do to you? Like cuz I was like, I even
told her I was just kidding about the whole you’re fat thing, cuz she’s really not, she just has abnormally large breasts. It’s like insane.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Gabby: And she’s real short so it gives the appearance that she is

Interviewer: Yeah I have a couple of friends like that actually.

Gabby: I feel kinda bad cuz like when people actually do call her, she’s like I’m not fat I just have abnormally large boobs! I’m like, ok.

[both laugh]

Gabby: It’s true though, you cannot walk by her without accidentally bumping into them. Like why you trying to touch my boobs? It’s like dude, it’s just there.

[both laugh]

Gabby: It’s basically like 98 percent of your body weight. [laughs] She’s like whatever.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Gabby: But yeah. Uh, stories that I have. [pause] mm, well I mean me and my friend got in a fight one time, but it didn’t really last long. Was when um, she had gotten lice and she was telling her boyfriend, who’s actually my boyfriend now, she was telling her boyfriend that she had the flu, cuz she was out of school and stuff. Like the way that she said it, he is not retarded, so he knew that that’s not what she had. Because one, her voice was totally clear, so usually means flu you’re talking [makes whiny voice], like whatever, and she was talking perfectly clear, and she was out way longer than any normal person would be for getting the flu. And she was already mad at me cuz I’m the one who—she had it so bad to the point that like her mom sent her to school anyway because she didn’t want her to miss school. And she had it so bad that I
could see it, and she was like my locker partner and stuff, so I’m like, I’m definitely not gonna get it, cuz like I refuse, I’d be horrified. Turns out I did get it a couple a days later.

Interviewer: Oh no.

Gabby: It sucked, but, I saw it in her hair one day, and I’m like, um, wow, so I didn’t say anything to her, but I told my mom, she was like you need to go tell your school nurse that. So I told my nurse and she sent her home. So, Jeff’s like, why did Brooke go home, I’m like she uh, isn’t feelin real good. He’s like oh ok. So anyway, she’s been gone a couple a weeks or whatever, and, he was like, well why is she lying to me, cuz I know something’s wrong, I just wanna help or whatever. And then, we were at youth group, and I forget how it was worded but somehow I insinuated the idea that, like, do you even like her anymore like that and stuff? He was like I don’t know things just get so complicated or whatever, and I’m like, well that’s not really cool cuz you don’t wanna like drag her along if you don’t like her anymore. He’s like well I do but I’m not sure and I was like I can name like five people who would die to go out with you. He’s like ok fine do it. So I name like four and he’s like, ok where’s the fifth one, and I’m like, um, you’re looking at her. He’s like seriously? I’m like well you already knew that I liked you—and yeah sorry if I get to talking fast but when I go—

Interviewer: That’s fine!

Gabby: --on these stories, I start going. So, he was like, oh well you really would, or whatever. I’m like um, duh! Like, we start taking. We were actually dating two and half hours before he actually broke up with her [awkward laugh] but, so, that was what kinda got her really mad because Leigh texted her and sent a picture of me and Jeff sitting on the couch together, and like, we didn’t know that he took it, er, that she took it, but she took it, texted it to Brooke and told her what’s gonna happen before it does. She she was like real mad. And she pretends that
everything’s fine the next day at school. But then she starts ignoring me and I’m just like what is wrong, and she’s like, gets real mad at me for it, I’m like, this is so not my fault! Like I’m not, I didn’t ask for him to date me, I just simply said the fact that I would date him if he ever wanted to, like weeks later, maybe even months. And she’s like oh whatever you’re so full of it. I’m like um, ok, so, yeah that happened. And then, she’s started going out with the guy I was dating before Jeff but I’m like 90 percent sure that that kid’s gay, so luckily they’re not dating anymore, but no, I’m serious! He talks with a lisp and everything! Like, terrible, so, yeah, I broke up with him after a week or something. So she started dating him so basically it was like a boyfriend swap. And it was really funny. I honestly don’t think that guy even liked her. I think he was just trying to get me jealous, it didn’t work, so yeah, she was, she’d be like real mad, everything I would say about him. And I finally, uh, she told me she was mad about it. I was like um, wasn’t my fault. Then she found this other guys, so everything’s good now. Luckily it’s not the gay kid. They broke up.

