Rethinking Solitude in Schools: How Silence and Solitude Can Benefit Students and Enhance Creativity

By

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Abstract

The education system greatly mirrors extroverted ideals which put introverts at a disadvantage due to the collaborative nature of the teaching practices demonstrated in school programs. Differentiated instruction has been suggested to teachers as a way to include all students in learning; however, as indicated through the findings of this research study, that is a very difficult task. For this qualitative research study, three participants were interviewed. They discussed their professional teaching experiences, and explored how they use solitude as a differentiated instruction strategy to support intrapersonal learners in the classroom. Intrapersonal learners are distinguished by their preference for independence and quiet working environments, which is similar to the personality type of introverts, who prefer solitude and re-energizing after socialization. There is a plethora of research that discusses the benefits of solitude that includes enhanced creativity, metacognition, mindfulness, and student success. However, implementation of this strategy in schools has not yet been fully discussed.

This study found that solitude is an important facet of a child’s development and success in school. The benefits that solitude has to offer supports not only students’ success, but their well-being as well. Teachers believe that students must be explicitly taught and supported to meet their learning needs. Furthermore, it is important that teachers are flexible to student requests and encouraging students to engage in voluntary solitude within a safe learning environment. The goal of this research study was to inspire teachers to rethink solitude in the classroom and promote the benefits it can create.

KEYWORDS: solitude, introvert, intrapersonal, differentiated instruction, creativity.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.0 Research Context</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1 Research Problem</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Background of the Researcher</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Overview</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1 The Situation in Schools</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Defining Solitude</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Misconceptions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4 Benefits of Solitude</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5 Creativity</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6 Mindfulness and Silence</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7 Solutions for Teachers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.8 The Need for Future Research</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1 Research Approach and Procedure</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Instruments of Data Collection</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Participants</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction........................................................................................................ 52
5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance.............................................. 52
5.2 Implications......................................................................................................... 56
   5.2.1 Implications for the educational community.............................................. 56
   5.2.2 Implications for myself as a beginning teacher.......................................... 58
   5.2.3 Implications for myself as a researcher...................................................... 59
5.3 Recommendations............................................................................................... 59
5.4 Areas for Further Research................................................................................ 60
5.5 Concluding Comments....................................................................................... 61

REFERENCES............................................................................................................ 63

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interviews.......................................................... 67
Appendix B: Interview Protocol (Questions)............................................................. 70
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction to the Research Study

In a world full of noise, some students are unable to reach their fullest potential because public schools are made for extroverts (Cain, 2012). Since introverts prefer solitude over collaboration, meaning they enjoy quiet and/or undistracted alone time, their talents and abilities are often stifled (ibid). Solitude has been studied by many scholars, and its benefits for learning and education are well documented (Galanaki, 2004 & 2005; Larson, 1990; Stern, 2014). However, in order for solitude to be implemented as a means of enhancing student learning, it is important to deconstruct some misconceptions of solitude and reconsider its benefits for students’ success.

In this research study, there are several terms that will be discussed. First, the two temperaments introvert and extrovert were first introduced by Carl Jung; they allude to the different ways in which an individual is energized (Fonseca, 2014; Jung, 1971; Vincent & Ross, 2001). Introverts prefer to work independently and channel their energy inwards, while extroverts are outgoing and sociable (ibid). Furthermore, introverts and extroverts have preferred learning styles, such that introverts engage in more solitary activities, while extroverts thrive on group work and socialization.

The idea that each individual learns differently was significantly spearheaded by the work of Howard Gardner (1985) who coined the term ‘multiple intelligences’. Gardner believes that each individual has specific capacities and skills that make up their humanity and argues that learning styles are not universal or standard (Gardner, 1985). One facet of Gardner's theory that is relevant in this study is the intrapersonal learning style. This solitary-type of learning style suggests that students are more reserved, introspective, and independent. Individuals who exhibit this type of learning style are also commonly identified as introverts.

