

Reading the Ostracism Case Study Transcripts (Part 2)

Purpose: Report on the perspective, choices, and role(s) played by one individual in the ostracism case study. Start to compare the perspectives of multiple individuals to arrive at a deeper understanding of the effects of ostracism on individuals and communities.

ADVISOR NOTES:

1. Creating Expert Groups for the Jigsaw Activity

There are six different readings representing six different perspectives about what happened during the ostracism incident that advisees were introduced to in Activity 56. Sue and Ms. Smith's transcripts are longer than the other four. For the **Jigsaw** portion of this activity, you might give stronger readers these transcripts, or, if you have random groups or let advisees choose groups, you might have them focus on certain sections so that everyone finishes the first half of the exercise around the same time. Visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn more about the Jigsaw teaching strategy.

2. Modifications for Advisory Groups Smaller than 12

If your advisory has fewer than 12 advisees, you will need to modify the jigsaw, which starts with six "expert" groups. For example, you can give some groups more than one short transcript. Alternatively, you could combine your advisory with another one so your advisees can discuss this case study with a wider range of students in your school.

APPROXIMATE TIME:
40 minutes

MATERIALS:

-  **READING**
Excerpts from the Interview with Sue
-  **READING**
Excerpts from the Interview with Rhonda
-  **READING**
Excerpts from the Interview with Jill
-  **READING**
Excerpts from the Interview with Lorna
-  **READING**
Excerpts from the Interview with Patty
-  **READING**
Excerpts from the Interview with Ms. Smith
-  **HANDOUT**
Ostracism Case Study Group Activity

PROCEDURE:

1. Review the Scene from the Middle School Scenario (see Activity 56)

- In pairs or triads, ask advisees to discuss the following questions:
 - What happened in the middle school scenario you read about in the last meeting? Who was involved? What roles did they play?
 - What do you hope to learn in this meeting about the scenario or the students involved?

- Depending on how much time has passed since your last meeting and your advisees' recollection of the material, either spend time reviewing the scenario or move directly to the next part of the activity.

2. Read and Discuss Firsthand Accounts of the Middle School Scenario

- Tell your advisees that they will now have an opportunity to read actual documents from the case study: firsthand accounts from the students involved in the incident, other students in the school, and a teacher. Review the **Jigsaw** strategy if needed (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy).
- Explain that they will be working in groups. Each "expert" group will receive the transcript from one person who was involved in the ostracism incident in some way. After they read the transcript and discuss four questions, they will move into "teaching" groups to hear the perspectives of others who were involved.
- Move advisees into six groups (see Advisor Notes for smaller groups), and pass out a different reading to each group and a copy of the handout **Ostracism Case Study Group Activity** to each advisee. Have them read their transcripts and discuss the four questions. They should record notes on side one of their handout to bring to their "teaching" groups.
- After the expert groups have finished reading and discussing their questions, have advisees move into "teaching" groups where they will share their individual's perspective. Advisees should take notes on side two of their handout that help them capture all six perspectives.

3. Reflect on New Understanding of the Incident

Let the group know that they will be discussing the case study further in the next meeting. To allow for a brief reflection, ask advisees to think about their response to the following question and then have them share in a **Wraparound** (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy).

How did hearing other perspectives about what happened confirm or change how you think about the ostracism incident?



Excerpts from the Interview with Sue

Sue, an Asian American girl from a working-class family, was a leader among her friends until her argument with Jill. Below are word-for-word excerpts taken from interviews conducted in 1998 as part of a Facing History and Ourselves evaluation study. Please note that the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the students.

THE SUMMER AFTER EIGHTH GRADE

Sue's perspective on what happened and why

SUE: I used to be friends with a really cliquey crowd, a really, like, a really popular crowd too, and then like, um, last year, around December we got into a fight and then, like, I was like in a fight with, like, ten girls against me, and it was, like, really bad, and we had to go to mediation and I had to go to therapy and everything 'cause, like, the fight got really bad. And at one point it even got physical where like this girl came up to me and was like grabbing me and threatened me, and stuff.