Interviewer: So, like it was rocky until she found someone else to date them?

Gabby: Yeah it was pretty bad. She started dating his best friend, so.

Interviewer: Does she still like him at all?

Gabby: I’m not really sure. I think that part of her does like him and then at the same time it may be like, well I kinda like him, but I know how he is, and I don’t think I wanna do that again. Because he’s like a flirt, like really bad, and like I know that he wouldn’t ever like cheat on me but he would go as far as to, like a couple of weeks ago, he was like joking around with this other girl and like he was just kidding had his arm around her shoulder and stuff and was like nothing was out of hand or anything. I’m just sittin there like excuse me? Like why are you holding hands with my boyfriend?! It was a little weird.
Interviewer: Yeah.

Gabby: Yeah, I kinda got mad at him about that. He’s like I’m sorry me and Maya already dated, like it would never work again. I’m like that doesn’t mean you don’t like her just because it wouldn’t work out or whatever. So yeah he’s kind of a flirt so I don’t think she would wanna date him again. She knows how he is.

Interviewer: Yeah. So um, and, that conflict hasn’t shown up in other conflicts either, it’s like, it’s an issue that’s been resolved? Or not really?

Gabby: Well, I mean she was, with her it’s resolved, with my other friends, they’re kinda like still have that feeling I can’t believe you did that to Brooke type thing.

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Gabby: Like even though they won’t say it to my face, like I know they all talk about it like oh my gosh I can’t believe Gabby would do that. And that was like what, like four or five months ago? Whatever. But…

Interviewer: But you guys are still cool anyway, you and your friends that still talk about it?

Gabby: Yeah. Well I mean we have situations going on with them right now, but

Interviewer: Uh oh

Gabby: Yeah, I don’t know if you wanna hear this, I mean do you want the story?

Interviewer: Yeah, please!

Gabby: Ok.

Interviewer: I may stop writing though.

Gabby: This one. Ok so, I have this friend Kara who like acts like she knows everything, real mature for her age type person, like.

