Influencing the Bully: Addressing Bullying in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Bullying is an issue that many students within a school environment experience on a daily basis. Teachers are frequently present when these bullying instances arise. This study focuses on two Ontario secondary teachers’ beliefs about how their responses to bullying affect the school dynamics of bullying. The study also addresses the teachers’ philosophies about bullying, and their professional performance when responding to bullying. A qualitative study is included, including one semi-structured interview with each participant. The participants were teaching at high schools located within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) when they were interviewed. The study reveals a discrepancy between common victim characteristics, making it difficult for teachers to notice bullying. Thus, teachers are frequently unaware that bullying is taking place in their classes. The study indicates the challenges that teachers endure when influencing the school dynamics of bullying, as consequences for the actions of bullying are dealt with by administration and are out of the control of teachers. The study also addresses documents and policies implemented by the Ontario Ministry of Education about how to effectively reduce and respond to school bullying. The discussion gives recommendations for teachers on how to effectively address bullying, and examines the importance of integrating bullying into the curriculum.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

Teachers can increase motivation in students by assisting in the development of positive self-worth. Teachers not only have the ability, but also the responsibility, to assist in the development of positive self-confidence in students so they can succeed in academics and life. Teachers influence the daily lives of students by altering their positive and negative experiences. It is through these experiences that a student’s self-confidence is built or diminished.

Bullying is an experience that interferes with a student’s self-confidence and quality of life (Flaspohler, Elfstorm, Vanderzee, & Sink, 2009). Bullying is an occurrence that unfortunately many students endure throughout their high school experience as almost “three out of four students observe some type of bullying at their school” (Harris, Petrie, & Willoughby, 2002, p. 11). Bullying is defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education as:

A form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 3)

Students are often physically or verbally bullied due to multiple factors, such as their sexual orientation and whether they identify in the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer) community (Taylor & Peter, 2011). There are many “negative consequences associated with bullying” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 638). When students are bullied, it “affects [their] life satisfaction and personal perceptions of social support from teachers and peers” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 645). Bullying can have a vicious snowball effect. That is, as bullying increases in occurrence and intensity, the victim’s negative self-thoughts continually increase. It is often difficult for the student being bullied to address and stop the bullying on his or her own.
bullying to stop, assistance from others, especially people of authority such as teachers, is often required (James et al., 2008).

Teachers are frequently located in the same area where bullying occurs. Bullying takes place throughout the school, often in the classroom or cafeteria where teachers are monitoring (Harris et al., 2002). In these situations, when a negative or condescending remark is said to a student by another student, the teacher has the ability to respond in multiple ways. An option may be speaking to the two students, either separately or together. Regardless of how the situation is addressed by the teacher, the outcome will naturally either positively or negatively affect the student.

The way a teacher responds to bullying is significant because a teacher’s response can either increase or decrease a student’s feeling of self-worth. The feelings that victims of bullying experience, whether positive or negative, will be with these students for the rest of their lives.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is significant to the education community because the way a teacher responds to bullying affects multiple groups within the school culture, including other teachers, the administration, students, and their families or legal guardians. Schools strive to create safer environments, where students can feel comfortable being who they are and expressing their beliefs. The effects of bullying can alter a school atmosphere and challenge this ideal of a “safe environment.” Teachers can govern the school climate through how they respond to situations they witness.

The purpose of this study is to examine how two Ontario secondary school teachers responded to instances of either verbal or physical bullying, and how their responses influence school bullying. The study focuses on verbal and physical bullying because they are forms of
bullying that are present in the school, offering teachers the ability to respond. Though physical bullying may seem difficult to ignore, small instances such as a student poking another student with a pencil, can easily go unnoticed by teachers. A teacher can also claim not to hear a negative remark made from one student to another.

With the accessibility of technologies such as smart phones and tablets, cyberbullying is another form of bullying that may take place in the school climate. Cyberbullying is difficult for teachers to respond to since it occurs online. In order to witness cyberbullying, teachers must be in contact with students in the cyber-world, which is not common. While impacts of cyberbullying are of urgent necessity to understand, this study focuses on verbal and physical bullying.

This study contributes to the body of research on school bullying and the impact that teachers do or do not have on school bullying. It addresses how teachers respond to bullying situations, if they believe it is important to respond to bullying, if they believe it is their responsibility to respond to bullying, and if they believe their responses to bullying instances alter the school dynamics of bullying.

**Background of the Researcher**

I was born and raised in Ontario, and have completed all of my schooling within the province. While in secondary school, I encountered a teacher whom I will never forget. I was a member of the ski and snowboard team for my school, and this teacher was the faculty supervisor, so I knew him quite well. In my grade 12 year, he was also my economics teacher. When the classroom was rowdy, this teacher would always yell at one particular student to stop talking, even though most students in the class were being disruptive. This student had demonstrated characteristics of someone who may have been previously bullied. For example, he
was shy and timid at times. One day, when the teacher yelled at this student to stop talking, I spoke up for him.

Looking back, perhaps I did not handle the situation in the most appropriate way, but I did address it. In front of the class, I told the teacher that I felt it was unfair that he always picked on this particular student, when most of the other students were also talking. The class went quiet. The student and I were not friends—in fact, we had never really spoken, but I could see the expression and emotion on his face. It seemed to say “wow,” with a smile. The teacher did not respond to what I said. He just stared at me, almost in disbelief.

No one ever said anything to me about that situation, not even the student, but the teacher did stop picking on the student. I realized how one simple statement could change so much. I am not sure if I responded the way I did because I knew the teacher outside of the classroom, or if I would have responded in a similar way to any teacher; I am just happy I did.

The teacher was embarrassing the student by always singling him out and yelling at him, and when I said something, it stopped. I recognized how easily experiences could be altered just by how you respond to them. I also witnessed how teachers can contribute to school bullying by participating in it. I questioned why some teachers contributed to school bullying instead of responding to these negative situations in the classroom. Teachers’ responses to negative instances can alter a student’s confidence, happiness, and ability to succeed academically. Why then, were more teachers not responding to these negative occurrences, specifically bullying?

In addition to witnessing bullying by a teacher in high school, I have also experienced it on a personal level. I have a close family member who was bullied considerably throughout elementary and high school. I believe it is predominately this family member’s experience that has led me to conduct this research. The bullying began at a young age after moving to a new
school in a different part of Ontario. It usually occurred during the school day—often in the classroom, where teachers were present. By the time he reached grade 12, his friends turned their backs on him and became bullies as well. For a few years following high school he was alone, without friends. I know through speaking with him that the bullying diminished his self-confidence and ability to do well academically. He will never forget the bullying, and it will always affect him and his self-esteem. It saddens me.

He told me that teachers often ignored the bullying. These instances were before Bill 212 (2007) was implemented in the Safe Schools Act (2000) in the Ontario education system. The Ontario Ministry of Education implemented this act in order to address how to create safe schools. The document provides information about

the roles and responsibilities everyone has in making schools safer for learning and specifies the behaviour expected from everybody at school (not just students) [and] the mandatory consequences (e.g., expulsions, suspensions) for students who break the rules. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000b)

Bill 212 was introduced in 2007 by the Ontario Ministry of Education. It was “an Act to amend the Education Act in respect of behaviour, discipline and safety,” and was the first act that included student consequences such as suspension or expulsion because of bullying behaviour (Bill 212, 2007).

This family member’s mother would frequently call the school regarding the bullying and very little was ever done. His teachers always claimed they never heard any negative remarks made by other students at his expense. He told me that teachers were often present and close enough to hear, so I believe these teachers were not being honest. I hope to show through this research that the way a teacher responds to verbal or physical bullying situations influences school bullying.
In the summer of 2011, I worked a full-time job unrelated to teaching, and one of my colleagues was a teacher. One day, a third colleague of ours shared with us that her son was being bullied in school. When she left the room, a man I was working with who was also an Ontario certified teacher initially responded with, “There must be something wrong with that kid.” I was shocked. I told him I did not believe what he was saying was accurate, and that students are often bullied for aspects such as the clothes they wear, or physical features that of course do not determine anything about the student. The man only said that he felt we have different beliefs on the topic. Through my research, I hope to discover why teachers believe students are bullied and determine if there is a correlation between their beliefs and their responses to bullying instances.

**Research Questions**

This research project focuses on Ontario secondary school teachers. Two teachers are interviewed and asked questions about school bullying, their responses to particular situations, and why they acted the way they did. I also use previous research within the field of education and bullying to demonstrate the relationship between a teacher’s response and school bullying. The main research question is: *in what ways do two Ontario secondary teachers influence school bullying through their professional performance?*

In order to answer this question, I assessed teachers’ beliefs on bullying. Therefore, my first subquestion was: what are secondary school teachers’ beliefs on why a student is bullied? Asking about teachers’ viewpoints may offer an explanation as to why teachers responded the way they did to a particular bullying situation.

A second subquestion I believed was important to ask was: how do secondary school teachers believe they should respond to school bullying? This helps determine if teachers believe
reacting to bullying is or is not in their job description, and thus helps explain why they responded the way they did to a bullying incident. Perhaps the teachers in my family member’s experience ignored the bullying because they believed their job was only to teach curriculum and provide assessment.

Overview

Chapter 1 reviews the topic I researched, the intentions behind my research, and the passion I hold for the issue that has led me to conduct this research. It also introduces my main research question and my subquestions. Chapter 2 consists of a literature review that will help establish my research within the field of education, teachers, and bullying. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure I used to gather the information required to answer my research question. Chapter 4 describes the data I collected, and an analysis of the data in relation to the research question and subquestions. Chapter 5 provides implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research, as well as a conclusion and summary of my research. References and appendixes can be found at the end of the paper.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Bullying is a current topic in the field of education. However, this was not always the case. It was not until the “1990s that [bullying] had become a matter of concern on the educational agenda” (Sandoval, 2001, p. 105). Educational literature states, “bullying affects everyone in the school—those who are bullied, the bullies themselves, bystanders who witness the bullying, and the children who hear about it” (Sandoval, 2001, p. 105).

Definition of Bullying

Olweus (1993) defines bullying as when “[a student] is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9). This definition is frequently cited throughout bullying literature. Importantly, Olweus’ (1993) definition of bullying “emphasizes negative actions that are carried out ‘repeatedly and over time’” (p. 9). Olweus (1993) defines “negative action” as “when someone intentionally inflicts or attempts to inflict, inquiry or discomfort upon another” (p. 9). He defines two main types of negative actions: verbal and physical. Verbal negative actions are “carried out by words (verbally) . . . by threatening, taunting, teasing and calling names” (Olweus, 1993, p. 9). Physical negative actions occur when “somebody hits, pushes, kicks, pinches, or restrains another—by physical contact” (Olweus, 1993, p. 9).

Olweus (1993) also highlights a power imbalance between the students involved in bullying. He notes, “the student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending him/herself and is somewhat helpless against the student or students who harass” (p. 10). An instance where students are “of approximately the same strength (physical or psychological)” is not a form of bullying (Olweus, 1993, p. 10).
Teachers’ Understandings and Beliefs about Bullying

Prior to entering a classroom, teachers have preconceived notions about many aspects of school bullying that will affect how they respond to a situation. There is extensive research on teachers’ understanding of bullying. Research suggests that if teachers are able “to recognize key characteristics of those who might develop into school bullies and/or victims,” this will assist in monitoring and reducing school bullying (Carney, Hazler, & Higgins, 2002, p. 93). However, within the literature, there is “inconsistency in the identification of bully and victim characteristics,” which makes it difficult for teachers to determine when a student is in need of assistance (Carney et al., 2002, p. 91).

A study conducted in the United States of America indicates that there are five essential qualities that victims exclusively display. According to this study, victims are “afraid of going to school, [are] physically younger, smaller, and weaker than [their] peers, blame themselves for their problems, [are] overly dependent on parents, [display] coordination difficulties, and believe they cannot control their environment” (Carney et al., 2002, p. 95). The study also indicates that bullies are “aggressive, physical, and quick to explode” (Carney et al., 2002, p. 95).