It started because, like, Jill was going out with her boyfriend, and he liked her a lot, but, like, she didn't like him that much. She was afraid to get involved, like, into love or whatever, but like, um, I mean, this kid, his mother committed suicide and I felt really bad for him. And I thought how it was so sweet how he, like, liked someone after, like, all that happened to him, that's like so hard, and I just thought, like, Jill should be much kinder. Like, she didn't like him, and I mean . . . But like, I, like, said something in a letter that—we used to pass notes all the time, and I wrote something in a note like about how it was, like, wrong of Jill not to like Tony, or, like, ditch him like that kinda, 'cause like Tony liked her a lot and they were going out, but she didn't want to do anything with him. And then, like, Rhonda told Jill or something, and then, like, they both got mad. Jill got mad at me and then Rhonda got involved, and I don't know how Rhonda got involved, like, and I don't know how Tina got involved, but they all got involved. Like, the fight is so unclear how it started. I don't know how it turned into something that huge.

I know it's partly that the fight started as my fault and stuff, but it shouldn't have gotten as bad as it did with like ten girls against one.

Rhonda and Tina had all these girls to back them up. It was, like, caused out of fear, I mean the reason they have backup. Fear that, like, since other kids were picking on me, they were afraid to get picked on, so they backed them up and picked on me more.

It was, like, so gradual. I had never thought it would go that far. One day they had found out I told [a teacher] or something, and they got really mad. From that point on, they, like, hated me a lot because I had told. They just thought that telling—like, snitching—

was like the worst thing. So then, from then on it became, like, so bad. They would like, um, say stuff in class, like make comments or laugh at me if I made a comment in class or anything. From then on, I just, like, lost any self-esteem I had or anything. I mean, bit by bit I lost it, but, like, now I'm regaining it.

I think it was because Tina came in, it made it all worse . . . Because the girls I had been friends with, I had been friends with since fourth grade. That's a long time. And then after three years some girl comes with new views and everything, and a new attitude and stuff, and they start looking up to her and she changes everything. And so, she was able to do that, which is, like, powerful, I think.

When you have the ability to pick on someone, or like make fun of—like, that's power and stuff. But like, it's not good power, it's like, the worst kind of power you could have. It's like Hitler's power. You know how Hitler was able to, like, do everything—you know, like, make people do stuff—like, that's, like, bad power. And to kill that [many] people, that's like, powerful to be able to do that, but it's, like, bad. And Tina was, like, able to get everyone to gang up on me. But that's 'cause she caused fear, you know.

I think the fact that I am Asian has a lot, actually, to do with it. Not why I was being picked on, it was more to do with why the fight got as big as it did. I think, I mean, because I was a minority, it was easier for them to pick on me. Like, there [were] even, like, times, like my parents would always be like, um, "Yeah, um, the reason why, like, now you have to go to therapy and not them, the reason why the guidance counselor was saying that there's something wrong with you and not them, is because you were probably the minority, and stuff."

And the thing was, they were all rich. Which is also, like, the thing. I'm poor, I live in the projects and stuff, and . . . it's surprising to me now that I fit, I actually fit in that crowd, you know? I don't know how, like, I did. I don't know how that ever was, you know . . . I think it's surprising that I went from being at the top, . . . like starting from a low background or whatever, to getting to the bottom again, and now being in the middle, kind of.

THE SUMMER AFTER EIGHTH GRADE

Sue's point of view on the impact of the incident on her and its aftermath

SUE: I learned that you can't just trust everyone just because they say they're your friends. And, like, you have to be careful of what you say and you can't go around saying stuff just 'cause you feel like it. Now, like, when I make friends, I am more cautious. I am also, like, paranoid, 'cause I am afraid of this happening again, you know, and then just, like, before the fight I was . . . probably, like, so clueless, you know. Thinking I was, like, all that and, like, not caring about other people. And I was, like, always prejudice[d] against other people—it was just my crowd and no one else could come into it. And I would pick on other people too. I guess what goes around comes around. And it was probably partly one of the reasons it happened to me. Like, I would always pick on other people that were different, but, like, so I mean—now I wouldn't, you know. I think I understand more, like, why people get picked on and stuff.

I always hoped that I would have someone to talk to, and I didn't. And that was the thing that hurt the most.