Interviewer: Uh huh
Gabby: She can be really helpful when you need advice but then you ask, you ask her for her opinion and she will tell you her opinion in like a 30 minute rant about like, oh well do you think I’m doing this wrong? [in high pitched voice] Well heck yes you’re doing this wrong and this and this and this. Um, alright then. I was kinda just asking your little short opinion here, but so, anyway, but, so I was talking to her on the phone yesterday I was like so, cuz I obviously have moved from their table in the lunchroom to Jeff’s table and them. Cuz I mean I actually moved there like last year but I didn’t think it’d be a real big deal. So, I was like telling her, we were just talking. I said something how it seemed like they were ignoring me, and then I was like, well I mean I come over to you guys’ locker everyday and I like make an effort to talk to you cuz last time we were talking you said “you need to make an effort to talk to us more if you really wanna be our friend.” So yeah that’s what I did, like every morning I would walk over to their locker and I would try to talk to them. And then she was like oh, and then she’d just kinda be like uuuerrr, whatever. She’d like mumble at me little responses and go back to their conversation. So I’m like um, you told me to make an effort, so I do, and then you ignore me. So I say you, they want their space. So I do that and then they get mad for not talking to them. I’m like well what do you want me to do, ignore you or talk to you? She’s like well you need to make an effort, I’m like are you kidding me?! Like, what do you think I’m trying to do?! She’s like oh well like all of my friends have this idea that apparently Jeff consumes all my time, which is like so much crap because I call them way more than I call them like everyday. And I like try and tell them stuff and they don’t seem to care, and so, yeah. And then Kara is like, well, I no, oh now I know what it was cuz there’s these two guys that’s in our friends group, names Aaron and Tyler. And they don’t like me for some reason, I was like not really sure why. Cuz like we all used to be real good friends and stuff. So, I was like real confused. So I asked her
and she was like oh they probably just don’t like you because every time someone’s upset or something your name always comes up in the situation. I’m like, um, when? Like, so she was like oh it just has happened a couple times so they always just associate you with like bad stuff that happens. And I’m like oh, so now I’m like a bad luck charm or whatever. And so, Aaron and Tyler and me and Kara and Cynthia and Jeff are all leaders in our Bible study at school. So we all like have a group there that we lead, and, so, like, all of a sudden, they just start, like talk about me behind my back and stuff, like the whole group would except for Jeff. So, they’d all be like talking about me and stuff so finally a couple days ago I just decided oh, whatever, I’m just gonna quit. Like so I didn’t quit [Bible study] itself, which is, what the Bible study’s name is, but I’m just gonna quit being a leader, because like, I been kinda, stressed out lately with school stuff anyway, so it would probably be better. So I did that and Kara was like well, it’s kinda a good thing that you quit leading because I mean you are kind of a control freak and kind of overdramatic, and I’m just like um, I am? She’s like [in high voice] I mean like, all the time Jeff’s always following you around all the time and stuff and he’s always taking your side on everything. I’m like I don’t tell him to do that! And she’s like you always control stuff in leading anyway, and she’s like you always like need to be in control of stuff, I’m like no I don’t [whiny], but apparently yeah, so she called me that. And apparently she was talking to like three of my friends that night or she called them and told me exactly what she told me about how like now like all of a sudden she’s on this kick like Gabby the control freak. Like she had never brought that up until I asked her something, now that’s all she tells people, that I’m a control freak. Like whatever, I don’t even care. Which I mean I kinda care but if people are really my friends then they won’t really care that I’m a control freak, so, it doesn’t really bother me too bad.
Interviewer: And Kara said that?

Gabby: Yeah. Kara is the one who called me a control freak and then she told Dana and Marissa and couple other people and yeah, that’s basically.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a conflict with Kara before, like even in the past?

Gabby: Oh my gosh, since sixth grade me and her cannot go two months without having some kind of argument. Cuz we been, knowing each other since sixth grade cuz we both went to the same school district, in elementary school we didn’t even know each other though until we both moved to [our new school district] and were in the same math class. We were going around like asking where everyone was from, stuff like where they went to school last year. People be like [one] or [the other] because those were the schools that were in the area. And I was like um I went to this school in [central Ohio]. And she was like, last year I went to [central Ohio] and we both kinda looked at each other like what?! So, yeah we both, she went to the school like a couple blocks away from mine. I was like oh my gosh I know that school, like we took a couple field trips there and stuff, so, we both just started talking then and every, every little thing we would end up getting in some kind of fight about. It’s gotten a little better cuz we don’t talk as much anymore, but sixth grade was just kind of bluh. It got a little better once we started going to church too. But in sixth grade we weren’t into the whole church thing, like we’re too cool for church, and whatever, so, yeah, once we started going though, everything got a little better, but. I think that has to do with that we don’t talk as much anymore.

Interviewer: So your conflict with her, obviously it keeps coming up over and over again.

Gabby: Repetitively.

Interviewer: How does that work, like you have a conflict, then you solve it, then does she, she brings something up from the past, bring it up again, or do you do that--?
Gabby: Mm sometimes it’s just new stuff and then sometimes I feel like maybe it’s because one of us doesn’t feel exactly like the previous one wasn’t exactly done with, so, be kind of, anger just kinda builds up from the last thing and the last thing and stuff, until finally it just explodes into something else, and then that just adds another layer. Then a couple, four more layers left and you gotta another big explosion. What’s that layering, like sedimentary rock or whatever--

Interviewer: Yeah.

Gabby: How it just keeps piling on top of each other or something. Sorry I’m kind of like a science nerd so if I make analogies like that then—

Interviewer: That’s fine. I like analogies.

Gabby: Yeah.

Interviewer: I used to be good at science but then I wasn’t.