Of course, possessing these characteristics does not necessarily mean a person will become a victim of bullying or a bully. The relationship is not causal; rather, there is a correlation between these factors. One research study indicates that teachers’ “definition[s] of bullying were correlated with the corresponding rating of perceived seriousness” (Bell, Craig, & Leschied, 2011, p. 24). This creates a challenge for teachers to identify students who are in need of help and mentorship, and for schools to produce the “appropriate preventative and intervention [techniques] for victims or potential victims” (Carney et al., 2002, p. 100).
Another study indicates that not all teachers view bullying as negative; some teachers believe that bullying is “normative and [that] . . . children get picked on [because] . . . they do not stand up for themselves” (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2007, p. 436). Teachers in this study would often not approach others, such as the victim’s parents, to indicate that the bullying was taking place. Rather they “advocated assertion” to the victim/student (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2007, p. 444). These teachers were also the “least likely to intervene” in comparison to teachers who thought otherwise during bullying situations (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2007, p. 448). Literature suggests that “teachers do not intervene in bullying if they do not feel sympathy for the victim or if they believe that getting involved in unnecessary” (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2007, p. 448). However, research does “suggest that there is a discrepancy in the manner in which . . . teachers define bullying,” which also makes it difficult for teachers to respond to bullying (Bell et al., 2011, p. 26).

Research continues to show that teachers’ personal beliefs influence their response to bullying. In their study, Kochenderfer and Pelletier (2007) found that teachers who hold “avoidant beliefs appear to be the most beneficial as they influence teachers to intervene in effective ways” (p. 449). These teachers actively assisted in helping the victim feel safe by “recommending that victimized students stay away from aggressors and find other kids to play with” (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2007, p. 449). They also assisted in separating the students whenever possible within the school community (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2007, p. 449).

A study conducted in Canada indicates a discrepancy between the number of students who teachers perceived to be bullied, and the actual number of students bullied. When teachers were asked of how many students were being bullied in their classroom, they replied seven. In
reality, 17 students were bullied (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005). This indicates the inability of teachers to accurately determine students who are victims of bullying.

The fact that teachers have difficulty identifying occurrences of bullying makes it challenging to determine how to appropriately intervene in a bullying situation (Mishna et al., 2005). Despite this, research does indicate multiple factors that teachers have used to determine how to properly respond to bullying situations (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 724). These conditions include: “whether teachers viewed an incident as serious, whether they considered the victimized child responsible, whether the child matched their assumptions about victim characteristics and behaviours, and whether they described feeling empathy for the child” (Mishna et al., 2005, pp. 724-725). These factors vary depending on the support provided for the teacher by the school system, as the school has a responsibility to educate teachers on appropriate awareness and responsive techniques (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 725).

In seeking assistance from the school or school board, teachers “contrasted the existence of school policies dealing with direct bullying and the absence of guidelines addressing indirect bullying” (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 727-728). This emphasis on direct bullying causes confusion among teachers regarding how to appropriately respond to indirect bullying (Mishna et al., 2005). Direct bullying is defined as “open attacks on a victim” and indirect bullying is defined as, “the form of social isolation and intentional exclusion from a group” (Olweus, 1993, p. 10). Studies indicate that teachers often feel “exhausted, scared, helpless, or fed up” because of this confusion (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 727). They also feel that attending to bullying situations while teaching curriculum is a lot to handle on a daily basis (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 727). However, research does indicate that “the more experiences that . . . teachers had in witnessing bullying,
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the more concern and confidence they reported in identifying and managing it” (Bell et al., 2011, p. 24).

**Bullying in Schools**

Students are bullied in schools for a variety of reasons. A recent Canadian study conducted by Taylor and Peter (2011) indicates interesting results. Their study’s purpose was “to identify the forms and extent of students’ experiences of homophobic and transphobic incidents at school, the impact of those experiences, and the efficacy of measures being taken by schools to combat these common forms of bullying” (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 13). Their study involved “3700 students from across Canada between December 2007 and June 2009” (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 13).

Out of the students who participated, “74% of trans students, 55% of sexual minority students, and 26% of non-LGBTQ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression” (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 15). Verbal harassment was occurring weekly for a large percentage of these students, as “37% of trans students, 32% of female sexual minority students, and 20% of male sexual minority students reported [it]” (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 15). The study also indicates that “21% [of] LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted due to their sexual orientation” (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 16). Taylor and Peter (2011) discovered that 64% the LGBTQ students surveyed felt “unsafe at school” (p. 17).

While many students are bullied, this study indicates the difference between the percentage of LGBTQ students who were “physically harassed or assaulted” versus the percentage of heterosexual students who were (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 16). The results were: “in connection with their own gender expression (30% versus 13% of other students), perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (27% versus 12%), gender (25% versus 10%), and sexual
orientation (25% versus 11%)” (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 16). Shockingly, the study indicated “teachers often look the other way when they hear homophobic and transphobic comments and some of them even make these kinds of comments themselves,” which goes against the moral and ethical obligations of a teacher (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 27). As consistent with the previous literature, Taylor and Peter (2011) note the frustration from students as “many participants in our survey, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, commented on their extreme disappointment with school staff who look the other way when disrespectful language is being used” (p. 31).

Taylor and Peter’s (2011) study on LGBTQ is interesting, as “approximately 1 person in 10 is LGBTQ” in the Toronto District School Board, or TDSB (Toronto District School Board, 2011, p. 6). The TDSB also notes, “many individuals do not identify themselves LGBTQ because the threat of verbal abuse, physical violence, loss of employment, social ostracism, harassment, and other discriminatory practices is so great” (Toronto District School Board, 2011, p. 6).

Interestingly, a study entitled Texas Middle School Principals’ Perceptions of Bullying on Campus, by Harris and Hathorn (2006), discovered that “principals reported, in general, a high level of personal commitment and staff commitment to school safety and stopping bullying on their campuses” (p. 61). The literature states that “principals’ and students’ awareness of bullying on campuses are somewhat different” (Harris & Hathorn, 2006, p. 63). Within this study, “nearly all of the principals believed that their schools were safe and that they were supportive . . . Yet, students still report that they do not feel safe, nor do they feel the support of their teachers and administration” (Harris & Hathorn, 2006, p. 66). It is important that administrators are aware of the frequency of bullying taking place in their schools, and the lack
of support from administration as “prolonged acts of bullying may have devastating effects on a child’s life” (Harris & Hathorn, 2006, p. 66).

A study completed in 2002 in the United States investigated the experiences of 1,400 grade nine students related to bullying in schools (Harris et al., 2002). When students were asked on a questionnaire “how often does bullying happen? . . . only 19% of students indicated that bullying never happened at school; 50% indicated that they observed bullying sometimes; and 29% said they observed it happening often” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 8). These results show that approximately 80% of students are aware that bullying is occurring at their school. Other literature states that school “staff clearly underestimated the prevalence of frequent bullying across all school levels” (Bradshaw, O’Brennan, & Sawyer, 2007, p. 361). This demonstrates a discrepancy between the views of students and educators on the frequency of bullying.

The participants in this study were also asked how often they are bullied. The results show that “10% of students indicated they were bullied at least once a week; 11% indicated that they experienced bullying generally less than once a week; 79% of students indicated they had not been” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 8). Though 10% of students being bullied once a week may seem like a small percentage, this amounts to 140 of the 1,400 students, which is significant.

When students were asked “where or when does [bullying] happen?”, 82% of students were aware that bullying was taking place most frequently during lunchtime (Harris et al., 2002, p. 8). The researchers in this study note that “this finding was not surprising because there is generally less adult supervision during this time” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 9). Nonetheless, “69% of students reported that bullying occurred sometimes or often in the classroom,” where teachers and adult figures are almost always present (Harris et al., 2002, p. 9). Literature about bullying also states that “although high rates of bullying reported in the classroom may seem
counterintuitive given the presumed high level of supervision in a classroom setting, students spend the majority of their time in a classroom and therefore have more opportunity to experience bullying there than in other locations” (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 366). The data indicates that more “professional development [for educators] should occur to increase teachers’ and other classroom staffs awareness of the different forms of bullying that may be occurring in the classroom” (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 366). With more opportunities for professional development for teachers and administration in schools, hopefully students can begin to feel safer.

Students were also asked to indicate what type of bullying they had frequently experienced. Most students listed verbal bullying, as “more than 41% [of students] reported sometimes or often being called a hurtful name” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 9). Physical bullying was also evident as “participants indicated that they had been threatened (23%), or hit or kicked (22%) sometimes or often” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 9).

Harris’ study also looked at who students informed once they had been bullied, and interesting results were uncovered. Out of the students who were bullied “49% told a friend, and 17% told their mother; only . . . 4% told a teacher, and 17% never told anyone” (Harris, et al., 2002, p. 10). It is noteworthy that students are least likely to report bullying to a teacher, even though teachers are often present when the bullying is taking place, as “69% of students reported that bullying occurred sometimes or often in the classroom” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 9). Also, interestingly, “when students who had been bullied were asked what happened after they told someone they had been bullied, only 25% indicated that things got better” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). It is disappointing to note that “47% [of students] said that [when] they told someone things
did not change, and 16% told someone and reported that things got worse” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10).

This research indicates shocking results regarding the administration and their level of commitment to student safety. When students were asked how their administration responded to their bullying experiences “only 25% of students felt that their administration were interested in trying to stop bullying” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). Also “28% [of students] said they did not believe that” the administration was trying to end the bullying (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). These results are surprising as administrators are often regarded as being role models for teachers in terms of their responses to negative occurrences within the school. This is evident as researchers such as Harris et al. (2002) state “principals must lead the effort to reduce bullying on their campuses” (p. 10).

This information is significant in the field of bullying as it demonstrates the great amount of bullying occurring in this southern American school, and the small amount of students that report bullying because they do not believe the bullying will stop, or they believe it will make the bullying worse (Harris et al., 2002). It is up to the school administrators to implement strategies to reduce school bullying. However, while “school administrators are eager to reduce bullying; they are frequently reluctant to address the issue of bullying in their schools, and even students appear to perceive them and teachers as not being particularly interested” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 12). It is difficult for students to report bullying when the adult figures in their lives do not seem concerned with helping students feel safe.

**A Teacher’s Role in Bullying**

Though bullying may appear to be student-student driven, teachers also provide a crucial role in addressing bullying. The literature states that teachers play a significant role in
“discouraging bullying” (Nation, Vieno, Perkins, & Santinello, 2008, p. 227). Research has demonstrated that because teachers are in a position of authority, they are required to model “appropriate behaviours” and also to intervene during bullying between students (James et al., 2008, p. 170). By modeling appropriate behaviours to address bullying, teachers will demonstrate to students that bullying is unacceptable.

Another study conducted in the United States shows that when teachers did respond to a bullying situation, most dealt with the situation by having a discussion with the victims and bullies (Dake, Funk, Price, & Telljohann, 2003). It is crucial that teachers respond appropriately to bullying because it is associated with a child’s quality of life (Flaspohler et al., 2009). Research in the field of psychology indicates that “the experiences of bullying and being bullied have both been linked to later development of negative consequences” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 638). Studies demonstrate that when students are bullied or act as a bully, it “affects [their] life satisfaction and personal perceptions of social support from teachers and peers” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 645).