Although it is established that students have preferred learning styles, instruction focused on oral communication and collaboration are disproportionately emphasized in contemporary classrooms (Cain, 2012; Senechal, 2012). This leaves little room for solitude and solitary
activities. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines ‘solitude’ with phrases such as “being alone” or “lonely”, which carries misconceptions. The misconception that in order to achieve solitude one must be alone has been challenged by many researchers who suggest otherwise. For example, Long & Averill (2003) describe solitude as when an individual is alone and unobserved, but not necessarily separate from others. Senechal (2012) also suggests that one can achieve solitude without physically being alone.

In order to successfully reflect the needs of the students, teachers must adjust their teaching styles (Levy, 2008). One way in which that can be possible is through differentiated instruction, which is explained by Anderson (2007) this way:

Differentiated instruction stems from the beliefs about differences among learners, how students learn, difference in learning preferences, and individual interests [...] Differentiation implies that the purpose of schools should be to maximize the capabilities of all students (p.50)

As Anderson (2007) states, differentiated instruction helps cater to all students, ensuring that all their needs are met and no student is excluded. It is the duty of the teacher to create a learning environment that instills confidence and interest in learning of individuals of various learning styles. This means that teachers need to consider learning preferences such as quietness and solitude, within their classrooms to fully support diverse learners.

1.1 Research Problem

Since we are humans, we are social beings by nature (Long et al., 2003). Hence, deviation from this social norm, such as solitary behaviour, is often viewed negatively. Particularly in the education system, many researchers and contemporary authors have argued that there is a strong emphasis on group work and collaboration, which suggests that the importance of socialization in our culture is highly reflected in the classroom. Classrooms are even set up to encourage this socialization through the arrangement of seats, such as into pods or into tables of fours (Cain, 2012; Senechal, 2012). This notion of socialization and collaboration as essential for future success is largely a Western idea. Western society praises individuals who are outgoing, social, and ‘extroverted’, and commonly neglects individuals
demonstrating ‘introverted’ behaviours, such as reflection in solitude and quietness (Fonseca, 2014; Helgoe, 2008; Laney, 2002). This neglect bleeds into the education system as educators are made to believe that students who exhibit ‘introvertedness’ are disengaged (Fonseca, 2014). This research study aims to encourage educators and teachers alike to rethink solitude and consider the benefits it can contribute to students’ learning and success.

1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate how educators create opportunities for solitude and quietness and to learn what benefits they believe it has to offer in the classroom. In doing so, this study explored the negative connotations that were connected to various misconceptions. Furthermore, the ways in which existing teachers implement solitude as a practice in their classroom and the changes they see among students will hopefully spark a change in the way solitude is perceived and discussed within the educational realm. In hopes of inspiring more teachers to rethink solitude within the classroom, I set out to answer the question: How is a small sample of teachers differentiating their instruction to include opportunities for solitude in an effort to meet the needs of intrapersonal learners? In turn, I hoped to learn how these teachers perceive their approach as a means to positively impact students. Sub-questions included:

1. What are different ways these teachers incorporate solitude into their daily routines?
2. What challenges do these teachers face when incorporating time for solitude in the classroom?
3. What do these teachers notice in terms of student performance and behaviour in the classroom when solitude is frequently practiced?
4. Why do these teachers include opportunities for solitude in the classroom?

1.3 Background of the Researcher

The reason why I chose this topic is because I have a very strong personal connection. I consider myself an introvert with a preference for solitude, individual work, and I often value quiet time. As a piano player of a little more than ten years, I frequently spent hours alone
practicing for pieces and learning new ones. I often engaged in activities such as reading and writing in solitude as well. Furthermore, I rarely spoke in class even if I had constructive arguments and/or something important to say. I believe there are different learning styles and personality traits that influence an individual's absorption of knowledge. More importantly, I truly believe that solitude has many benefits that can impact a child's emotional development which can affect their learning in school. For example, I found my individuality through working and spending time alone, and I think it is important for students to be self-aware in order to self-regulate. Hence, I have a strong interest in conducting research on this topic as it not only reflects who I am as a learner, but also how I can encourage other teachers to consider solitude as beneficial and implement it in the mainstream classroom.