Gabby: Science is like my favorite subject ever.

Interviewer: That’s cool.

Gabby: Specially like genealogy and heredity and stuff. It’s so fun.

Interviewer: I liked when we did, what are they, Punnet Squares?

Gabby: That’s what we’re doing right now, they’re so fun! Like I don’t know, they shouldn’t be that fun but they are.

Interviewer: [laughs]. Yeah, um, and then, in any of, any of these situations we’ve talked about—we’ve talked about a couple of different stories, we’ve talked about um Marissa, and Emma, and Brooke, in any of these situations, how did you react, or retaliate even?

Gabby: The Marissa one I screamed back at her, and in the Emma one, I just kinda ignored her and I always kinda roll my eyes at her like if she ever says something sarcastic to me or something. And then in the Brooke one, kinda ignored her too but it was more of the rolling the
eyes kinda I was usually the one in the Brooke one that usually was the one that asked for her to talk to me again. Like oh my gosh please tell me what I did wrong and whatever just. Brooke’s the kind of person if you do something wrong she’s not gonna tell you, you have to figure it out on your own. Which is like really pathetic because people half the time don’t even know what they did. And you’re like getting mad at them for it. Like, well what did I do?

Interviewer: Mm hmm

Gabby: But yeah. A lot of times I have trouble with when people get mad at me or when tensions get real high I just kinda walk out of my room. And people take that as like me taking the easy way out and stuff. But that’s me walking out of the room because I don’t want to punch them in the nose and then get suspended. Like, w-what do you want me to do, just stay in there and like explode all over you all, like?

Interviewer: Yeah

Gabby: So I just wanna leave and like let it go, let it go,

Interviewer: Yeah

Gabby: And they take it like I’m taking the easy way out and just walking out on them when I don’t wanna face my life, is the way Kara puts it. Like you always wanna take the easy way out and you never wanna face reality. I’m just like, no I don’t wanna punch you in the nose, like.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Gabby: She’s really weird.

Interviewer: Have you ever done socially aggressive things to your friends?

Gabby: Um I’m sure I have, I mean like, I used to talk about Marissa all the time, and, I talked about Lexie sometimes, but not a whole lot. And then, mm, I talk about Kara a little. [pause]

Trying to think. Who is it I do talk about? I used, I do talk about Marissa a lot, I don’t know if I
said that. Ok. Yeah and I mean Emma I used to talk about her a lot I mean I talked about her all the time.

Interviewer: What kind of things would you say?

Gabby: Like oh my gosh she’s such a—we’ll use the term flirt because it’s more appropriate.

Interviewer: You can use any words you want.

Gabby: Yeah basically we said she was a whore [laughs], and she is like, flirts with every guy, and like didn’t really care, she’ll flirt with even like the lowest scumbag like, just when one of her friends starts dating a guy she wants to go after it like it’s bait on a hook or something.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Gabby: I don’t know a better way to put it, sorry. She like goes after it like it’s bait on a fish hook and she’s like eager to bite it and she’s like oh my gosh, gotta get it. Even if she doesn’t even like him, she’ll go after him cuz her friends are dating em. So I basically tell them, they all be like oh my gosh I know she’s such a whore and whatever, and so, we call her that behind her back and stuff. I used to say that stuff all the time, everyday.

Interviewer: What motivated you to say something like that?

Gabby: Her passing notes to Jeff and the fact that it got to the point one time where she could tell that it aggravated me so much that she would purposely do little things like when she stopped in the hall to put her hand on his shoulder to stop him or but she wouldn’t do it in a way like oh like someone grabs you to stop you, she did it in more like a girly, like touch him on the shoulder like hey hold on a minute type thing. I’m just like uh, sure you can touch my boyfriend if you want to, I don’t have a problem with that. No, not at all.

Interviewer: Did any of your, like the people that you told oh my gosh Marissa’s such a whore, did they start feeding the fire, you know, did they start saying—
Gabby: Brooke did.

Interviewer: --I totally agree?