Research shows that teachers are often used as support systems to help bullied students deal with “the negative consequences associated with bullying” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 638). Teachers aid students in dealing with the stress and negative repercussions of bullying. However, research also suggests that receiving social support only from teachers, and not from peers, “may not be enough to protect students from the deleterious effects of bullying” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 646). Having both groups, teachers and peers, offer social support increases a student’s sense of well-being and “buffer[s] against the negative effects of bullying” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 646).
In a study conducted by Bradshaw et al. (2007), they indicate that “staff who reported being bullied as a child were more likely to think bullying was a “moderate” or “serious” problem in their school” (p. 365). Though this may suggest a more effective response to bullying by these teachers, “experience with bullying as a child, was not related to the staff members’ perceived ability to effectively handle a bullying situation” (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 365).

Through the literature, it is evident that teachers play a crucial role in addressing bullying (Nation et al., 2008, p. 227). However, a study conducted by Meyer (2008) indicates some of the difficulties that Canadian secondary school teachers experience when addressing gendered harassment/bullying in their schools. Teachers in this study stated they have minimal trust for their school administration in responding to verbal harassment as “they felt administration did not want to be bothered with these issues” (Meyer, 2008, p. 560). Teachers often felt “they [had] to handle most non-violent discipline issues alone” (Meyer, 2008, p. 559).

The Canadian teachers in the study also experienced difficulty meeting the curriculum requirements and addressing harassment in their schools (Meyer, 2008). They stated this “prevented them from acting as consistently as they would like towards various forms of verbal harassment” (Meyer, 2008, p. 560). Teachers in the study admitted to “ignor[ing] certain [negative] behaviours” from students because of the “great pressure from their administration to cover the required amounts of curricular material” (Meyer, 2008, p. 560). This left teachers feeling “exhausted and overwhelmed with the professional demands placed on them” (Meyer, 2008, p. 560).

The teachers in Meyer’s (2008) study indicated they did “not feel as if they are given the necessary support or resources” to handle harassment in their classrooms (p. 560). When professional development days were available, teachers felt pressured from administration to
attend the days that would improve their teaching in their subject area, as opposed to using the
days to assist them in expanding their knowledge and training in dealing with harassment in their
schools (Meyer, 2008). Teachers who were educated in how to appropriately address bullying
and harassment in their schools took their own initiative to do so, as they “took it upon
themselves to seek out these opportunities” (Meyer, 2008, p. 561).

Legislation Protecting Students from Bullying

For the purpose of my research I focus on teachers and their influence on school bullying
in the province of Ontario. Ontario has produced multiple forms of legislation to promote safe
schools and anti-bullying initiatives. The Ontario Ministry of Education has produced an Ontario
Schools Code of Conduct that must be present in all schools in Ontario. The Ontario Schools
Code of Conduct states that students “have the right to be safe, and feel safe in their school
community” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 1). This is significant in relation to school
bullying because as previous research indicates, bullying can lower a student’s sense of life
satisfaction and thus safety (Flaspohler et al., 2009, p. 638). When a student is bullied, this right
to satisfaction and safety is taken away from them.

The Ontario Schools Code of Conduct also states that teachers have the responsibility to
preserve a school climate where students are not bullied, but are treated with “respect and
civility” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 3). This indicates that a teacher must report
school bullying and address it in an effective manner to promote acceptance between students.

Not only are teachers required to promote safe schools, but the Ontario Schools Code of
Conduct also states a responsibility to school boards to educate the school community (students,
parents, and staff) on the code of conduct. They must also “provide opportunities for all staff to
acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to develop and maintain . . . safe learning
and teaching environments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 4). This legislation provides staff, specifically teachers, with the appropriate measures required to address school bullying. It also means teachers cannot claim they do not know what is expected of them in terms of addressing bullying and creating a safe school environment.

Within this code of conduct, teachers are expected to assist in the development of student self-esteem (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a). Studies link bullying to diminishing students’ sense of well-being and therefore, teachers have the responsibility to prevent and help students experiencing bullying (Flasphohler et al., 2009). Not only are teachers addressed, but administrators and students are also expected to “treat one another with dignity and respect at all times” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 8). This shows that bullying is not tolerated within the Ontario Schools Code of Conduct as it is disrespectful to bully an individual.

As previously mentioned, in 2000, the Ontario Ministry of Education also produced a policy regarding school bullying prevention and intervention titled the Safe Schools Act. The Ontario Ministry of Education implemented the Safe Schools Act to create initiatives to lead to safer schools. The document provides information about the “roles and responsibilities” required for members of a school community to make “schools safer for learning” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000b). It also discusses the consequences for those who do not participate in the rules for creating a safer school climate (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000b). In 2007, Bill 212 was introduced by the Ontario Ministry of Education, and it became the first act that included student consequences such as suspension or expulsion because of bullying behaviour (Bill 212, 2007).

These, along with other government documents, also stress the importance of providing a safe school climate in order to prevent bullying (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). The
Progressive Discipline document states the significance of character education, and making each student “feel safe, comfortable, and accepted,” as bullying can have a significant impact on students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 3). Teachers cannot ignore bullying in their schools, as these government documents also stresses the importance of board policies providing teachers with the required teaching/training strategies on how to address and even prevent bullying “in daily classroom teaching” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 4).

The Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour policy states the importance of progressive discipline, which can be defined as: “a whole-school approach that utilizes a continuum of interventions, supports, and consequences to address the inappropriate student behaviour and to build upon strategies that promote positive behaviours” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 5). It ensures both bullies, and students who are bullied, receive the proper “corrective and supportive” assistance required for students to learn to treat others respectfully, and to feel safe within the school community (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 3). This policy emphasizes the severity of school bullying, the importance of teachers in addressing a bullying situation, and “promoting positive student behaviour” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 1).

In 2012, the Ontario Ministry of Education implemented the Ontario’s Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13). This act “requires school boards to prevent and address inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour among students in our schools; these behaviours include bullying, discrimination and harassment” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The philosophy behind this policy is that “[it] promotes respect and understanding for all students regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).
Though there are multiple acts similar to Bill 13 in the Ontario Ministry of Education documents, this act specifically requires school boards to:

- have policies in place on progressive discipline, bullying prevention and intervention, and on equity and inclusive education; Consider tougher consequences for students who bully others. This can include suspending and considering expulsion if: the student has already been suspended for bullying and the student's presence in the school creates an unacceptable risk to the safety of others, or the bullying was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012)

The act also provides specific roles and responsibilities of administration to follow. It states that principals must:

- Investigate any incident reported by a board employee which could lead to a student being suspended or expelled, including bullying. Notify the parent/guardians of students who have harmed another student about the incident, when the students' behaviour could lead to them being suspended or expelled. Also invite the parents to discuss the supports that will be provided to their child. Invite the parents/guardians of the student who was harmed in the incident to discuss the supports that will be provided to their child. Principals were already required to notify these parents. Communicate with teachers and where appropriate, other board employees, who reported an incident which could lead to a student getting suspended or expelled. Principals will be required to inform them about the results of their investigation into the incident. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012)

The act also mentions how it is part of a “comprehensive actions plan” calling upon all members of the school, and community to take part in creating accepting schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). In order to create safer and more accepting schools, the Ministry is “introducing more mental health workers” in schools’ development strategies to integrate “equity and inclusive education principles and bullying prevention strategies” in the curriculum, creating “a public awareness campaign to highlight that all Ontarians have a role in preventing bullying” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The Ministry is also “creating an Accepting Schools Expert Panel to provide advice on resources and practices that focus on a whole school approach, including bullying prevention and intervention” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). With
these policies in place, hopefully Ontario schools can become safer and more accepting, and thus reduce school bullying.

**Overview**

The literature suggests that “identifying and responding to bullying is complex and confusing” for many teachers (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 734). It suggests that there are no universal traits that identify victims or school bullies (Carney et al., 2002). Research indicates that students who are bullied often have a lowered sense of well-being, and that it is therefore important for teachers to address bullying situations (Flaspohler et al., 2009). Educators are often unaware of the amount of bullying taking place in their schools. As the literature states, they often “underestimated the prevalence of frequent bullying across all school levels” (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 361). Although Administrators are noted to be “eager to reduce bullying” they are also found “reluctant to address the issue of bullying in their schools and even students appear to perceive them and teachers as not being particularly interested” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 12). Teachers are also not likely to respond to negative LGBTQ remarks in the school environment as Taylor and Peter (2011) indicate in their study that there are teachers “who look the other way when disrespectful language is being used” (p.31). However, the teachers’ lack of response is an important issue as within the TDSB, one out of every 10 students identifies as part of the LGBTQ community (Toronto District School Board, 2011).

Anti-bullying legislations are relatively new in the Ontario system of education. My experiences in school bullying occurred prior to the implementation of the Safe Schools Act, and I hope that my research will indicate a progressive shift in the influence of Ontario secondary school teachers on school bullying, and in the commitment that teachers have to following the
new legislations from the Ontario Ministry of Education to promote safer and more accepting schools.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Through a qualitative research process, I collected data to understand how two Ontario secondary school teachers responded to instances of verbal or physical bullying between students, in order to analyze how their responses influenced school bullying. The participants were Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs) who were currently teaching in a secondary school. The data were collected through two face-to-face semi-structured interviews that were then transcribed, coded, and analyzed. This chapter reviews the research methodology, which consists of the procedure followed, a description of the participants, data collection and analysis, ethical review procedures, and limitations of the research study.

Procedure

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A for interview questions). I interviewed two Ontario secondary school teachers about their beliefs and experiences with equity issues in the school environment. One interview was 36 minutes, while the other was 54 minutes. In an effort to mask the purpose of the interview, so I did not unduly influence responses, I transitioned from questions about broader equity issues to bullying more specifically. The topic of bullying, particularly a teacher’s response to bullying instances, can be controversial as it often questions a teacher’s ethics. I did not want the participants to feel that their responses were inadequate according to a hypothetical standard of how bullying should be dealt with. I therefore attempted to be very sympathetic to the concerns of the participants. In total, I asked each participant 19 semi-structured interview questions.

For the purpose of this research, two participants were interviewed individually. The participants were interviewed face-to-face in a location of their choice, off of school property. The interview was off of school property because I wanted to enhance participants’
confidentiality and honesty. If the interview took place on school property, I was concerned participants may have modified their answers in fear that a colleague may overhear the interview. An offsite location was therefore chosen. I recommended a quiet space such as a coffee shop, but ultimately allowed each participant to select the location, in an effort to enhance his or her level of comfort. Perhaps if participants selected a location they were already familiar with, they would feel more at ease while being interviewed.

The participants were not given a copy of the interview questions in advance. After the interviews were conducted, participants could email me any additional comments they might want to add to their responses. This was stated in the informed consent letter that participants signed prior to the interview taking place (see Appendix B for consent letter).

The interviews were recorded with a Zoom H4n Handy Mobile 4-track recorder. Following the interviews, I transcribed and read over them numerous times. The data were coded and analyzed using the comparative method, according to relevance to my research objectives (how teachers’ responses to instances of verbal or physical bullying affect the school environment). I looked specifically for similarities and differences between responses to the questions, as well as how participants responded (tone or hesitation). After noting the commonalities and differences between participants’ responses, I related the results to the literature in the field of bullying, and my research subquestions. The findings from this data analysis are examined and discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Participants

One of the participants was referred to me by a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. This participant had emailed the professor regarding issues of bullying, and was asked to partake in this research. Upon expressing interest,
this participant was recommended to me. The other participant was referred to me by a colleague from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, but did not have any connection to issues of bullying. The only requirement to participate in this study was that participants were OCTs currently teaching in a secondary school.

By coincidence, at the time of the interview, both participants had been teaching for 13 years, and both taught English. The only apparent difference between the participants was that one was a female teaching at a Catholic high school in a rural part of the GTA, and the other was a male teaching in an urban, inner-city school in Toronto.