Actually, I was so driven. 'Cause that was, like, the only way I could block my mind off and everything. And I actually got, like, good grades for a while, but then afterwards, everything just, like, was the pits. You didn't want to go to school, you didn't want to do homework, you didn't even see the point of like, living, it was just so bad.

When I came into the eighth grade this year, I was like: I'm gonna drop everything that happened last year. I'm gonna be as nice as I can. 'Cause I try to improve and try to change a lot because, I mean, and I try to be as not like I used to . . . I would always love to be the leader, you know. I used to love to be the leader, but now I wouldn't. I try to stay in the shadows more so people wouldn't notice me and stuff. But, like, this year, I didn't say anything. I never told a teacher if anything happened to me. I would try to ignore it.

I wanted to transfer—there were so many times that I wanted to transfer. There were actually some days when I would miss school just because I couldn't face it for that day.

THE SUMMER AFTER EIGHTH GRADE

Sue's perspective on the teachers' role in the incident

SUE: This isn't a fight you could ignore. And it wasn't a fight that you could confront, either, in a way.

You should be able to feel safe in a classroom, because there's a teacher, a supervisor, I mean, like, but now you can't. You don't feel, like, you can't feel safe at all even in the classroom. Cause they would say stuff to me inside of class.

I really had hoped—I wish that, like, I don't know, I wish, like, the teachers should have been able to stop it. But, I mean, I shouldn't have expected it, because they couldn't have.

I got mad at a teacher, kind of, because she couldn't keep the class under control. Like when they made snide remarks, even though it shouldn't, like, I should try to ignore it, it hurts, you know.

Teachers started putting into their lessons about friendships and fights and stuff. And they would always mention something about the fight, because the fight was so big, everyone knew it. Also because my guidance counselor emailed all the teachers and said, you know, to try to look out for me in a way. They mentioned it, but the thing was, like, partly it made it worse, because Rhonda's crowd or Tina's crowd . . . they hated the fact that they were all being ganged up on by teachers, but I hated the fact that they were ganging up on me, you know. And I was thankful so much for even like the least help, you know, that they could do. And the teachers would incorporate that into our lessons. Like, "You shouldn't do what you don't want others to do to you," but it never taught them anything. And the Facing History unit I related [to] a lot—like, from last year, I

related [to] a lot of stuff, like the books we read and, you know, those surveys we took. I've been a bystander, a victim, and a perpetrator. In a lot of ways I can relate to a lot of those stories.

It [Facing History] helped me, like, know that I wasn't the only one who had gone through stuff like that, which helps a lot, to know that, you know? To know you aren't the only one and, like, that it happens. Like, reading [that] stuff was, like: it happened to teenagers, but it also—reading, like, the Facing History, learning about the Holocaust made me realize that what happened last year wasn't as—well, to me it was big, you know, 'cause it's my life—but there is so [much] other worse stuff that can happen in the world, you know, to kids my age, like what happened to Sonia Weitz at her age.

But now, like, there were two times when I really didn't want to live and stuff, and I would never think about, well, there's other worse stuff happening to people. I would just feel like I have to just show them that I am not weak. But now I feel like I have to because, look at—I mean, look at other situations. Why would you kill yourself over something like that, you know? Sometimes, like, you lose your perspective like that.

THE SUMMER AFTER EIGHTH GRADE

Sue's perspective on some positive outcomes from the incident

SUE: Before, I couldn't go anywhere by myself. I couldn't even walk down the street by myself, it was like, oh, I needed a friend . . . but now, like, I don't know, you know? It's like, I've learned to be more independent and stuff.

Back then, I probably would have just been, like—if I saw someone being picked on [by them], I'd probably go back them up, you know, like the . . . stronger people, but now, I mean, I try to stand up for the person.



Excerpts from the Interview with Rhonda

Rhonda, an African American girl from an urban, working-class family, saw herself as a leader among her friends. Below are word-for-word excerpts taken from interviews conducted in 1998 as part of a Facing History and Ourselves evaluation study. Please note that the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the students.