Gabby: Brooke did because she does the same thing with her boyfriend. Because she would flirt with Michael, which is Brooke’s boyfriend, she would do that all the time.

Interviewer: Ok

Gabby: Brooke would, and, Brooke’s basically the only one. Yeah. Maya would sometimes and Lexie every once in a while. But, it got to the point where Marissa’s just gonna like break down because no one was talking to her anymore. And it was like, cuz everyone was mad at her for flirting with other people’s boyfriends. So. Pretty sure she learned her lesson cuz she don’t do that no more.

Interviewer: Yeah? [pause] Have, whoa I need to skip here. If one of your friends spread a rumor about you, what rumor would be most hurtful and why?

Gabby: Um, rumor that would be most hurtful would probably be partly believable would be like saying me and Jeff like had sex or something. Like I would never do that but like it would really suck if someone said that because like he is the boyfriend that I’ve, I’ve gone the farthest with would be the right term for it, but I kinda kiss him more than my other boyfriends and stuff like that, and like it’d be a little believable probably for people and even if I said no I didn’t they probably wouldn’t believe me if someone started that, but, that would really suck of someone said that.

Interviewer: I know it seems like an obvious question, but why would a rumor about somebody, about you having sex with somebody be so hurtful? Like what is it about sex that makes people-?
Gabby: Well, because I’m like one of the people I’m like really really really big on church stuff so like the Bible makes it absolutely clear, you do not have sex before marriage. Like I’m stuck on that idea like so bad that if people said that I didn’t, like I definitely didn’t do that, I promise you, like! But they probably wouldn’t believe me anyway. Because that’s how people [at my school] because pretty much like 25 percent of the eighth graders in my school already have had sex with each other, multiple times.

Interviewer: And what is that, are you in [this town]?

Gabby: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok and so which high school is that?

Gabby: Um, [name] probably is the school that, well that’s the school I’m going to.

Interviewer: But what are the kids like [there]? Are they well off, are they kind of like a mix of all different kinds?

Gabby: Yeah it’s pretty much, I mean you get some real bad kind of girls and then you get some really nice people and then the kinda people who are kinda in between.

Interviewer: Ok.

Gabby: But if you ever go to my friend Leigh, she lives up in [name of town], oh my gosh, the girls down there are like ridiculous into stuff. Like, I was, they were, about four of them were at Leigh’s birthday party this weekend, like they, one of em started smokin in her hot tub in the eighth grade and we’re all just like what are you doing?! And so one of em was talking about how she’s had sex with like two people before and these are people in the eighth grade and I’m just like oh, well then. And the one of em’s like oh yeah I’ve totally done marijuana before and I’m like, whoa! Um, ok. I’m like is that how all the people at your school are, and she’s like oh heck yeah, like
Interviewer: [laugh]

Gabby: We smoke all the time and we do drugs everyday er whatever I’m like oh, well then.

Interviewer: I went to Bible study one time.

Gabby: Yeah! Like, oh fun.

Interviewer: Um, if someone did spread a rumor that you and Jeff had had sex, how would you respond?

Gabby: Um well I would try and convince people that we didn’t. And I’d probably try and get Jeff to convince people that we didn’t cuz people probably believe him over me. Cuz he’s usually a really honest person. Then if that didn’t work, I would probably say, well you know what? Someone who probably just is jealous cuz they probably just wanna have sex with him or something. So, they probably just say that cuz they wish they could and they’re just mad cuz I could get it if I wanted it. Whatever, so, that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Would you ever spread a rumor or talk bad about somebody who was saying those things?

Gabby: Mm depends. I don’t, I would never make stuff up about people cuz I don’t, I don’t like making stories up about stuff, I’m not creative enough to do that. I mean I could if I really wanted to, but I don’t like to do that kind of stuff. But I would maybe take something they said and exaggerate it or something a little bit. Maybe twist it just a little so it’s kind of like a biased thing where it’s kinda leans toward that person being a negative, an antagonist there.