The research focuses on public secondary schools, which is why participants must be certified by the Ontario College of Teachers, and currently teaching in a secondary school. These were the only two requirements for participation in this research study because I believe that equity issues, or more specifically bullying issues, are evident within any public school, and are not subject or grade specific. Bullying occurs in multiple areas of a school, such as the classroom, hallway, or cafeteria, and there are usually teachers present throughout these locations. Teachers may experience instances of bullying while teaching, on cafeteria duty, or while passing through the halls. During the interview, I asked participants to share an instance where they experienced student-on-student bullying, but I did not specify a location for this reason.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Participants were not aware that the focus of the research was bullying. In a letter of consent, they were informed that the research focused on equity issues. The interview questions were purposely structured to mask the focus of the research in an effort to maintain the validity and reliability of participants’
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responses. Masking the focus of the research also aided in the recruitment process. Participants may be hesitant to participate in a study that focuses predominantly on bullying, because issues related to bullying and the appropriate ways to respond are subjective. Participants may also alter their responses to questions about bullying if they know it is the focus of the study. Responding to student bullying situations is related to one’s morals and ethical beliefs. Teachers may be more honest in their responses to the interview questions if they do not think bullying is the focus of the interview. To fully review the interview questions please see Appendix A.

After transcribing the interviews, the data were coded and analyzed through the comparative method. I listened to the first interview and noted the key themes and reactions with different coloured highlighters. I then listened to the second interview and recorded whether or not these themes or reactions repeated. I used the same colour of highlighter to represent quotes that corresponded to the key themes from the first interview. I looked for patterns that occurred in the data, and then analyzed the quotes. I also placed an asterisk on significant quotes. I had the ability to select specific quotes I believed to be important. The majority of the quotes were selected from section 3 of the interviews, as this section was specifically about bullying. The other sections of the interviews were created to mask that the purpose of the interview was on bullying; they were intended to allow participants to perceive that the topic of interest was equity in general. However, additional quotes were also selected from other sections of the interviews when participants’ statements were applicable to describing or encountering bullying.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

Prior to the interview, I emailed an informed consent letter to participants to review (see Appendix B). Participants were given the opportunity to ask me questions, and were directed to contact my research supervisor Dr. Patrick Finnessy, or the Office of Research Ethics, should
they have any additional questions. The phone numbers and emails of Dr. Patrick Finnessy and the Office of Research Ethics were provided in the consent letter. Participants were also given the opportunity to email me any additional information they would like to add to their interview.

Participants were aware that their participation in this research study was beneficial to the field of education research on equity issues in Ontario secondary schools. They were also told that there were minimal risks involved in being a participant in this study. Their information would be strictly confidential. No names of students, colleagues, institutions, or participants themselves would be in the final research paper. They were provided a transcript of our discussion four weeks after the interview. They were also aware that the transcript would be kept for up to one year, after which it would be destroyed. Participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and were thanked for participating. If the participants decided, they had the right to withdraw from the study any time.

**Limitations**

One limitation to this study is the background of the researcher. Of course, I have my personal biases and perspectives regarding bullying, what are appropriate responses to bullying, and how bullying should be handled by teachers and administrators in the school environment. Therefore, while I attempted to keep an open perspective while analyzing the data, my personal biases cannot be completely eliminated from the analysis of the data.

A second limitation is the research approach to this study. The research is conducted through a case study. Due to challenges in acquiring approval from the Research Ethics Board and local school boards to research aspects of a specific school, such as the students’ beliefs and perspectives on bullying, an ethnography could not be conducted.
Another limitation to this study is the two-year time restraint in completing the study, which, as a result, reduced the number of participants. Since there were only two participants, it is significant to note that the results of this study cannot be generalized to the greater population. These are the beliefs and reactions of only two Ontario secondary school teachers. Nonetheless, the results are beneficial to the field of education research on equity issues in Ontario secondary schools because the data are transferable to other Ontario secondary school teachers. The overall outcome of the study is significant because it demonstrates how secondary school teachers affect the school environment through their responses to the bullying situations they experience in a secondary school.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

Introduction and Overview

Coincidentally, the two participants in this study had similar qualifications. Emily and Mike (aliases have been used to protect the identities of participants in this study) both teach English and have been teaching for 13 years. Emily teaches at a Catholic high school in a rural area of Ontario, and Mike teaches at a public high school in an urban Toronto setting. I interviewed the participants to determine the ways in which they influence school bullying through their professional performance. I anticipated that teachers were aware of bullying in their classrooms and schools, but that they did not respond appropriately (i.e. speaking to the students involved, administration, or parents). I predicted these results because of my personal experience with bullying, and the lack of response from teachers my family member experienced. I expected participants to state that students who are bullied are easy to identify because of common traits and characteristics of bullied students. I expected participants to have a negative influence on school bullying because of their lack of response to instances of school bullying. However, the findings from this study did not always match my expectations. I elaborate on my findings throughout this chapter. I have organized the chapter according to the general emerging themes evident in my research.

Definitions

While interviewing the participants, I learned that their definitions of bullying were in sync with one another, and with the Ontario Ministry of Education, regardless of the location or type of school they taught in. It is important that their definitions of bullying are similar to one another’s, and to the Ontario Ministry of Education’s, because this increases the validity of my research as it ensures that both participants are referring to the same notions when discussing bullying experiences and beliefs. Emily defined bullying as, “When one person decides to make
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a victim of another person by exerting power over that person.” She also stated that negative occurrences must be repetitive to be classified as bullying. Mike’s definition of bullying was not as concise as Emily’s, but he did mention key terms such as, “Using power, coercion, [and] guilt.” The Ontario Ministry of Education has defined bullying as:

a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a).

Emily’s and Mike’s definitions of bullying are similar to the Ontario Ministry of Education’s definition. However, their experiences and beliefs as teachers lead to different interview discussions.

**Perceptions of Victims of Bullying**

I proceeded to ask if there were any distinct characteristics that victims of bullying portrayed; a recurring trait that may stand out in students who are bullied. Unlike with the definition of bullying, participants responded very differently to this question. Emily articulated her description of a bullied student very clearly, and revealed that she was bullied in high school. She believed that “victims make themselves vulnerable because of [their] personality type.” When asked to elaborate on “personality type,” she began to list specific characteristics, such as, “a need to please, a need for attention . . . quiet, shy.”

Mike’s response to the question was unclear. His initial response was, “no,” but then he elaborated and stated that a student:

Never came to me and said they were bullied. Like they have never actually said it. I’ve heard about it. I mean, I’ve seen people, and there were other things involved, not just bullying or exploitation. You’ll see a withdrawal, a depression, that kind of thing. But there’s other things involved, not just bullying.
Mike stated, students who are bullied often appear to be withdrawn and depressed; a contradiction from his initial response of “no.” Later in the interview, when discussing bullying in general, Mike stated, “Kids get it. They know who’s weak.” Based on this statement, I asked Mike if he believes that someone who is bullied is perhaps someone who is weak. Mike clarified his initial statement, as he responded with “No. [The bullies] pick on a weakness, not like a weak [student].”

If teachers are aware of characteristics of students who are bullied, then I assume teachers should be able to determine and/or predict which students are bullied. I followed up on my previous question by asking my participants, “Is it obvious which students are bullied?” Both participants had similar, and surprising responses. Mike implied that it was not obvious; he stated, “I don’t see it in my classroom. I know it happens. I just don’t see it. Sometimes you don’t see it in the classroom. It might happen in the hallway.” I followed up by asking if he sees “bullying in the hallway, in the cafeteria, or before or after school.” He responded, “I don’t know. I don’t go to cafeterias. I’ve heard of it after school, I don’t really see it.” I decided not to question any further because I did not want to imply that perhaps he does witness bullying, but does not respond to it. I did not want to upset him, or risk withdrawal from the study. Based on his response, “I don’t really see it,” I suspected that he may witness bullying, but ignores the situation. A response such as “I don’t really see it” is questionable because a teacher either witnesses bullying or does not witness bullying; there is no middle ground.

Emily agreed with Mike when she admitted, “you never know” who may be a victim of bullying. She elaborated, stating, “Because it wasn’t to me [obvious who was being bullied] . . . there’s one kid in my class who is kind of quiet and he seemed really sweet, always gets his work done—he was the bully.” This surprised me because the characteristics Emily previously listed
to describe students who were bullied, such as being shy, were not held true in this instance. However, Emily’s discrepancy in identifying characteristics of bullied students is also evident in the literature, as Carney et al. (2002) have noted “inconsistency in the identification of bully and victim characteristics” (p. 91).

Emily further explained that you cannot categorize the characteristics of someone who is bullied or not bullied, because they may overlap at times. When we discussed an example of bullying in her class, Emily stated bullying was “very difficult to notice.” She said she “felt really bad that I [Emily] had no idea that [the student] was being bullied.” This shows that Emily was compassionate in this situation as she felt guilty for not noticing the bullying in her classroom. Had she noticed the bullying, perhaps she would have intervened because of her emotional attachment to her students.

Emily did not state her emotional attachment, but it can be inferred based on her responses. For instance, when Emily was discussing a bullying experience she witnessed, she described how she says “hello” to the victim of bullying when she sees him in the hallways, because she “let[s] him know that I still care.” If Emily did not have an emotional attachment to her students, then she would not have “cared” to acknowledge the boy when she saw him in the school hallways. Literature supports this claim, as a Canadian study conducted by Meyer (2008) indicates that when secondary school teachers were responding to student bullying, they “spoke mostly of a high respect and deep level of care for their students and overall well-being” (p. 564).

When asked if Emily believes it is important for teachers to respond to instances of bullying in her school, Emily stated, “absolutely.” When asked to elaborate, Emily replied, “Our student[s’] safety is our utmost concern. We have to protect them and make sure that they are
healthy and happy.” This further supports the assumption that if Emily was aware of the bullying in her classroom, she would have intervened.

The information gathered from my participants indicates that it is difficult for teachers to “categorize” or “label” students who may be victims of bullying. Mike implied, and Emily explicitly commented, that it is challenging to notice bullying as it occurs in their classroom or school environment. This begs the question: if teachers are not always aware that bullying is occurring, and cannot attempt to predict bullying based on perceived characteristics, can teachers really have an influence on school bullying? The other emerging themes from the semi-structured interviews may help in answering the research question.

**Specific Bullying Instances**

I asked Emily and Mike if they had ever encountered a situation where a student was being bullied. I was interested in their beliefs regarding the situation and their reflection on their own actions. I wanted to know their immediate reaction, and whether it was an appropriate response. I did not go into this section of the interview with any preconceived notions.

Emily shared an interesting experience with student bullying in her grade 10 applied all-male classroom. The situation involved two students. The bully sat behind the victim and consistently poked the victim on the back of the neck. Emily described this situation as “very subtle.” She explained how the victim did not approach her about the bullying. One day, she received an email from her administration stating that the victim had been removed from her English class. When Emily asked the vice principal, she discovered that the victim’s mother had called the school and demanded her son be removed from the class to avoid further bullying. This was the first time Emily had been made aware that bullying was taking place in her classroom.
It is interesting that the victim was removed from Emily’s class before she had been formally notified of the bullying event by the administration. This did not give Emily an opportunity to address the situation. Emily did follow up with the mother of the victim, informing her that she was unaware of the bullying taking place. However, this occurred after the victim was removed from the class.

I asked Emily if there were any consequences for the bully. Her response was, “I believe not.” This was surprising, because seven years ago the Ontario Ministry of Education placed bullying on “the list of infractions for which suspension must be considered” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b). This particular act of bullying may not have fallen into the required list of events for suspension, but I would like to hope that progressive discipline was placed into affect by administration. Bill 13 (2012) states principals are required to “communicate with teachers and where appropriate, other board employees, who reported an incident which could lead to a student getting suspended or expelled; principals will be required to inform them about the results of their investigation into the incident” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Therefore, Emily should have been notified of the consequences that the bully endured. I would like to hope that progressive discipline occurred in regards to this situation by the administration, as Ministry documents stress the importance of a proactive approach in dealing with bullying (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b). However, based on my personal experience with bullying, my lifetime in the Ontario educational system, and the law passed by Bill 13 to notify teachers about the consequences to bullies actions, I am sceptical that progressive discipline occurred (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).