THE FALL OF EIGHTH GRADE

Rhonda's perspective on the original incident

RHONDA: Last year, it was a real big thing from like December to the end of the year, where this girl named Sue, like, she said some stuff to me about my, like, best friend, and, like, Sue was my best friend at the time. But then she was good friends with the other people too, but she went behind . . . Sue was talking about people behind their backs, 'cause, you know, there's a boy named Tony, and Jill used to go out with Tony. And Sue and Jill were, like, really good friends. And Jill didn't like Tony and she wanted to break up with him. And Sue was, like, helping her break up with him. But then she wrote me a letter saying that Jill was ignorant to break up with Tony. And so I showed Jill that, and Jill got mad. And then Sue got mad at me because she said in the letter don't show this to anybody, but I showed it anyway, 'cause I felt obligated to show it to her because it wasn't, like, right for Sue to do something like that. Then we all got mad at each other.

THE FALL OF EIGHTH GRADE

Rhonda's perspective on the aftermath of the original incident

RHONDA: All these people started taking sides and, like, the teachers took Sue's side because they thought we [were] being, like, really mean to Sue when she really was . . . What they did was they, they always said, "Sue what happened?"—they never said, "Okay, Tina, Jill, and Rhonda, what happened?" . . . The teachers never heard our . . . They heard her side, but they didn't, like . . . They felt sorry for Sue . . . During that time period, from December to June, the teachers [were] mean to us and they didn't, like, listen to us. And they held grudges against us . . . The teachers, like, they held grudges against us because Sue told them, or Sue was crying about this, Sue was doing that—never, they never [said] "Sue did things to us and we did things back to Sue," but Sue never seemed to tell them what she did to us . . . Everybody who was part of our group, everybody who was on our side, got degraded. Everybody who was on Sue's side got, like—they [were] sympathizing [with] Sue, so they . . . [were] more lenient towards them.

The groups changed significantly. There was more people on our side than on Sue's side, but the teachers was on Sue's side. So then it seemed like teachers were, like—the teachers together would probably be more than as many kids as was on our side. So that the teachers had more, they have more power than us, so they can do whatever they want. Not whatever they want, but they would do a lot of things. But there were still people who, like, wasn't even in it that got into it anyway, and so . . . it just, it . . . It was a real big problem last year and we had, like, mediation and all these other things.

What they [were] doing is putting parents into it, and our parents had nothing to do with it and like I got in trouble because the guidance counselor called my father and told him that I was helping in part of this little grudge held against Sue or stuff like that, and she never said anything about what Sue did, which really made me mad, and I got in trouble for that. And, like, I guess everybody else, like, got talked to by their parents about whatever, and nobody never, nobody never said anything about what Sue did, so that's how we figured everybody was on Sue's side. And people . . . I still don't talk to her now, 'cause I don't like to forgive and forget, I don't like to forgive something that wasn't resolved at all . . .

THE SPRING OF EIGHTH GRADE

Rhonda's point of view on the incident and its aftermath

RHONDA: What we did was really, really wrong. I regret it now . . . because I think it was stupid . . . Well, I treated Sue really, really bad. And I don't think it's right now, but I can't do anything to change that. But we're friends now. So, it's kind of changed how it was. I didn't change it, really, but I kind of made it better . . .

And, 'cause we were good friends before, and, so, we shouldn't have wasted a good friendship just because of that. . . . We're friends. I don't know, we just started talking . . . we just talked in the classes together . . . I don't know. I can't really explain it. It's just, we're friends now.

INTERVIEWER: Did you and Sue ever talk about what happened?

RHONDA: Yeah. It's funny now. We find it pretty funny. We laugh at it now, but it wasn't funny then.

THE SPRING OF EIGHTH GRADE

Rhonda's perspective on the adults' role in the incident

RHONDA: There was no need to have parents involved. So you might as well—that made me, at the time, made me more, like, I would say, it made me mad again. . . . Because teachers got parents into it. And parents had nothing to do with it. And at the time, it just made me go—like it just made me go and do stuff. Worse.



Excerpts from the Interview with Jill

Jill, a white girl from an upper-middle-class family, did not see herself as having much influence on others. Below are word-for-word excerpts taken from interviews conducted in 1998 as part of a Facing History and Ourselves evaluation study. Please note that the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the students.