[pause]

Interviewer: If one of your friends told you to your face that she wasn’t gonna be your friend anymore or something conflicting along those lines, would that be more hurtful than if she spread a rumor about the same thing? Or would a rumor be more hurtful than face to face?
Gabby: Well I have had people come up to me and tell me they didn’t wanna be my friend anymore. Basically, I think that’s like the most childish thing you can do is [in child voice] oh I’m not gonna be your friend anymore. Like I think that’s just retarded, like you’re friends with somebody you be like listen dude, you’re on my last nerve, just like get the heck away from me. Like you don’t like oh I’m not gonna be your friend anymore that sounds like such a pouty little kindergartner thing to say. But it’s happened, like ok, whatever, just kinda walk away. But just like with the rumor thing, I think that spreading a rumor would probably be a little better cuz then I could just kinda find out, oh well you know this person’s mad at me, then I could just kind of ignore em let them have their space. Cuz um, that way would be better than coming up being like I’m not gonna be your friend anymore. And then it’s like oh, well, alright then, then you feel kinda bad. Like wanna ask em what you did, but you can’t or something like that. At least with like a rumor you could be like oh well I’ll just give them their space till they’re ready to come to me, I guess.

Interviewer: And if that person never came to talk to you?

Gabby: Then they’re not worth talking to I don’t think. If they really don’t wanna talk to me then what’s really the point in trying to be their friend if they don’t care about you?

Interviewer: Would it bother you that everyone else would know that they’re angry with you, or-?

Gabby: It kinda depends because I mean if it were something that would make all my other friends mad then yeah it would bother me. But if it were something like my friends were like aw this is something between them two then I don’t think it would bother me.

Interviewer: And if someone did confront you, you kind of touched on this a little earlier, but just to review I guess, if someone did confront you and say uh, I have a problem with you, I don’t
want to be your friend anymore, blah blah blah, X, Y, Z, what would your response be in that situation?

Gabby: Well I would probably just be like oh well then I’ll give you your space. And if that’s what you really want, I’ll kind of just walk away. Let them do their thing. Cuz you can’t really tell them, oh well you have to be my friend, like, no I don’t [laugh] cuz like you can’t say that to somebody, like oh well yeah you have to be my friend. Like um, no pretty sure I don’t.

Interviewer: [laugh]

Gabby: But yeah.

Interviewer: What kind of things would a girl have to say or do to you or about you in order for you to retaliate?

Gabby: [sigh] I get real angry over little stuff sometimes. Like, for one thing, like I’m trying to think of a time when I always get mad over stupid stuff, like, I don’t know. I’m sure in people’s perspectives, like pretty much everything seems real stupid when you look at it. But, like to us, everything that happens is like real big, make a big deal out of it type thing. So, basically anything I probably would.

Interviewer: What kind of things would you do to retaliate?

Gabby: Um, I’d talk about em behind their back or, just give em real dirty looks, like glaring at em and stuff. May flirt with the guy they like even though I’m dating someone else. I mean I would never like kiss them or something, but I may just like flirt with em in front of their face so they know that, hey look what I can do.

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Um, do, do any conflicts end up getting physical, physically violent to the point where you know you’re bloody or anything like that?

Gabby: With Lexie they can.
Interviewer: Yeah?

Gabby: mmm hmm. She’s a tomboy type person so she gets real rough with people. Like there’s this one guy named Marcel, at a [high school] game, he has like anxiety problems, so I’m not like real friends with him but I am friends with Lexie. Marcel had said something to some sixth grade kids and Lexie got oh you should not be talkin to sixth grade kids like that. She walked up and punched him in the face. He’s just like excuse me?! So, he gets real mad and flips a knife out on everyone and he didn’t cut anybody but like “I’m gonna like kill you” or whatever, and yeah, she hit him or whatever and kinda gets real mad and start cussing at each other. And he runs off and starts, like, picking on some second graders or something, and chasing them around, I don’t mean picking on em, like oh you’re short or whatever, I mean like threatening their lives type picking on these second graders. Lexie just like gets furious, so. She’s very, confrontational I guess would be the word for it.