The vice principal handled the situation by removing the victim from the class. There were no known consequences for the bully’s actions, as this would affect the student’s
confidentiality. In situations like this, when the administration does not communicate with the teacher regarding the bullying, or sufficiently follow Ministry documents, it is challenging for the teacher to positively influence school bullying. Removing the victim of bullying from the classroom does not solve the root problem; it is just a temporary fix. Bullying may continue to occur in other settings. If there are no consequences for the bully’s actions, and no steps toward progressive discipline, then the bully has little motivation to stop.

I asked Emily if she followed up with the victim. She said that when she has seen him in the halls, says “hello,” and asks how he is doing, “he doesn’t say much. At least I let him know that I still care.” Emily said this in a soft voice, and her facial expression was full of compassion. Though she was not given the opportunity to address the bullying in her classroom with this particular student, her response to other classroom bullying articulates her deep sense of care for the well-being of her students.

This was evident through an experience Emily shared about a poetry unit she implemented on bullying in the same grade 10 applied English class. Emily showed the students a documentary titled *The Bully Project*, a film that follows those who have been victims of bullying. The response from one student who had bullied other students in the class was remarkable. Emily explained, “The one involved in the bullying incident that I just told you about, he in particular was quite moved by it, and was asking lots of questions. He was really taken by it. I was happy about it.” If Emily did not care about the well-being of her students, she would not have dedicated the time to create a unit on bullying. Perhaps she also would not have described her feelings when teaching her students about bullying. I asked Emily if she thought other teachers respond to bullying the same way she does. She responded, “I would like to hope
so, that teachers would be proactive about it. They see a problem and would try to bring that into their curriculum. I can’t see why not, I mean, that’s a teachable moment.”

“Teachable moments” are opportunities that present themselves where teachers can encourage learning. Teachers have an opportunity to convey information that was not planned as part of their taught curriculum. We can see that Emily was concerned about the well-being of her students as she hoped other teachers respond the same way she has to bullying. She was also proactive in dealing with bullying, and the moments she described as “teachable moments,” are opportunities teachers seek to attain.

Unlike Emily, Mike stated he had not experienced any specific bullying situations. However, he did share his beliefs about school bullying. Mike believed the reason he had not witnessed or been involved in an instance of student on student bullying, is because he did not think bullying occurred in the classroom or in front of teachers. He believed that when bullying occurs, it takes place somewhere teachers are not present, such as outside of school or online. He related his beliefs to a drug analogy, stating:

If everyone’s getting busted somewhere, like if you’re always busted for drugs at a certain area, well what happens is they go somewhere else because that place is policed. So if schools being watched, well okay, so it goes outside of school. . . . Obviously [bullying] doesn’t happen in class a lot because you know, you’d get caught right away.

Mike’s statement is interesting because the literature has indicated that “69% of students reported that bullying occurred sometimes or often in the classroom,” where teachers are almost always present (Harris et al., 2002, p. 9). The literature supports this statistic by reporting that “students spend the majority of their time in a classroom and therefore have more opportunity to experience bullying there than in other locations” (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 366).
Mike commented about how there is no training for teachers on how to appropriately handle bullying in their schools within the TDSB. It was not clear whether the TDSB offered professional development days on bullying and Mike did not attend them, or if the TDSB truly did not provide sufficient training. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education documents, the TDSB is required to educate the school community (students, parents, and staff) on the Ontario Schools Code of Conduct. They must “provide opportunities for all staff to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to develop and maintain . . . safe learning and teaching environments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 4). However, more recently in 2012, Bill 13, The Accepting Schools Act, was introduced by the Ontario Ministry of Education to add to the existing “work already done by school boards and schools” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). This bill requires that school boards “provide training and information to teachers and other school staff on an annual basis about bullying prevention and promoting positive school climates [and] include goals around positive school climate and bullying prevention in their multi-year plans” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Therefore, all educators should be trained on the appropriate measures to help address school bullying.

Mike also mentioned that within the TDSB, he did not believe bullying was dealt with on a consistent systematic basis in relation to the administration. This lead me to question whether Mike has truly “never” experienced bullying, if he felt that bullying is not the responsibility of teachers because there is “no training,” or if bullying was the responsibility of the “inconsistent” administration and thus, he did not need to respond to bullying. The literature indicates this inconsistency from the administration. The administration has been noted to be “eager to reduce bullying; [but] they [administrators] are frequently reluctant to address the issue of bullying in their schools” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 12).
Strategies for Addressing Bullying

Though Emily and Mike had different experiences with bullying, they held similar beliefs on the techniques used to address bullying in their classrooms that will transcend to the school. Emily believed it would be beneficial to insert bullying into the curriculum. Due to the bullying situation she experienced in her grade 10 applied class, she decided to implement a poetry unit on bullying. She mentioned a resource she used consisting of different poems related to bullying collected by David Booth and Larry Swartz, titled *The Bully, The Bullied, The Bystander, The Brave*. She used this resource because in her class she had all four of the types of students listed in the title of the book. She had strong beliefs about implementing this unit, regardless of whether the students enjoyed it. She said, “I knew I had to do something, so we are doing some poetry, they are not liking everything but you know, too bad.” Emily knew that she “had to do something” because of her commitment to her students’ well-being. Emily felt that implementing a bullying unit in her class was the best way to help address bullying, and ensure that her students were “healthy and happy.”

Emily also introduced bullying documentaries and films into her English class. She felt the films had a positive impact on her students. She stated, “They liked it. I was surprised because this was a wild class. They’re crazy. You could have heard a pin drop in this class; they really enjoyed it. I showed it to them in the hopes of creating more of a sense of empathy.” Emily’s goal was to achieve empathy in her students; if they could be empathetic to those involved in bullying, then perhaps they would realize the consequences and stop bullying one another. She explained the effect one particular documentary had on a student who was involved in bullying in her class. The student “was asking lots of [engaging] questions” about bullying.
She continued to describe the importance of bringing bullying into the curriculum, and how moments like the one previously described, are teachable moments.

Emily classified the approach of bringing bullying into the curriculum as a “nonconfrontational approach.” She believed that no one liked confrontation and that if she could have students incorporate the effects of bullying into their writing, it would be very therapeutic for them. Though Emily strongly believed in including bullying in the curriculum, she did note that this is not every teacher’s belief. She explained the difficulties that teachers have with making bullying a part of the curriculum, such as a conflict with their own beliefs about bullying, and with the “burden by time constraints” that teachers experience. This brought to my attention the difficulties that other teachers may have in addressing bullying through their professional performance; some teachers may believe that it is not a requirement of their professional performance.

Mike also felt it was important to include bullying situations and its effects in the curriculum. He stated teachers “can talk about it, they can be a part of workshops, maybe include it in your materials, your content.” He also mentioned the strategies that Emily said when he stated, “Promote it through curricular stuff, your content, through film, through discussions, and that kind of thing.”

Unlike Emily, Mike discussed his belief on education and the experience of education. He stated, “Education is something that happens over a period of time.” The example he provided was about empathy. He explained, “Empathy would be something that you can’t learn in a minute, you can’t [say] ‘oh now I’m going to be empathetic,’ you can’t do that. You have to experience it, maybe if somebody treats you like shit, you’re like ‘oh my God that’s how I must have treated someone else.’” He did not believe that teaching about bullying and its
consequences would have an effect on students. He related his thoughts on education to writing. He explained, “Writing you can learn, I can give you a strategy today and you might not actually develop it fully for like three years.” However, Mike believed in the importance of educating a potential victim of bullying about topics such as “how to deal with [bullying] if you are” a victim, and provide students with strategies to help develop their confidence.

Mike suggested that victims of bullying could “deal with it better or fight back” by getting involved in extracurricular activities, such as tae kwon do. He stated being involved in these activities will help develop confidence in students. Mike related one’s level of confidence to the likelihood of one being bullied:

If you have an air of confidence those won’t bother you. Not that you’re going to go there and fight, I’m not saying that. If you walk around like I am not frightened of you, you’re probably not going to get picked on. That’s my theory, I don’t know if I’m right, I could be wrong and I’ll find out. But that’s my theory, if you have the confidence, you won’t be bothered.

This contradicts Mike’s initial statement of “no” when asked if there are any characteristics associated with victims of bullying.

On the topic of addressing bullying, I asked Emily, “If there is a bullying issue going on in your classroom, what steps do you take?” Emily responded, “You need to have constant communication with your administration, constant communication with guidance, like you need to get help within the school, and constant communication with their parents—both the bully[‘s] and the victim[‘s].” Emily’s response implies that impacting school bullying is not only the responsibility of the teacher, but also other adults, including parents and support teams involved with the school and bullying situations. Emily suggested that addressing bullying in schools is really a team effort. This is consistent with the Ontario Ministry of Education’s documents. Within the Ontario Code of Conduct, it states that educators are required to promote safe
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schools, and that school boards are responsible for educating the school community (students, parents, and staff) on the code of conduct (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a).

Emily noted that as a teacher, it is important not to be afraid to seek assistance from other adults within the school. Emily described this:

You know, you just can’t keep that stuff bottled in. You have to say ‘look this is happening and I need help.’ There’s also the special ed [Special Education] department; if either student is monitored by the student services department [or] by a particular teacher, then you get them on board as well.

This implies that the more adults who gather together to form a support team to help students who are involved in bullying, the more influence their professional performance will have on school bullying. Though multiple support personnel are beneficial, and administration is there to support and assist teachers, Mike held strong beliefs about the administration and their lack of professional performance in influencing school bullying. His thoughts are discussed under the subheading A Teacher’s Role in Bullying Instances, within this chapter. When Mike was asked what steps he would take if he had witnessed bullying, he stated he would report it to the principal (administration) or police. Later in the interview, he mentioned the importance of seeking help for the students involved in bullying, either through guidance, a parent, or a doctor, depending on the situation.

Teacher Concerns

Though some teachers want to respond to bullying instances they witness, teachers often have difficulty responding to these situations. Many teachers are afraid that their professional performance will be judged, or that their response may negatively affect their reputation with their students. Emily displayed concern regarding her professional performance when responding to bullying instances. When responding to bullying, she stated a concern about the “blow back” from her students. By “blow back,” Emily meant that she was concerned that the
bully she confronted would cause her difficulty. In other words, Emily’s response to a bullying encounter may upset the bully and influence her reputation within the school. The bully may begin to disrupt the class, shifting much of her time to classroom management rather than teaching.

Since Mike had not experienced a specific bullying instance, his concerns about bullying were limited, and different than Emily’s. Mike conveyed a concern in balancing time spent addressing the victim and the perpetrator. He stated, when bullying instances occur, there could be multiple factors involved such as depression or other medical issues, and the importance of dealing with both the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) involved.

A Teacher’s Role in Bullying Instances

During the interviews, I asked participants if they believed, as secondary school teachers, they had influence on school bullying. Emily and Mike shared both similar and different views on this topic. Emily’s response matched what I anticipated. She stated that she tried to have an influence on school bullying by responding to situations in ways that she believed are appropriate. However, she acknowledged that no matter what you do as a teacher, “Sometimes it works, [and] sometimes kids are going to do what they are going to do.” Mike explicitly answered the question with “no.” I asked Mike to elaborate on his opinion. He responded, “I think if it happens, it happens.” He elaborated by stating that if bullying is going to occur, it is not going to take place where adults are present and where students can get in trouble and face consequences of their actions. He believed that bullying will occur online, and stated, “A teacher can’t control what happens at twelve o’clock at night.”