THE FALL OF EIGHTH GRADE

Jill's perspective on the precursor to the incident and the incident itself

JILL: Sue and I were friends, and Rhonda and Tina were all friends with Sue, and then she started being really rude to me, and just, like, I didn't like it anymore. Like, she would try and tell me what to do and everything, and when I wouldn't, she'd get mad.

INTERVIEWER: What kinds of things did she try to tell you?

JILL: Like, to go out with certain people, and, like, if I didn't, she'd be mad. And, like, she'd talk about me behind my back, and she'd try and make me, like, do things for her or whatever. So, when I stopped, like, talking to her and stuff, Rhonda showed me letters that she'd written about me and stuff.

She was kinda controlling, like she would write letters to me, and if I didn't write back in time, she'd get upset, and it was like—it was all focused on her. And it was . . . I just didn't like it. And she would, like, talk about me behind my back, and then say I was her best friend and stuff like that. And she read my diary, and so I really didn't like her anymore.

THE SPRING OF EIGHTH GRADE

How Jill's perspective changed

JILL: Yeah, that was basically a gang-up against Sue and stuff, like, you know. But now, I mean, she has different friends, and we're not like enemies but we're not friends, we don't talk to each other. I mean, like, we say hi, but, um, everyone—everybody got mad at her. She—I mean, she had a couple friends . . . but hardly anybody. But there was a good reason for it. When she was really rude to all of us, she treated me very badly. So as a friend, I stopped liking her. And it didn't have to do with anyone else not liking her. It was just that I didn't like her and then everyone else stopped liking her.

I think a lot of people stopped because no one else did. No one else liked her.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you were the first to stop liking her?

JILL: Yeah, no, I really do. I think that, like: I remember the day that it started, and I was the one that told her that I was mad at her. And, like, then everybody else stopped liking her.

INTERVIEWER: And do you think that had to do with—because you were mad at her?

JILL: No, I think—no, I just think people started to realize how, how rude she was.

I think, like—I realize how mean we were to her, but at the time I didn't think that it was that big of a deal, because she was mean to me, and she had been mean to me, she was getting what she deserved. But now it's just, like—I was childish.

INTERVIEWER: What happened over the course of the year, do you think, to make you change about what you thought about that?

JILL: Well, she really felt I didn't—I left her alone and I [stopped] talking about her behind her back and just like let things cool off. It was like—it was like she wasn't there, kind of, and so I [stopped] being angry and everything just calmed down. And then this year, um, I think we had to work together on a project in a group, and I just, like, forgot it all. I just, like, talked to her, you know, we had to work together, and I didn't feel like going through that.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any apologies made?

JILL: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: And now how would you summarize the way you feel about her?

JILL: She's nice. I really don't want to be friends with her anymore. I think it would be too weird. And she's just not my type, I guess. She's just not anyone I want to hang around with.



Excerpts from the Interview with Lorna

Lorna, an African American student from an urban, working-class family, was not close friends with the other girls in the case study. Below are word-for-word excerpts taken from interviews conducted in 1998 as part of a Facing History and Ourselves evaluation study. Please note that the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the students.

THE FALL OF EIGHTH GRADE

Lorna's perspective on the incident and its aftermath

LORNA: I saw something happen to another girl in the school that I didn't really approve of.

INTERVIEWER: What happened?

LORNA: Well, there was, like, a lot of people—Sue, she was like a center for a target, or whatever. People like to make fun of her because of past things that happened, like in the sixth grade. So, I just—like, she didn't do anything to me. She said—people said that she said something about me, but she didn't say it to my face. So, I just, like, I mean, I'm friends with her—it's nothing—but she's not, like, buddy-buddy, she's just, like, we're just friends or whatever.

I think it was because of, like, not a survey—like, a rumor that happened. People said that she had said something about them, and that she had started saying something, she had told everybody, and that she wasn't really a good friend, she was a liar and stuff like that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know what she said?

LORNA: No. Whatever it was, it had to be pretty bad, because everybody's mad at her still, and it's eighth grade now.