My preference for learning has always been slightly different from what was generally presumed in the classroom. As a result, I often felt misunderstood and distinct from the majority of my classmates. Teachers were supportive of the outgoing and 'extroverted' type, and their teaching styles were mostly geared toward group work or collaboration. They consistently encouraged students to speak up and assessed them based on oral communication skills and participation in class discussions; which are considered important socio-communicative behaviours in classroom learning (Coplan et al., 2011). Since I do not have a preference for that kind of learning style, I tended to do poorly in those assessment areas. Moreover, it was evident that teachers were concerned about my preference for independent work and solitude. It seemed that teachers did not understand that solitary behaviour was a choice that I make. This led me to encounter difficulty expressing myself and engaging in class. I did not feel that teachers understood me as a unique individual who simply had a different learning style compared to most of the other students. This perpetually led me to feel dejected because of these misunderstandings and pressures to change because I was not following socio-cultural norms.

From my personal experiences, I feel strongly sympathetic and understanding towards the misunderstood introverted student who deserves to be supported in ways that propel their learning rather than hindering their progress. I believe that teachers should not change a learner's personality or learning preference in order to meet social norms or even their own
expectations (McCroskey, 1980). Furthermore, I agree with Gregory & Chapman (2002), for effective teachers to see a potential in every learner, they should not neglect or stereotype anyone for having a different style of learning. I think the best way to respect and embrace learning differences is to incorporate variety in teaching methods, and differentiate the teaching style to address the diverse needs of every student; which in turn creates a more inclusive classroom. Thus, I have chosen this topic to educate current teachers to consider how introverted students learn, particularly through solitude and quiet time or spaces, and how that can drastically change the way introverted and/or intrapersonal learners can be valued within the classroom.

1.4 Overview

To respond to the research questions, I conducted a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling to interview three teachers about the ways they incorporate solitude into their daily routines and how that impacts their students. In chapter two, I review the literature on solitude, its importance, and how it can benefit all students within the classroom. In chapter three, I elaborate on the research design. In chapter four, I report my research findings and their significance in relation to the literature. Lastly, in the final chapter, I discuss these findings and their implications for the educational community and my own teaching practices. I also make recommendations and identify areas for further research. A list of references and appendixes follow at the end.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature to investigate the current state of the issue in regards to the notion of solitude in schools. The investigation will seek various ways in which solitude is understood within the context of education and schools and how it is perceived by various researchers. I begin with a review on the current situation in schools, then I discuss the various definitions of solitude along with its misconceptions. Next, I review the benefits of solitude, including its benefits towards well-being, and how teachers implement solitude in the classroom. Finally, I discuss further research that is still needed. Currently, as many educational researchers have claimed, little research has been conducted on this topic regarding implementation in schools, thus research in this regard is limited. For this reason, further research is necessary for full understanding. As I review the literature and refer back to my research question, I aim to create a better understanding of the topic and how teachers can acknowledge and support quieter and intrapersonal learners.

2.1 The Situation in Schools

In today’s society, children are raised in group settings (Helgoe, 2008), specifically with an emphasis on collaboration and group work in the public school system (Armstrong, 1994; Cain, 2012; Coplan et al, 2011; Fonseca, 2014; Senechal, 2012; Stern, 2014). At an early age, children grow up to believe that brainstorming collectively was important for the purpose of generating ideas - which supports the notion that schools were created for extroverts. However, the idea of brainstorming as a myth was first suggested by Furnham (2000). He claimed that brainstorming in groups interferes with creativity, which is contrary to the popular belief that group brainstorming yields creative ideas. Often, we hear the theory that 'two heads are better than one' (Fonseca, 2014), but it turns out that a majority of the literature states otherwise. For example, Cain (2012) claims that “solitude is an important key to creativity” (p.75) and Dembling (2012) reiterates that remarkable ideas grow from within, through a quiet, inner space. Although sharing ideas are fully supported, students should be given more opportunities to think about worthy topics and to have time to decompose their own thoughts before working
in groups. Senechal (2012) suggests that collaboration is ineffectively conducted in schools as a response to preparing students for a world created for extroverts (Cain, 2012; Fonseca, 2014). In order for collaboration to be effective, it requires independent thought (Senechal, 2012). This kind of thought can be referred to as contemplation or metacognition, which, when practiced in solitude, yields more creative individuals and creative ideas (Bryant, 2013; Cain, 2012; Dembling, 2012; Long et al., 2003; Long & Averill, 2003; Senechal, 2012; Stern, 2014). Contemplation or metacognition and independent thought cannot occur in group settings, which suggests that it is important for students to practice solitude in order to explore their own creative ideas.