These responses show that these two Ontario secondary school teachers are not certain that their professional performance will have any effect on school bullying. This was not the
response I anticipated. I thought that teachers would believe that what they do in the classroom transcends into the school community and thus, influences school bullying. According to documents produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education, teachers are required to promote safe schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a). In the Ontario Schools Code of Conduct, it states that the school board must “provide opportunities for all staff to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to develop and maintain . . . safe learning and teaching environments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 4). If each teacher’s goal was to consistently preserve a school climate where students are not bullied, but treated with “respect and civility,” then perhaps these two Ontario secondary school teachers would feel that their efforts in reducing bullying would alter the dynamics of school bullying as their positive actions would transcend throughout the school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 3). Teacher’s goals should be to promote safe schools, as just last year Bill 13 was produced and requires schools to “include goals around positive school climate[s] and bullying prevention in their multi-year plans” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).

I asked each participant if they think it is important for teachers to respond to instances of bullying in their school. I was very pleased to hear Emily’s immediate response, “Absolutely,” as it was in sync with Ministry documents promoting safe schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a). I was also pleased to hear Mike’s response, “If they see it.” I was sceptical of Mike’s response, because I felt that he was possibly defending his position that in 13 years teaching, he had not experienced any instances of bullying. However, I was glad to hear that Mike believed that teachers need to respond to school bullying as well. Both responses agreed with my beliefs, and the position of the Ontario Ministry of Education, that it is a teacher’s responsibility to create an environment that allows students to feel safe.
When I asked Emily to elaborate on why she felt it was important for teachers to respond to instances of school bullying, she stated, “Because our student[s’] safety is of our utmost concern. We have to protect them and make sure that they are healthy and happy. That to me is far more important (laughter) than the curriculum, whatever curriculum gets done gets done (laughter).” Emily also said that, “Kids who are being bullied, kids who are being maligned, they need protection, they need help.” The teacher is the adult figure. Mike supported Emily’s belief, as we can see from his statement that “it’s a moral thing” for teachers to respond to bullying. Emily and Mike’s responses align with what is required of them as teachers, as stated in Ontario Ministry of Education documents.

Towards the end of the interviews, I asked participants if they believe a teacher’s response to bullying influences the dynamics of school bullying. In this case, Emily and Mike had different responses. Emily’s response was what I anticipated: “Yes . . . If I can make a difference in my classroom, then maybe that can start to filter out amongst the school . . . Maybe word will get around and maybe other teachers will start doing the same, maybe students will talk, who knows.” Her opinion was very optimistic and positive.

Mike’s response, on the other hand, was:

One incident, no. I think it comes from administration to respond to it in a more visible way. A teacher will respond to it if they see it; however they respond to it I don’t think that’s going to have a bigger impact on the school at all. I think it has to come from the administration.

Initially, I was caught off guard by Mike’s opinion, as it differed from my own. When I asked him to elaborate, I began to understand what he meant. Mike explained that a teacher does not have significant power over the consequences of bullying. Teachers do not have the ability to suspend a student. That is the administration’s responsibility. Mike explained that students are not dealt with as severely as they should be by the administration, when faced with bullying. He
explained that the consequence for students who victimize other students is usually a “slap on the wrist.” He stated, students are often left “[thinking] ‘oh I just got away with it’ and other [students] pick up on that,” and therefore bullying never really minimizes in a school. He admitted, “Honest to God, I don’t think in the TDSB bullying is dealt with at a—I think it is talked about but never dealt with on a very systematic basis.” He further explained that sometimes, you may even see the perpetrator back at school the following day. There were no severe known consequences for their actions. If students are aware that the course of action for dealing with bullying is first, for a teacher to report it to the administration, and then for the administration to report it to the police, to apply consequences, this will impact the dynamics of school bullying in a positive way.

Mike’s opinion coincided with what is stated in the literature. One study indicates, “when students who had been bullied were asked what happened after they told someone they had been bullied, only 25% indicated that things got better” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). It is disappointing to note that the data showed that “47% [of students] said that [when] they told someone things did not change, and 16% told someone and reported that things got worse” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10).

Students are aware that there are no severe consequences from the administration if they are involved in bullying. The same study above indicates that when students were asked about how their administration responded to bullying “only 25% of students felt that their administration were interested in trying to stop bullying” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). This is unfortunate, and the literature supports Mike’s negative statements about the administration and their lack of a consistent systematic bullying protocol. However, it is significant to note that the data from the study conducted by Harris et al. (2002) is an American study. Also, the study was
done in 2002, which is slightly dated from today. Since this research, many Ontario Ministry
documents have been published promoting, and creating policies regarding bullying specifically,
Bill 13 (2012) is a prime example.

When I asked participants if they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that
it is the teacher’s responsibility to respond to bullying, Emily strongly agreed and Mike said,
“Yeah if you see it.” Emily believed it was her duty and thus, an important part of her
professional performance is to protect her students. Mike believed that because teachers are
adults, they hold a moral obligation and authority to respond to bullying, again in alignment with
Ontario Ministry of Education documents.

However, Mike continued to discuss his belief that there is no training for teachers on
how to deal with bullying; a statement that contradicts the Ontario Code of Conduct. The
Ministry has stated, it is the responsibility of the school boards to “provide opportunities for all
staff to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to develop and maintain . . . safe
learning and teaching environments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 4). Reducing
bullying in schools can be considered an act of creating “safe learning and teaching environments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 4). Therefore, it is unknown if
professional development days on bullying were not offered in the TDSB, or if they were
offered, but not to Mike’s standards. Mike stated bullying is “not black and white . . . it’s in a
situation per situation basis, that’s how it’s dealt with.” Mike’s statement supports the difficulty
that the Ontario Ministry of Education endures in providing adequate training for teachers on
how to deal with bullying as each bullying situation is unique and different.

Though there is truth to what Mike said, it is important for teachers to be able to think
quickly when they witness bullying instances within their schools. As Mike stated, teachers
might not be given adequate training on how to deal with bullying situations. However, teachers should respond to these situations based on their moral responsibility in protecting students from danger in the classroom and their obligations as teachers, according to Ontario Ministry of Education. Each bullying situation is different, but teachers must reach out to their administration, guidance departments, and special education departments to assist in addressing bullying situations. As a means to ensure that the bullying instance was dealt with effectively, teachers should continually check with administration, and with the students involved in the bullying.
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine how two Ontario secondary school teachers responded to instances of verbal or physical bullying, in order to understand how their responses influence school bullying. This final chapter discusses the implications of the research, the limitations and ideas for future research, and recommendations for teachers.

The Influence Teachers Have on School Bullying

The Research

While I began this research with a biased negative outlook on teachers’ responses to school bullying based on my life experiences, this study has opened my mind and caused me to be less pessimistic towards teachers and their responses to bullying. Mike and Emily were from different school boards located in different parts of Ontario, but had both been teaching for 13 years. It was interesting to hear their perspectives about bullying, as there were instances where their responses were very similar, yet there were occasions where their responses were quite different.

Emily and Mike’s definitions of bullying were in agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Education’s definition. The Ontario Ministry of Education has defined bullying as:

a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person’s body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 3)

Though participants agreed on the definition of bullying, when asked to describe specific characteristics of students who were bullied, their responses differed. I anticipated results that indicated characteristics that were often evident in students who were victims of bullies, therefore making it easier for teachers to determine and/or predict which students are bullied.
However, Mike and Emily’s different responses matched the literature, as studies have noted that there is an “inconsistency in the identification of bully and victim characteristics” (Carney et al., 2002, p. 91). This inconsistency makes it difficult for teachers to notice which students are bullied and are in need of assistance and support.

It may be difficult for teachers to notice bullying in their schools. This is evident as Mike stated he has not experienced any specific bullying situations, and Emily’s experience regarding bullying was “very difficult to notice.” However, Mike and Emily’s different responses matched the literature. Mike and Emily’s statements are also consistent with additional literature, as a Canadian study indicates a discrepancy between the number of students who teachers perceived to be bullied, and the actual number of students bullied (Mishna et al., 2005). Not only is it difficult for teachers to notice bullying themselves, but the literature indicates a reluctance for students to report bullying as only “4% [of students] told a teacher” about their experience (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). This is evident in Emily’s bullying experience, when the victim did not personally inform her of the bullying that was taking place; his mother and the school administration had contacted Emily. These facts make it quite complicated for teachers to intervene during bullying instances, as they are often unaware that bullying is occurring in their classroom.

When participants were asked why they believe certain students are bullied, Emily attributed the answer to personality. She stated, “Victims make themselves vulnerable because of [their] personality type usually, I mean, I know I was bullied in school, and I believe it had to do with my personality type . . . a need to please, need for attention . . . quiet, [and] shy.” It was important to ask participants their beliefs as to why students are bullied. I wanted to determine if there was a correlation between participants’ beliefs on why students are bullied, and their
responses to bullying instances. While Emily admitted that she had been bullied in school because of her personality type, according to the literature “experience with bullying as a child was not related to the staff members’ perceived ability to effectively handle a bullying situation” (Bradshaw et al., 2007, p. 365). The literature implied that Emily being bullied as a child does not alter her ability to successfully respond to a bullying situation. However, it could be attributed to why she decided to get involved in educating her students about bullying through her implementation of a bullying unit.

When I asked why Mike believed students are bullied, he did not initially answer the question. However, later in the interview he stated bullies “pick on a weakness” of another student. Mike’s lack of description of potential victims of bullying may be attributed to his inexperience with a bullying situation in his 13 years of teaching. Mike had never witnessed a bullying instance. Perhaps this is because of his inability to notice bullying, as he was only able to list one specific characteristic of a bullied student. However, may be Mike had witnessed bullying but has ignored this situation. This can be suspected, as it is difficult to believe that in Mike’s 13 years of teaching, in an inner-city Toronto school, he has never experienced bullying. Interestingly, Canadian literature states a similar frustration from students as “many participants in our survey . . . commented on their extreme disappointment with school staff who look the other way when disrespectful language is being used” (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p.31). The same study also indicates that “teachers often look the other way when they hear homophobic and transphobic comments and some of them even make these kinds of comments themselves,” which goes against the ethical obligations and responsibilities of a teacher (Taylor & Peter, 2011, p. 27). This Canadian study provides evidence that teachers do ignore bullying in their schools, which suggests that Mike may be doing the same.
When participants were asked if they believe it is important for teachers to respond to instances of bullying in their school, Emily responded immediately with “Absolutely,” and elaborated, stating how “Student[s’] safety is of our utmost concern . . . we have to protect them and make sure that they are healthy and happy.” Mike’s response, on the other hand, was not as positive. He stated, “If they see it.” I feel that by Mike saying this, Mike was attempting to defend the fact that he has not experienced any bullying instances in his teaching career. His response implied that teachers could either ignore it, or not see it at all. The response to this question should be a “yes” or “no.” Mike’s response implied that he does not “see” bullying, but whether he chooses not to, or simply does not, is unknown. Regardless of the meaning behind Mike’s response, I was pleased to hear that Mike and Emily believed that teachers need to respond to school bullying. These responses aligned with my beliefs that it is a teacher’s responsibility to create an environment (as best as teachers can), that allows students to feel safe and not be potential victims of bullying.

Emily and Mike agreed that it is important to respond to instances of school bullying. They were asked if they believe it is a teacher’s responsibility to respond to bullying situations. This question implies an answer indicating that reacting to school bullying is in the “job description” of teachers. I suspected that participants would agree that it is their responsibility to deal with bullying as teachers are in loco parentis of their students, hold a moral obligation as adults to protect students, are meant to be a mentor and leader for students, and must follow documents presented from the Ontario Ministry of Education. It is especially important that educators fulfill their duty requirements listed by The Ontario Ministry of Education.

Emily “strongly agreed” that it is the responsibility of a teacher to respond to bullying instances. When asked to give reasons for this, Emily stated exactly what I anticipated; she said,
“Because a teacher needs to help to protect their students. That’s our job.” I was happy with Emily’s response as it matched both my prediction and personal belief. When Mike was asked this question, his response was again, “If you see it.” He elaborated by saying “You should respond to it in the best way that you can, or in a way that it’s suppose to be done.”