Interviewer: Oh no.

Gabby: That sounds like a phone.

Interviewer: It is I should have turned it on silent instead of on silent.

Gabby: I have a phone but I got grounded from it today.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Gabby: Yeah

Interviewer: How come?

Gabby: Well to start off I had a real bad day. It started out where I got home and I locked myself out of my house, and I, my phone of course wouldn’t work, so I wouldn’t get any signal in my backyard, and, I finally did and the first number that actually worked, because none of the others did, but the first one that did was my dad. And I don’t live with my dad, so he called my mom to
be like oh well you know your daughter’s outside today, and it’s like cold and she’s locked out, make kinda like it was my mom’s fault, and she kinda got mad at that and finally I was able to get the garage code so I could get in so my mom didn’t have to leave work or anything like that. But when I did get inside, I, my room wasn’t really clean and then I did my homework instead of cleaning my room, which usually doesn’t seem like a bad thing, but my mom really likes my room clean when I get home, and of course I forget to let the dogs out, and [makes a face] on the carpet, and I’m like oh crap. So I got home and mom was a little upset about that.

Interviewer: Yeah, I bet.

Gabby: Yeah it was not good.

Interviewer: Real rough day. At least you can let it out to the tape recorder!

Gabby: I know!

Interviewer: [laughs]

Gabby: Hey tape recorder!

Interviewer: Um, I had a thought about stuff, but I can’t really remember, so instead I’ll ask you tell me like about the nature of conflicts, how do they start, what are they like in the heat of things, how do they end, do they come up again, recurring, or do they just happen in a vacuum?

Gabby: Um, most stuff usually like comes up again even if you do think that it’s over with. And it may come up in like the most random times. Like someone’ll be like, say Jill and Jane, help me, I don’t know, just coming up with random names I don’t know if this has ever happened to me or not, but, like if like, Jill or something was like, oh well you are like so mean and says some rumor about her or something, then they end up becoming friends again, and then like couple months later, Jill will do something like really really small, like should not bother anyone, but it’s like oh well you know I still didn’t forget the time a couple months ago when you started
that rumor about me. Like, probably like, how you know, I thought we were done with this, like we were *never* done with this, like whatever, and—

Interviewer: Yeah

Gabby: That type thing,

Interviewer: Ok

Gabby: So

Interesting: That’s good, good for me to know. Um, what do you think’s the most common method for retaliating against people?

Gabby: Probably yelling back at them or talking about them, nah, probably talking about them more. People like to talk about each other, more than they probably should.

Interviewer: You think that the conflicts that happen between girls happen because girls are bored? And they find it interesting and amusing? Or do they usually have a legitimate reason, and they’re really angry, it’s a way to vent their anger?

Gabby: I think that they wish they had a legitimate reason or that they would say that they do, but I think honestly that’s just our nature is to be the type of people who are real mean to each other. I think actually, it all boils down to some jealousy like that one girl wish that they had something someone else did and then like, it just gets so, where like little things can seem so, like they kinda wanna tear each other down to make themselves feel better is what I think. Never does make you feel better but you just think it will, so.

Interviewer: And I guess do you have any final thoughts maybe about all this stuff, anything I should know about as I’m coming up with conclusions about the way like the communication between girls where they’re doing social aggression thing?
Gabby: Um, I would just think I mean like, with the age group, like what ages did you say you were doing?

Interviewer: 10-16

Gabby: Yeah I think in that age group it’s gonna happen, like there’s really no way to avoid it but I think there are better ways to handle it than others, and just because people are aware of the ways to handle it, doesn’t mean necessarily that’s how they’re going to handle it. So you could give someone a lecture for hours on, oh you shouldn’t talk bad about other girls and, if they talk bad about you just walk away and use that method or whatever, but people are still gonna, the same cycle’s gonna happen no matter what people say, so, that’s basically, it’s just gonna happen so.

Interviewer: Cool.
References