A contributing factor to the idea of collaboration can be found in the prioritization of the multiple intelligences and differentiating learning styles in teaching that strives to create inclusion among students (Anderson, 2007; Armstrong, 1994; Gardner, 1985; Gregory, 2002; Levy, 2008). In a similar vein to brainstorming, Susan Cain (2012) names another popular method of teaching called the “New Groupthink”, which is used in schools to promote innovation, intellectual achievement, sociability, and creativity. The notion of bringing groups and students in discussion suggests that schools are focused on the idea of socializing students and engaging them in discussion as part of learning. Classrooms are designed via grouped seating arrangements that encourage collaboration which inevitably forces students to socialize (Cain, 2012; Stern, 2014). Stern (2014) states that the idea of social constructivism was influenced by the work of the psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who believed in the socialization of children and the promotion of discussion in classrooms. Stern (2014) also notes that it is possible to create inclusion without socialization, through nurturing healthy forms of solitude within the classroom. However, with the social pressures and taboo against solitude, Western society has culturally constructed the extroverted ideal (Demblng, 2012; Laney, 2002; Helgoe, 2008). Now, with a plethora of technological devices, social networks, and media sources (Bunkers, 2008; Cain, 2012), it is difficult to imagine a place for the value of silence and solitude. Stern (2014) claims that “many people and many schools have forgotten this quiet way of life” (p.147). In this reality, children are brought up to believe that they must stay connected in order to be an existing member of society. Thus, it is the duty of the teacher to
promote a quieter way of life by practicing solitude with students in order to allow them to input their own thoughts into discussion without the distraction of others, and to fully engage them in meaningful topics.

Despite the amount of research that suggests an importance for individual thought, schools have yet to respond to the overstimulated introvert (Helgoe, 2008). Cain (2012) reports that a third to a half (about 33-50%) of the general population is introverted. Furthermore, Fonseca (2014) claims that teachers will see a 3:1 extrovert-introvert ratio in the classroom, which means that there are actually more introverted students in the classroom than teachers think. This statistic suggests that teachers should start to become more aware of the variety of students within their classroom and provide more opportunities to broaden the learning and engagement of their students. Jung (1971) believed that introverts are often the victims of misunderstanding and underestimation in a society that strives for the extroverted ideal. The ‘extroverted ideal’ has become entangled within the educational realm for quite some time. Many researchers and contemporary authors such as Cain (2012), Senechal (2012), and Fonseca (2014) have suggested that this 'extroverted ideal' is hindering introverts’ performances in the classroom. Introverted individuals prefer a more subjective view on things, are less in need of the company of others, work best when they are alone, enjoy quiet time spent in solitude, and are very creative individuals (Cain, 2012; Dembling, 2012; Long et al, 2003; McCroskey, 1980; Jung, 1971; Vincent & Ross, 2001). Still, due to the fact that our culture and society highly values characteristics of an extrovert (such as an outgoing, charismatic, risk-taking individual), the introvert and associated behaviours are not always acknowledged or deemed appropriate (Fonseca, 2014; Gardner, 1985; Laney, 2002). An introvert’s quiet demeanour is often misjudged and/or interpreted negatively. It may be commonly perceived as deviating from social/cultural norms that emphasize sociality as an indicator of success. In turn, introverts may be viewed as deficient or a problem to ‘fix’ (McCroskey, 1980). Needless to say, introverted students in the classroom suffer the consequences of misunderstanding and neglect, which hinders their ability to succeed.
2.2 Defining Solitude

Within the literature lies several definitions of the term 'solitude'. It is helpful to recognize the various ways in which solitude is understood and defined. Without a doubt, it is viewed both positively and negatively in the literature; however, my goal is to conjure a more positive perspective towards a stigmatized concept in both society and in schools.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) which has also been referenced by Senechal (2012) and Long & Averill (2003), solitude is defined as the following:

1. a. The state of being or living alone; loneliness, seclusion, solitariness (of persons).
   b. The fact of being sole or unique. *Obs. rare.*
2. Loneliness (of places); remoteness from habitations; absence of life or stir.
3. A lonely, unfrequented, or uninhabited place.
4. A complete absence or lack. *rare.*

Evidently, there are different uses of the word 'solitude', which is defined in several ways. It is important to note, as Senechal (2012) also mentions, that solitude is defined as ‘sole or unique’ is deemed obsolete and rare, yet it is something one might think as a significant aspect in the word. Perhaps this has misconstrued society's understanding of solitude. Particularly, Senechal (2012) claims that “to make one's way through the world, one must be to some degree sole, to have a mind apart from others, one must be in some way unique” (p.23). Just as each learner is unique (Anderson, 2007; Gregory & Chapman, 2002), the thoughts and ideas that are generated in the brilliant minds of students are also unique. Therefore, it is important that teachers provide opportunities for students to explore their personal thoughts and cultivate creativity through the practice of healthy solitude.

Other researchers have similar definitions of solitude that pertain to more of an objective view. Larson (1990) defines solitude as an objective condition with “absence of immediate social demands, constraints, and scrutiny” (p.157). When an individual is free from others’ scrutiny and demands, they are able to be alone and are able to separate their own thoughts from those of others, thoughts that are deemed ‘distractions’ (ibid). Often, these distractions are misconstrued as engagement, which limits the growth of the self (Senechal, 2012). When there
are less distractions, one can better understand the self and recognize their shortcomings (ibid). Furthermore, Galanaki (2004) suggests that solitude emerges as a fundamental need, especially for children, as it is a healthy and constructive experience to be able to connect to one’s inner self. This coincides with the qualities seen in what Stern (2014) calls an “enstatic school”. This “enstatic school”, he suggests, emerges when a combination of healthy solitude and sociability are mixed together within the school context. Moreover, Long & Averill (2003) claim that “solitude is a vital social phenomenon” (p.21). This, as the authors have argued, have been present throughout history. Many spiritual leaders, philosophers, and artists attest to the benefits of solitude (ibid). In order for individuals to be social, they must be able to reflect upon and interpret their own thoughts. Evidently, society needs to accept solitude as a significant part of socialization, even though it may seem paradoxical. Needless to say, solitude is a critical aspect that projects many benefits for students.

2.3 Misconceptions

Common misconceptions of solitude arises from the knowledge individuals have pertaining to punishment (Stern, 2014). In our culture, we are aware of the different ways one can be punished, such as enforced isolation (e.g. solitary confinement, jail time, mental institutions, etc), which is seen as a severe type of punishment (Long et al., 2003). Teachers and parents on the other hand use a different method that is not as severe, but also requires physical separation of individuals as a means of punishment (Burger, 1995; Galanaki, 2005). For example, 'time outs' or 'detention' are familiar to most students as ways in which teachers punish students for various reasons. This form of punishment has been ingrained in the minds of students as something negative, which leads them to the fear of being alone. Galanaki (2005) reports that universally, everyone fears being alone, but she also suggests that it has been socially conditioned in us since childhood. Moreover, Chua & Koestner (2008) see solitary behaviour as negative only when it originates from controlled motivation. As defined above, solitude is a voluntary act of aloneness, even in the presence of others (Galanaki, 2004; Senechal, 2012). In order to encourage autonomous motivation towards voluntary solitude,
teachers need to provide encouragement and many opportunities for this to happen in the context of a safe learning environment.