Mike’s statement, “In a way that it’s suppose to be done,” was contradictory to his previous comments throughout the interview. For example, Mike stated numerous times during the interview that there was a lack of training provided by the TDSB on how to respond to bullying. If this statement about the TDSB’s lack of training is valid, then what does “In a way that it’s suppose to be done” entail? There would be no standard to compare responses to bullying instances if the TDSB did not have a policy or training on how to deal with bullying. Once again, I had doubts about the validity of Mike’s answers. Later in the interview when Mike continued to elaborate on this question, he stated teachers should intervene if they see bullying “because you’re an adult, maybe a moral thing.” I was pleased to hear this from Mike, as it was what I expected participants to say.

The purpose of the research was disguised from participants because I did not want the true topic of my research, bullying, to influence the data I collected. This was a concern because how a teacher responds to bullying can be controversial; it questions a teacher’s ethics. However, Emily and Mike were asked a question that was similar to the research question. The research question was: in what ways do two Ontario secondary school teachers influence school bullying through their professional performance? Participants were asked if they believe a teacher’s response to bullying influences the dynamic of school bullying. Emily’s response was “yes.” She elaborated by saying, “If I can make a difference in my classroom then maybe that can start to filter out amongst the school. Maybe word will get around, I don’t know maybe other teachers
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will start doing the same, maybe students will talk, who knows.” Emily’s response was the answer I hoped to receive. I was glad to hear that Emily was optimistic in her belief that the bullying unit she had implemented in her grade 10 classroom would transcend throughout the school environment, and ultimately reduce school bullying. I was especially happy to hear her positive perspective, as a Canadian study indicates that teachers do “not feel as if they are given the necessary support or resources” to handle harassment in their classrooms, and thus have difficulty addressing bullying (Meyer, 2008, p. 560). However, Emily’s comments were also consistent with this study, as the teachers who were educated in how to appropriately address bullying in their schools had their own initiative to do so; they “took it upon themselves to seek out these opportunities,” which is exactly what Emily had done (Meyer, 2008, p. 561).

Mike did not believe that a teacher’s response to bullying incidents affects school bullying. Mike stated there is only so much a teacher can do and that change has to come from the administration. He also said that the administration has the ability to apply consequences to bullies, and that only when the administration consistently applies proper consequences will bullying change on a systematic level. Mike’s argument is that if there are no consequences to a bully’s actions, then why would the bully stop bullying? Research supports Mike’s argument, as one study shows that “28% [of students] said they did not believe that” administration was trying to end the bullying (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). Mike’s argument is also supported by Canadian research, as a study by Meyer (2008) indicates teachers to have minimal trust for their school administration in responding to verbal harassment because “they felt administration did not want to be bothered with these issues” (Meyer, 2008, p. 560). Teachers in the study also admitted to “ignor[ing] certain [negative] behaviours” from students because of the “great pressure from their administration to cover the required amounts of curricular material” (Meyer, 2008, p. 560).
It cannot be proven if Mike truly did not experience bullying or if he ignored bullying. However, Mike has an obligation as a teacher to preserve a school climate where students are not bullied, but rather are treated with “respect and civility” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 3). Mike’s response may also be another excuse to support the notion that he has never experienced bullying. If Mike did not believe his response to bullying would influence school bullying, then why would he “witness” bullying instances and attempt to solve a situation? Perhaps because of time constraints, as many teachers throughout the literature experience the pressure of time constraints in covering the curriculum in their classes (Meyer, 2008; Mishna et al., 2005).

School Policy

The Ministry of Education in Ontario has created documents to assist in the monitoring of bullying. This research indicates that while these documents are suggested, they are not always followed by educators and administration. For instance, the Ontario Code of Conduct was introduced in 2000, and states that students “have the right to be safe, and feel safe in their school community” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 1). The conclusion has been drawn that Mike turns a blind eye to bullying, as it is difficult to believe that in 13 years teaching in an urban inner-city Toronto city school, Mike has never experienced a bullying situation. By ignoring school bullying, Mike is not allowing all students the opportunity to “feel safe in their school community” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a, p. 1). He is also not supporting the Ontario Ministry in their recent Safe and Accepting Schools Act (2012), as by ignoring bullying Mike is not following proper protocol for creating an environment where students feel safe and accepting.

A recent piece of legislation that the Ontario Ministry of Education has implemented in 2012 was the Ontario’s Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13). It has also been implied by Mike that
this bill is not being followed properly by the administration as this act requires school boards to “have policies in place on progressive discipline, bullying prevention and intervention, and on equity and inclusive education; Consider tougher consequences for students who bully others” such as “suspending and considering expulsion” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Mike stated there was no training, or resources for teachers, and that students who he knew were involved in bullying were usually at school the next day with no severe consequences. This act requires principals to “communicate with teachers and where appropriate, other board employees, who reported an incident which could lead to a student getting suspended or expelled; Principals will be required to inform them about the results of their investigation into the incident” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Therefore, because Mike has “never” experienced bullying, the bullying incidents he had “heard of” are protected by student confidentiality. Mike will never know if the students involved in bullying had any consequences applied to them. However, Emily’s experience with bullying was in her classroom. According to Bill 13, administration has a duty to “inform them about the results of their investigation into the incident” to Emily (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). When Emily was asked if there were consequences applied to the bully in her classroom, she responded, “I believe not.” I interpret Emily’s comment as “no, there were not any consequences for the bully,” because he remained in her class, and according to Bill 13, the administration should have notified her about any consequences.

Literature on bullying states that in seeking assistance from the school or school board, teachers “contrasted the existence of school policies dealing with direct bullying and the absence of guidelines addressing indirect bullying” (Mishna et al., 2005, p. 727-728). This is consistent with Mike’s beliefs on school bullying. Mike believed that specifically within the TDSB, there
was no training for teachers on how to appropriately handle bullying in their schools. He also believed that bullying was not dealt with on a consistent systematic basis when it comes to the administration’s responses to bullying. Perhaps there is truth to what Mike is saying. A study conducted with grade nine students about their experiences with bullying shows that when students were asked about how their administration responded to their bullying experiences “only 25% of students felt that their administration were interested in trying to stop bullying” (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). Also “28% [of students] said they did not believe that” the administration was trying to end the bullying (Harris et al., 2002, p. 10). A Canadian study indicates teachers have minimal trust for their school administration in responding to verbal harassment as “they felt administration did not want to be bothered with these issues” and as a result, teachers sometimes ignore bullying (Meyer, 2008, p. 560). This however, does not provide sufficient evidence for Mike to ignore bullying in his school. Mike’s responsibility as a teacher is to follow Ministry documents and thus, ensure that each student “feel[s] safe, comfortable, and accepted” within the school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 3).

Mike questioned how teachers can positively influence school bullying if the administration does not work with teachers to address instances of bullying that occur in the classroom sufficiently. There are often no consequences for the bully, and they often return to school the following day. Emily stated a similar concern when she described a bullying experience for which there were no consequences for the bully. However, as adult figures, teachers can influence school bullying. Teachers hold a moral obligation to act in loco parentis to the students. This ensures that students are protected from potential danger from bullying. By stopping a bullying situation, the teacher is influencing bullying within the school. Ending one bullying experience is altering the dynamics of school bullying, as it is one less instance of
bullying within the school. Also, in order to change the dynamics in the school around bullying, it is important to intervene in bullying situations because it changes students' expectations when it comes to consequences for bullying. Students may be less likely to bully another student if they are aware that there will be consequences for their actions. Also, if teachers intervene during bullying, it may make victims more likely to tell a teacher when they are being bullied, as the teacher can help solve the problem.

In 2007, the Ontario Ministry of Education created a policy regarding progressive discipline and promoting positive student behaviour. The Education Amendment Act (2007) has added bullying “to the list of infractions for which suspension must be considered” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Prior to this legislation, there were no serious repercussions to school bullying. This policy emphasizes the importance of creating safe schools, and demonstrates how bullying can diminish the ability to do so (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Perhaps the bullying experience that Emily had described did not fit within the “list of infractions for which suspension must be considered” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Or, perhaps there is reluctance for the administration to respond to instances of bullying because it may negatively impact the school’s reputation. A study conducted with Texas middle school principals demonstrates that “principals believed that their schools were safe and that they were supportive . . . Yet students still report that they do not feel safe, nor do they feel the support of their teachers and administration” (Harris & Hathorn, 2006, p. 66). This indicates a discrepancy between the beliefs of the administration and the students in regards to bullying. This may also explain why appropriate consequences are not being applied to those involved in bullying.

In chapter 2, we learned that the literature shows that teachers are required to promote safe schools, and the Ontario Code of Conduct states a responsibility to school boards to educate
the school community (students, parents, and staff) on the Code of Conduct. The school board must also “provide opportunities for all staff to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to develop and maintain . . . safe learning and teaching environments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000a). This legislation provides educators with the appropriate measures required to help address school bullying. However, based on what participants stated in their interviews, the Ontario Ministry of Education is not fulfilling this responsibility. The Ontario Code of Conduct also stresses the importance of board policies to provide teachers with the required teaching/training strategies on how to address bullying and “prevention strategies . . . including bullying prevention in daily classroom teaching” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 4). Bill 13 was even introduced in 2012 to “promote respect and understanding for all students regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The bill “requires school boards to prevent and address inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour among students in our schools; these behaviours include bullying, discrimination and harassment” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Neither Emily nor Mike mentioned any training provided to them by the school board on how to address bullying. Emily had to seek her own additional resources, and even contacted a professor at the University of Toronto regarding how to address bullying within her classroom. Emily’s personal initiative to educate herself on bullying and curriculum resources for bullying is also evident in the literature; teachers who were educated in how to appropriately address bullying and harassment in their schools had their own initiative to do so, as they “took it upon themselves to seek out these opportunities” (Meyer, 2008, p. 561). Mike stated there was no training at all for teachers on how to deal with bullying. An interesting statement, considering Bill 13 was just introduced two years ago to “provide training and information to teachers and other school staff
on an annual basis about bullying prevention and promoting positive school climates” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).

Emily took initiative to gather resources and create a unit on bullying. This initiative is not evident in all teachers. Professional development days to educate and train educators on how to appropriately respond to bullying experiences are needed. However, Mike did state in the interview that bullying is “not black and white . . . it’s in a situation-per-situation basis; that’s how it’s dealt with.” Mike’s statement supports one difficulty the Ontario Ministry of Education endures in providing adequate training for teachers on how to deal with bullying instances. It would be impossible for the Ministry to provide examples of “what teachers should do” in every bullying situation. Professional development days dedicated to bullying should be sure to include resources for integrating anti-bullying into the curriculum. However, Bill 13 (2012) was introduced relatively recently and is interested in “finding ways to include more equity and inclusive education principles and bullying prevention strategies throughout the curriculum, building on recommendations from the Ontario Curriculum Council” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Unfortunately, neither Mike nor Emily mentioned this bill, or any strategies provided to them from their administration about bullying.

Teaching and the Curriculum

Emily and Mike believed it was important to imbed bullying into the curriculum. If aspects of bullying are integrated to assignments, for example, into poetry units like in Emily’s English class, perhaps students would take bullying seriously, as their assignments will be assessed. Teachers should include bullying within the taught curriculum. This will give students an opportunity to learn about the consequences of bullying, not only for the bullies, but also for the victims of bullying. For example, research in the field of psychology as it relates to bullying
should be shared with students. Students need to learn how and why “experiences of bullying and being bullied have both been linked to later development of negative consequences” such as student’s “life satisfaction” (Flaspohler et al., 2009, pp. 638, 645). By explicitly teaching students about bullying, it will bring bullying out from the hidden and sometimes null curriculum into the taught curriculum. It will bring awareness to the severity and frequency of bullying to staff members and students, and thus, reduce school bullying. If bullying is placed within the taught curriculum, resources for teaching about bullying and professional development days regarding bullying will be brought into schools by the Ontario Ministry of Education. As previously mentioned, “finding ways to include more equity and inclusive education principles and bullying prevention strategies throughout the curriculum” was one of the goals that the Ontario Ministry of Education had when implementing Bill 13 (2012).