Well, they probably made her feel like she was, I don't know, she had some, like, incurable disease that she would die from, and that if anybody would come near her, they would die, too. I mean, a lot of people are just that mean that they would just make somebody feel like that, 'cause a lot of people prank-called her house—I mean, they wrote mean letters to her and stuff. . . . I have an idea of who was doing it, but it was mostly boys—like, the girls would say something nasty about her or whatever, like, behind her back, but they wouldn't go to that extreme, to call her up or write letters or whatever like that.

People are just still, like, making fun of her, and they're just still not hanging around with her. Well, she has friends, but they've been her friends all along, so I think that's pretty good.

THE FALL OF EIGHTH GRADE

Lorna's perspective on her role in the incident and its aftermath

LORNA: I didn't really know her, so I, like, kind of stayed away from her, but, like, this year I just got sick of all the stuff that was happening to her. So I just, more or less, became more of a friend than I was last year.

INTERVIEWER: And did you do anything about what happened?

LORNA: No, I just wasn't a part of it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And how do you feel about that?

LORNA: Well, if I had been a part of it, then I know that a lot of rumors would have been said about me, that she would have probably not have said, but other people might have said that she had said.

THE SPRING OF EIGHTH GRADE

LORNA: Like, nobody thinks about it. Well, they think about it, but it's like they laugh it off or something. So, like, everybody's friends now. So, she, like, sits at our table sometimes. And, like, I mean, everybody's friends now.

INTERVIEWER: So, everyone who was against her before is friends with her now?

LORNA: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: It sounded like, from what you said, a lot of kids were against her. But you came forward and you were friends, so I wondered: What was going on for you? Why did you make that decision?

LORNA: Why not? I mean, she didn't do anything to me—didn't say anything about me.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

LORNA: Just because she said something about my friend doesn't mean I'm going to jump in every time they have a problem. Like, I don't think it's fair for, like, a whole group of people just to pick on one person. That's just not fair.



Excerpts from the Interview with Patty

Patty, a white girl from a middle-class family, did not see herself as a leader among her friends. Below are word-for-word excerpts taken from interviews conducted in 1998 as part of a Facing History and Ourselves evaluation study. Please note that the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the students.

PATTY: Also, it's sort of weird, 'cause you'd never expect somebody who was as popular as she was to, like, be sort of, like, shunned from the group by everyone else, but we sort of, like, we all just went against her.

She talked about people behind their back . . . but I think other people did that, too. . . . I really don't know . . . why we were so willing to jump on her and attack her more than anyone else. People were breaking the confidence. . . . She had told them stuff in confidence, and people sort of forgot that was one of the reasons why they didn't like her. And they just sort of, like, started doing it to her.

It sort of seemed like it was a cool thing to do . . . to be mean to her. And I guess it felt good to be able to get your anger out on a person, regardless of whether or not they really deserved to be the person. . . . It sort of seemed, like, sort of exciting, like it was something you could talk about.

I figured if I stuck by her, I would probably be her friend or be friends with all the other friends that I have, and I guess I, sort of, like, chose them over her because, like, they were more important to me.

If I sort of, like, became her like good friend—like started hanging out with her and doing stuff with her—I would definitely sort of, like, be not as close to the friends I have now. I don't know how far it would go, but it definitely would have an effect on it.

People still . . . might say something [like], "Oh, look at what she's wearing today," or whatever, but, like, I mean, I know I don't say—I try not to say mean stuff about her anymore, but it's sort of become a habit.

What they've done has left a permanent effect on Sue. She'll never get over it. Though people feel remorse, it's too late now.

THE SPRING OF EIGHTH GRADE

PATTY: Once we had started, it was sort of like you couldn't stop. . . . It builds and builds and builds until the point where you can't . . . turn back and say we're not going to do this to her anymore.

The Holocaust, or whatever: I think it started out with little things like that. Like, it didn't all happen at once. And so, I mean, that's what I think about how it connects to me personally. 'Cause it's like we allow people to be hurt for no reason. Or because if we're there every, like, every day. And, that's on like a much, a much smaller scale [than] what happened in the Holocaust. And that's how I connect [to] it myself, really. I think probably because you feel, like, if they are picking on her, they are going to leave me alone.