Negative connotations of solitude arise when psychologists and researchers conflate the terms 'loneliness' and 'aloneness' in general with other forms of social isolation (Stern, 2014). For example, solitude is not defined as a social, emotional, or behavioural disorder in childhood, as described by Rubin et al. (2009). Another form of social isolation that is often confused with solitude is “anxious solitude”, which is feeling cautious in unfamiliar peer contexts leading to social withdrawal (ibid). Dembling (2012) elaborates that “aloneness is an external condition” (p.74), while “loneliness is an internal state” (p.75). Galanaki (2004) argues that “one may experience loneliness even if they are not literally alone” (p.436). This suggests that loneliness or privacy is subjective (described by Galanaki as “painful aloneness”), while beneficial aloneness and solitude is an objective state which can be experienced even in the presence of others, because it is communicative rather than simply physical (Galanaki, 2004, 2005; Larson, 1990; Stern, 2014). Indeed, solitude is not being unsocial, rather it is simply a withdrawal from stimulation by choosing not to interact with the people around them, hence its exists even in social contexts (Galanaki, 2005). The negativity towards solitude stems from the fact that psychology focuses on ‘negative solitude’ (loneliness) and neglects the positive experiences - such as how solitude can potentially benefit individuals (Long & Averill, 2003). Loneliness and solitude are distinct from one another, as Piirto (2010) suggests “solitude is not loneliness but rather a fertile state where the creator can think and work freely” (p.163). This fertile state is where individuals are able to fully immerse their individuality, be creative in their work, and think for themselves. As teachers, this is a crucial factor in the growth of student’s independence.

One of the most common misunderstanding is that when an individual is alone, there may be something wrong, something missing, or they are unhappy. Fonseca (2014) and Rubin et al (2009) argues that our culture often mislabel introverts as shy, isolated, unsociable, or rejected. The terms, shy and introverted are often incorrectly interchanged. Cain (2012) explains that shy people fear social judgement, while introverts prefer less stimulation. Furthermore, Coplan et al
(2011, 2014) state that shy individuals experience anxiety, are wary in social contexts, and avoid social interactions. As this shows, these two characteristics are distinct from one another and are too often misunderstood. Moreover, defined by the OED, the fourth definition of solitude is that it is “a complete absence or lack”, but as Helgoe (2008) claims, “[...] solitude is not lack. As understood by Taoist practitioners, solitude is a ‘fertile void’, an open door to a world overflowing with possibilities” (p.17). This notion supports the idea that most creative thoughts come from within oneself, and that solitude is beneficial towards effective collaboration. As mentioned above, in order to achieve effective collaboration, it is imperative that individuals are given the chance to spend quality time by themselves to think their own thoughts, separate from others.

2.4 Benefits of Solitude

The benefits of solitude are plenty as many researchers have noted. While there is research to support both perspectives, the benefits of solitude often outweigh its detriments (Long & Averill, 2003). Solitude requires individuals to seek meaning from within themselves (Galanaki, 2005), which suggests that individuals will become more in-tune with their identity and themselves as a result. When children are more in-tune with their inner selves, they may become more self-aware, which can benefit them in terms of self-regulation. Although it is true that there are individual differences for the preference of solitude (Burger, 1995), I still believe that when healthy solitude is promoted and supported in the classroom, it will benefit all students regardless of their learning preference. With this in mind, extroverts may question the validity of solitude in regards to their learning preference, and they may even see it in a negative light, but I am certain that even extroverts, who thrive in social settings, can benefit from solitude.

When one is disengaged with another person, removing physically or mentally from ‘distractions’, they will experience a sense of freedom, which leads to serenity, emotional development, and self-discovery (Burger, 1995; Galanaki, 2005; Hornich-Lisciandro, 2013; Larson, 1990; Long et al, 2003; Long & Averill, 2003; Rubin et al, 2009; Stern, 2014; Winnicott, 1958). When freedom is granted to an individual, in the context of solitude, they
will likely express themselves more genuinely and find their inner self. Long & Averill (2003) argues that “freedom is a precondition for other benefits” (p.24), such that by reducing social stimulation, an individual can be at peace and discover their true selves (Long et al, 2003; Bunker, 2008). These are significant aspects to the growth of a child because it teaches them to become independent, learn to self-regulate, and reconstruct stimulation (Galanaki, 2005). Senechal (2012) suggests that children are not raised to think for themselves, as most of their activity is monitored and controlled by teachers and/or parents. Thus, children who do not know how to tolerate and appreciate solitude will become addicted to stimulus and will not understand the potential benefits it holds (Helgoe, 2008).