Bringing bullying into the current curriculum also gives students the ability to study the effects of bullying on a larger level (unit study), rather than when bullying is taught only on anti-bullying days in the school. If students are being assessed on the topic of bullying, it increases the chances of student participation in actions that match what they are learning, writing, and talking about. This is also an opportunity for teachers to practice what they preach. If teachers are educating their students about bullying, then it would be difficult for teachers to ignore instances of bullying. This would be hypocritical. Integrating bullying into the curriculum provides opportunities for students to engage in an ongoing discussion about bullying in the classroom, and allows faculty members to be viewed as more approachable for mentorship and help when students experience bullying.

In Ontario, it is the law that students “have the right to be safe, and feel safe in their school community” and is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that students feel this way
Bill 13 (2012) has been recently introduced and “requires school boards to prevent and address inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour among students in our schools” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). It also stresses the importance of progressive discipline, and for the administration to follow up with the parties involved in the situation, including teachers who have reported the incident. School boards must “include bullying prevention in their [schools’] multi-year plans . . . provide training . . . about bullying prevention and promoting positive school climates, . . . [and find] ways to include more equity and inclusive education principles and bullying prevention strategies throughout the curriculum” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). It is interesting that neither participant mentioned the bill, or the policies within the bill. For example, Mike stated that there was no training for teachers in how to appropriately deal with bullying, and Emily demonstrated her own initiative to find curriculum resources on bullying.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations

A significant limitation to this study was my own personal background. I have personal biases and perspectives regarding bullying, what the appropriate responses to bullying are, and how bullying should be dealt with by teachers and in the school environment. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of the data may have been biased according to my own subjectivity. I attempted to keep an open perspective while analyzing the data, however my personal biases cannot be completely eliminated from the analysis of the data.

Another limitation to this study is the research approach. The research is conducted through a case study. Due to the extreme difficulty in acquiring approval from the Research Ethics Board and local school boards to research aspects of a specific school, such as the
students’ beliefs and perspectives on bullying, an ethnography could not be conducted. Time restraints also did not allow for a different research approach to the study.

A final limitation to this study was the number of participants. There were only two participants in this study, which was due to the limitation of time. The study had to be completed within two years, and because of this time restraint, more participants could not be gathered. Due to the limited number of participants, the results of the research cannot be generalized to the greater population. These are the beliefs and reactions of only two Ontario secondary school teachers. However, the results are beneficial to the field of education research on equity issues in Ontario secondary schools because the data are transferable to other Ontario secondary school teachers.

*Future Research*

It would be beneficial to expand this research by increasing the number of participants. In particular, it would be beneficial to interview another participant who teaches at the same inner-city Toronto school as Mike, to see if his or her beliefs about bullying and the administration’s response to bullying coincide with his. The research could also be expanded by including another participant within the same school board (TDSB) as Mike, to see if the lack of administrative response to bullying is a systemic issue extending across the school board. Characteristics of participants could also vary, ranging from a different teachable, to years of experience, to school boards.

Further research on bullying would be valuable from the perspective of the administration. Learning about professional development days dedicated to educating and training teachers about bullying would be crucial to expanding this research. Discovering *how* the administration has dealt with issues regarding bullying would also be significant in proving
or disproving Mike’s statements about the lack of administrative response to bullying. During the interviews with the administration, it would be interesting to discuss the current knowledge that the administration has about the Safe Schools Act, the Ontario Code of Conduct, and the Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour document, and how they apply these polices in their schools.

It would also be appealing to expand this research by interviewing the student body in a particular school. It would be interesting to do a case study in the school, and note the difference in perceptions of bullying between the students, the teachers, and the administration. It would be fascinating to note how much the three perspectives are in sync with one another, and how different they are. Conducting a case study of a particular school would allow for student voice. Students who are victims of bullying, who perpetrate the bullying, and who are bystanders to bullying all have unique perspectives that would be interesting to hear, and be reflexive of teachers’ and administrators’ responses to school bullying.

**Recommendations**

After completing this research, I have developed the following recommendations for teachers to consider regarding bullying:

- Be proactive: allocate time in the classroom to observe the dynamics and power imbalances in the classroom
- Expand your knowledge: attend a professional development day associated with strategies and curriculum resources about how to deal with bullying in your school
- Integrate the topic of bullying into the curriculum in the form of a unit plan with formative and summative assessment
Know your roles and responsibilities; it is a teacher’s job to help ensure students are learning in a safer space. This means responding appropriately to all negative encounters witnessed.

Always respond to bullying situations regardless of how “major” or “minor” the bullying may appear.

When reporting bullying, consistently follow up with both the administration and the students involved in bullying, to ensure the bullying incident is dealt with sufficiently.

Integrating these recommendations into the daily lives of teachers will help ensure that they establish a school environment that is “safer for learning” for all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000b).

**Conclusion**

When I initially approached my research question, “in what ways do two Ontario secondary teachers influence school bullying through their professional performance?”, my negative experiences with bullying influenced my expectations of what I would discover. I expected to hear that teachers often ignored bullying instances. I believe that this was partially true in Mike’s case, as I find it difficult to believe that after 13 years of teaching in an urban Toronto school, he had not experienced any instance of bullying. However, based on what the literature has said, and what my participants have said, I am aware that bullying is significantly more difficult to notice than I initially thought. However, I was hoping to discover that a lot more teachers were responding to bullying instances.

When researching bullying, my beliefs were similar to Emily’s. I believed that teachers do have an influence over school bullying, and therefore, it is important for them to respond to bullying, as teachers have an ethical obligation to do so. However, after hearing Mike’s
perspective on the topic of bullying, I became less optimistic. I acknowledge the truth in Mike’s opinion regarding the need for the administration to respond to bullying on a systematic basis by increasing the consequences for bullying, and thus reduce it. I recognize the difficulties that teachers have in responding to bullying when they have minimal control over the consequences for those involved. I believe that teachers can still have an influence on school bullying through spreading awareness about bullying, integrating bullying into the curriculum, and having discussions with students about bullying.

Over the years—from my personal experiences with bullying, to today—there have been many improvements made by the Ontario Ministry of Education in providing documents regarding creating safer schools, progressive discipline, and how to appropriately respond to school bullying. However, this research has indicated an inconsistency with the policies from the Ontario Ministry of Education, and what is practiced in schools by teachers and the administration. I hope that this study will help spread awareness about this inconsistency, and assist in bringing together the theory associated with Ministry documents and the practical life of an everyday teacher. Working together, the Ontario Ministry of Education and teachers can create a much safer environment where students can feel comfortable learning and being themselves.
References


Influencing the Bully: Addressing Bullying in the Classroom


Appendix A: Interview Questions

SECTION 1: Background Information

1. What is your current teaching responsibility?
   a. How long have you been teaching?

2. What is your academic background?
   a. Which Universities have you attended?
   b. What did you major/minor/specialize in?
   c. What educational courses have you taken following your Bachelors of Education?

SECTION 2: Experience and Conceptual Understanding

3. Based on your knowledge and experiences how do you define the term equity?

4. Out of racism, sexual harassment, bullying, and homophobia what is the most frequent equity issue you have experienced between students during your teaching career? Provide a rationale for your choice.

5. How do you define the term (insert common equity issue)?

6. Why do you think students encounter (insert common equity issue)?

7. Based on your experience in the high school setting where have these equity instances occurred?
   a. Approximately what time during the school day have these instances occurred?

8. Based on your experience as a teacher how have issues of (insert the most common equity issue) been dealt with within the school?

9. Teachers have agreed that it is often difficult to intervene between students during equity related encounters. Have you ever intervened during an instance of (insert common equity issue) between students?
   a. Can you explain the situation that occurred?
   b. How did you intervene?
   c. Looking back on this moment do you believe that was the correct way to respond?
   d. Would you have done anything different?

10. Due to situational circumstances it may often be difficult to consistently intervene during equity related instances. How frequently have you intervened during bullying situations between students?
    a. Although it may be difficult, Do you always intervene?
b. Are there any particular circumstances that determine whether you intervene or not?

SECTION 3: Subject-Specific Compliments and Concerns

11. Based on your knowledge and experiences how do you define the term bullying?

12. What are your beliefs on why certain students are bullied?
   a. Is it obvious which students are bullied and which are not?
   b. Are there specific “characteristics” that these students hold?

13. Do you believe as a secondary school teacher you have influence on bullying issues?
   a. In what ways?
   b. If you are aware of a bullying incident in your school, what are some interventions that you might implement that might impact the situation?

14. Have you encountered a situation where a student was being bullied?
   a. Can you explain the situation?
   b. How did you respond to the situation?
   c. Were there any consequences for the students involved?
   d. Looking back on this moment do you believe that was the correct way to respond?
   e. Would you have done anything different?
   f. Do you believe most teachers would have responded the same way you did to the bullying situation? Why or why not?
   g. How do you think this affected the students involved in the situation?
   h. Did you follow up on the students involved?

15. In your opinion do you think it is important for teachers to respond to instances of bullying in their schools?
   a. Why or why not?

16. Do you believe a teachers response to bullying influences the dynamics of school bullying?
   a. Why or why not? / How or how not?

SECTION 4: Recommendations

17. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that it is the teacher’s responsibility to respond to bullying situations? Give reasons for your choice.

18. What advice would you give to teachers on how to handle bullying incidents that they are aware of?

19. Do you have any additional comments?
Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Interview

Letter of Consent

Date

Dear [participant],

I am a graduate student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at the University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master’s of Teaching candidate. In order to complete my degree requirements, I must complete a research paper. My research is about the influence and beliefs that Ontario secondary teachers hold on equity issues, and your knowledge and experience will be of great value to my paper.

In order for me to conduct my research I request permission for you to participate in the following activity:

This interview:
- Should take approximately 45 to 60 minutes
- Will take place in a private, quiet location, outside of your local school premises; a location will be arranged at a place of your preference
- Will be recorded using a tape recording device

The interview can take place at your earliest convenience. I will provide you with my e-mail if you have any additional information to add to your responses, to which you can e-mail me up to March 1st, 2014. I will have a transcription of the interview available four weeks after our interview if you would like a copy. I will keep the transcription for up to a year after our interview, and then it will be destroyed.

Confidentiality. The information that you provide to me will be used towards my research paper, and potentially a presentation in front of my peers at OISE, and research supervisor. I will not use your name or any information that could possibly identify you such as your school location, colleagues, or students.

Risks and Benefits. There are minimal risks involved in being a participant in this study. The benefits include assisting in advancing the field of education research on equity issues in Ontario secondary schools.

Right to withdraw. If at any time during my research you wish to withdraw you may do so up until March 1st, 2014. I will remove all information that you have provided me with.

Dr. Patrick Finnessy is my research supervisor who will be looking over my research process. If you have any additional questions you may send him an email at pk.finnessy@utoronto.ca. Please feel free to contact either myself or my research supervisor should you have any questions.
or require further information. You also always have the option of contacting the Office of Research Ethics at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant.

Your participation is voluntary. If you wish to participate in the interview explained above please sign the attached form. Please keep one copy, and return a copy to me.

Thank you very much for your help,

Sincerely,

Researcher Name: Ashley Skakun
Phone Number: 416-737-6181
E-mail: ashley.skakun@mail.utoronto.ca

I agree with the above information that has been explained to me and wish to participate in the study. I have also asked any questions that I may have.

________________________________________                    ____________________________
(Name)                                                                                 (Date)