Some people who make fun of other kids, I think that one of the reasons they do it is out of fear that if they don't, someone would make fun of them for how they are. . . . I think the people who are actually the ones making fun are also afraid of what might happen if they don't make fun of people. Because then other people would make fun of them.

INTERVIEWER: Knowing the things that you know now, that you've learned this year, do you feel like you would have acted differently now? That you would act differently if this happened?

PATTY: I'm not sure it would have happened. I mean, I think . . . it makes you realize that these things happen every day and you just can't sort of say, like, "Oh, this isn't a big thing." . . . I'm not sure it would have happened. Some people would have realized this isn't right, which I don't think we did at the time.

When you realize it could happen to her, you realize it could happen to you. I think that was one point [at] which I lost a lot of trust for my friends. 'Cause it was like: You say the wrong thing or you do the wrong thing and it could happen to you.

I started to be a lot more careful about . . . what I say and what I [do]. I guess everybody knows it's been, like, a lot harder . . . to stand up and say what you believe or say what you want to say.

There's a lot of pressure to act a certain way. To be a certain way. And since there's all that pressure, you're, like, afraid to say things, you know, you want to say. You—you don't know what necessarily it is that's going to happen to you once you say them.



Excerpts from the Interview with Ms. Smith

Ms. Smith taught a ten-week Facing History and Ourselves unit as part of her eighth-grade language arts course at the school where the conflict took place. The students involved in this case study were in her class. Below are word-for-word excerpts taken from interviews conducted in 1998 as part of a Facing History and Ourselves evaluation study. Please note that the names have been changed to protect the privacy of the students.

A teacher's perspective on the ostracism incident and its relation to her teaching

MS. SMITH: This eighth grade is a class that has gone through a lot of social/friendship upheavals. There's been a lot of—especially last year, but it's flowed over a little bit to this year—some tension in the breakup particularly [of a] girls' group of friendships that kind of broke apart last year . . . It was very painful for some girls, and there was definitely victimizing and the victim and all that sort of thing going on, and so in that case it's been a very interesting class to watch. And yet that seems to have leveled off and that seems to have pretty much taken care of itself, so now, again, it's interesting to watch the different groups as they move around, making friends, that sort of thing. It's a fascinating group.

INTERVIEWER: The incident that happened last year—do you think it influenced the kids in this class in particular, in terms of the kinds of discussions you are having, at all?

MS. SMITH: Um, I think, um, when we talked about *The Crucible*—when we talked about victimizing, there are a number of times in the discussion, without saying outright, you know, using the example of what happened last year, because it would have been too painful or too personal. I did talk a lot about why certain people in certain situations seem to have a power over other people, and it's a really—for me, anyways, it's something that we will talk about as we do more of Facing History, but we've talked about it as a group, how people get a certain amount of power. And kids, through the discussion of *The Crucible*, they were very aware that sometimes the totally incorrect person has the power. And with *The Crucible*, we did talk about it a bit, and it's something we are going to pursue more, and when I do that I really am definitely hoping some of them—and I think they are—are making the connection to what happened in the school.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I was going to ask you: Did you get a sense that they did make that connection?

MS. SMITH: I—yes, again, I—yes, I did. I got a sense that they kind of knew what I was talking about without stating it, 'cause I never would, because it's just too, too close to home.

INTERVIEWER: Did anyone raise their hand and say, “Wait a minute. This sounds a lot like . . .”?

MS. SMITH: No, no. But I think, again, it’s too—I think, partly because there’s still a person in that room with power—or, not in that room, but in that class—with power who kids are still afraid to go against.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. I think kids—I think that one thing that happened last year, and I think it’s kind of a negative, a sad thing, is that kids realized how quickly . . . you could be isolated, how powerful a group, in this case a group of girls, can be. And, in fact, when I was filling out the questionnaires, I said a lot of kids have had the experience of standing by and not getting involved with someone else who was a victim. And this was the class: that because of that, there were very few kids who tried to jump in and help out in that situation. They all, I think, were afraid that they would be the next victim. It was really an interesting situation.

INTERVIEWER: Can you just outline it? You don’t need to name names, but . . .