Along with the benefits mentioned above, solitude also promotes identity formation (Galanaki, 2005). The formation of an identity is important now more than ever, especially in the advent of the internet (Cain, 2012) and other technological advances. Cain (2012) suggests that ever since the introduction of the world wide web (www.) crowdsourcing information has become popular, which means more and more people are relying less on their own ideas and more on what others are saying or thinking. Furthermore, Stern (2014) fears the loss of selfhood in this century where society is becoming increasingly impersonal. Since we live in a society that views reflection and solitude negatively (Lane, 2002), I understand the challenges contemporary teachers face in light of the situation. However, it is possible when teachers provide the right tools and spaces for students to fully develop their individual selves, and form their own unique identities.

2.5 Creativity

One of the most frequent beliefs is that creativity is fostered in a high stimulating environment, hence the trend toward group work and collaboration. However, Fairweather (2010) suggests that although most people believe this is true and that stimulating environments can spark ideas, it is important to have one's own thoughts developed alone, in quiet spaces. Cain (2012) argues that “excessive stimulation seems to impede learning” (p.84). Others such as Long & Averill (2003), Long et al (2003), Galanaki (2005), and Bunkers (2008) agree as well, creativity is most correlated with and is a byproduct of solitude. Furthermore, Long &
Averill (2003) asserts that adolescents who cannot appreciate solitude are often unable to develop creative talents. I believe that every student is a creative individual. However, many students believe they are not, and the reason for this is due to the ways in which they were taught in school (Robinson, 2011). Ken Robinson (2011) famously argued that ‘schools are killing creativity’. He suggests that “dominant forms of education actively stifles the conditions that are essential to creative development” (p.49). The norm in the education system emphasizes competition and collaboration, which replaces innovation and creativity (ibid). Students need freedom from noise and stimulation to completely grasp the concept of solitude to be creative individuals. In order for this to be achieved, students need to remove distractions from their environment that may be the cause of hindrance to their performance. Additionally, students need reinforcements through explicit teaching instructions and encouragement of voluntary solitude.

In the context of education, students with an enhanced individuality contribute better to collaboration. Cain (2012) claims that “solitude can be a catalyst to innovation” (p.74), and Bunker (2008) also suggests that relaxation and innovation are benefits for new perspectives and creativity. It is not surprising then, that introverts are often very creative individuals (Cain, 2012; Fonseca, 2014). With this in mind, it is unfortunate that introvert’s talents are rarely recognized or supported within the classroom. Although solitude is a safe haven of sorts for an introvert, extroverts can also reap its benefits as well, even if they prefer socialization. Piirto (2010) suggests that “creative people may be solitary but that does not make them neurotic or unhappy” (p.164). As I have gathered from the literature, many researchers have suggested that solitude has many benefits and it yields creative thinking.

In history and in our society, when we think of creativity and solitude as intertwined, images of the cliched mad scientist working in their mysterious labs, a writer in a cabin in the woods, or a painter in their studio comes to mind (Long & Averill, 2003). As this suggests, creativity requires an individual working space, sometimes - but not necessarily - separate from others in order to create something extraordinary. Some examples of brilliant, influential people who acknowledge their solitary behaviour as their creative power source include, but are not
limited to: Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin, Carl Jung, Steve Wozniak, and Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) (Burger, 1995; Cain, 2012). One thing these individuals all have in common, unsurprisingly, is that they are all introverts. Fonseca (2014) claims that solitude that is inherent in introverts is often connected to creativity. Thus, teachers should consider providing more solitary activities or opportunities for solitude in order to foster creativity in successful individuals.

### 2.6 Mindfulness and Silence

Creative processes require periods of stillness and contemplation (Fonseca, 2014). As I have discussed, there is great evidence to suggest that schools focus their energy on collaboration and socialization, leaving little room for students to sit still and think. Bryant (2013) claims that silence stimulates two of the most important evolutions for humans, which are self-reflection and critical thinking. These are also extremely important in students’ learning. Likewise, Armstrong (1994) states that “silence is the best environment for reflection” (p.82). It is in silence that one can fully think quietly and focus on developing their creative thoughts. Long et al (2003) suggests that this reflection promotes personal and creative development, which are important criteria for the success in students. Students endure many stressors during the day, and it is beneficial that they have coping strategies provided and guided/taught by their teacher to sustain their well-being.