MS. SMITH: It was basically a friendship, a very intense, close friendship of a few girls who had been friends down through the years. A few things happened, and, again, I don’t think any of them were major, but enough different things happened amongst the girls, and then there was a new girl that came into the school. This is part of it, too, and when that happens, you know, people are kids—other girls are curious. For whatever reason, this girl tends to wield a lot of power.

INTERVIEWER: The new girl?

MS. SMITH: The new girl. And all of the sudden—not all of the sudden, but slowly but surely—one of the girls that used to be a very close member of this girls’ group became isolated. She couldn’t understand quite why. Um, there was a lot of cruelty, a lot of backstabbing, a lot of just meanness. And . . . definitely shut-off: this girl is not any longer a part of this group. And it eventually involved teacher intervention. Not myself—I mean, I was concerned about it, but it was really something that the counselor really had a part in, and the principal and some parents were called in, and even then it wasn’t resolved because some kids just couldn’t see it. They just couldn’t see that this was, you know, something that teachers should be involved in, or parents should be involved in. Some parents thought it was silly and foolish that, you know . . . It was really an interesting situation, and yet one girl was tremendously hurt by it.

This happened last year. I mean, this girl is very bright, the one who was isolated, um, very talented, always gets A’s, although a few of the other girls who were doing this to her are pretty much in that same bracket, so I think there might have been some of the jealousy issue. She might have, you know, she might have turned them off in some ways and maybe her attitude was a little—she might have come across a little too sure of herself, a little too, you know, sort of cut-her-down-a-little-bit sort of thing. But . . . you know, I’m not the only teacher who thinks the, um, the idea of this new young woman coming to the seventh grade and just, again, having the kind of personality that draws

people to her, and then she can do things with that personality that, you know . . . It's really fascinating. We'll talk more about it as time goes on. It may come out in some of the discussions with the Facing History [unit] . . . I hope it will, you know: some of the issues surrounding what happened last year.

INTERVIEWER: So that's definitely in the room?

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah. That's part of this class's history. It's a big part. And what breaks my heart is some of the brightest, some of the most insightful, some of the most mature students in the class still seem to need her approval. Still seem to . . . It's just fascinating. And, you know, they will kind of, there is a little adoration there that I would've thought wasn't necessary for them. That they were self-assured enough not to have to do that. But I think everyone is afraid of not being on her right side. Because if you're not on the right side, you could be isolated, or you could be not one of the "in" crowd. It's pretty interesting. She is also the kind of kid who will tease other kids. She'll be supportive of other kids and she'll also tease.

. . . So, you don't want to do anything to jeopardize your position in the group. You don't want to be one of the kids who doesn't have a group. You don't want to be one of the outsiders. We're taking a great leap here: when we talk about what happened in Germany—how willing are you to go against what your neighbors are doing, what your neighbors are joining, you know . . . ? I mean, how many of us are willing to take a stand against that, even if we feel morally that, you know, we should—and then you bring that down to in our school. How many of us would be morally willing to take a stand against some of our friends if they were doing something that we think is wrong? And I hope to get into that discussion with the girls and the boys. So, we'll see.



Ostracism Case Study

Group Activity

“Expert” Group Directions: Read your transcript with your group, and then record your answers to the following questions. You will be using this information to help others understand your individual’s perspective. Do not start side two of this handout yet.

Individual’s Name: _____

1. What stands out for you about your individual’s perspective on the incident? Record three to five details that help you capture her perspective.
2. What role or roles did your individual play in this incident (victim of injustice, bystander, perpetrator, upstander)? What makes you say that? (Remember, someone can move between different roles over the course of the same incident.)
3. If you were this individual’s peer (either another student or another teacher, if you have Ms. Smith), what would you want her to consider that was not apparent in her perspective on the incident?
4. What questions does this perspective on the ostracism incident raise for you? Who might be able to help you answer your questions?

"Teaching" Group Directions: Use the bull's eye graphic organizer to record notes from your expert group discussions. First, each person should share one or two key ideas from each question on side one of this handout. Next, in the inner circle, write each individual's perspective. In the outer circle, write the role(s) they played in the incident.