The solitude of the mind is the essence of solitude (Senechal, 2012). This kind of solitude depends on the inner self, which sprouts from the concept of ‘mindfulness’. This idea of mindfulness was first defined by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who described it as “paying attention in a particular way on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” (p.112). Mindfulness has even been deemed a ‘cognitive style’, and as Beitel et al (2014) suggests, it is a cognitive ability which involves focusing on living in the present moment. Many other researchers have also shared similar ideas. For example, Bishop et al (2004) claim that mindfulness practices gain insight into one’s mind and enables them to respond more reflectively to situations, which improves cognitive inhibition. This skill is beneficial for students to tune-out the noise, and tune-in to their inner thoughts and creativity. Additionally, Dembling (2012) states that
“creativity happens when the mind is quiet and receptive” (p.39), which contradicts popular belief in regards to multitasking. Cain (2012) reports that a simple interruption in one’s thoughts will impede productivity. In addition, Bryant (2013) argues that stillness requires individuals to calm the mind and quiet their thoughts. This way solitude can be achieved even in the company of others. Moreover, Hornich-Lisciandro (2013) notes that it is now beginning to surface in education as it is shown to have powerful results, such as combating a variety of physical problems and disorders (such as ADHD). Furthermore, Prochnik (2010) suggests that silence helps children develop their social conscience and build their resilience. It is important that children learn to be resilient early as it provides them with a foundation for life. Truly, mindfulness and solitude go hand in hand as they benefit students’ cognitive and mental state.

2.7 Solutions for Teachers

Teachers need to first understand and believe in the benefits and the value of solitude in schools in order to provide the appropriate guidance, instruction, and environment necessary for solitude to be appreciated by students. In addition, teachers must celebrate each student’s learning preferences and be open to diverse learning needs in the classroom (Cain, 2012). Senechal (2012) provides some ways in which schools can honour solitude in the classroom. She encourages the removal of constant group work and incorporating more worthwhile topics that students can think on their own before collaborating. The significance of independence in the development of children is crucial to their success.

Teachers must also create a learning environment that encourages solitude and fosters creativity. Fairweather (2010) claims that the most ideal physical environment for fostering creativity is in a room that has active, yet quiet, learning spaces. Teachers can create quiet spaces within the classroom – such as quiet corners (which should never be misused as a 'time out' corner), and study carrels where students can work without distractions (ibid; McGrath, 2000). These spaces can facilitate the above mentioned benefits, as they allow for comfortable and safe spaces for solitude. Although teachers may not be in total control of their classroom designs, teachers need to create a psychological environment as well, where students can feel comfortable participating in solitary activities.
Many researchers cite mindfulness as a benefit of solitude, and Piirto (2010) claims “meditation is a part of the creative process in all domains” (p.165). A large portion of the emerging research uncovers the many benefits of meditation and mindfulness (Galanaki, 2005). Teachers can introduce relaxation and breathing exercises coupled with solitude practices to promote free-expression, self-discovery, and reflection in students (ibid; Stern, 2014). Galanaki (2005) suggests students write about their aloneness experiences, while respecting each other’s privacy, they should not be expected to share with their peers. Teachers should allow for some spare time in which students can think on their own or use the time to their leisure – as a creative means for personal growth and discovery (ibid). Moreover, teachers are suggested to encourage creativity by providing as much freedom as possible to encourage individualism and autonomy. Bryant (2013) also suggests that mindfulness helps focus students’ attention, which can transform their thinking towards questioning and wondering. Stern (2014) suggests that “loneliness is something learned” (p.190), then, perhaps solitude can also be something that all students can learn as well.

2.8 The Need for Future Research

Future research is required in learning more about adolescent and children’s ability to understand solitude (Galanaki, 2004). As of right now, “there are no measure of solitude for children and adolescents… [which means there is] no data for children’s understanding and experience of solitude” (ibid; Galanaki, 2005, p.437). It is important for teachers to know how children perceive solitude and if they have the capabilities to understand and value its benefits. Until only recently, “psychologists and psychiatrists believed that children do not experience loneliness - let alone solitude” (Galanaki, 2005, p.128). With this in mind, it is a topic that requires research attention.

In the context of education, how solitude is or isn’t practiced in schools has yet to be fully researched, hence the limited data regarding teaching implementation on solitude in classrooms. Coplan et al (2014), Larson (1990), and Stern (2014) all express concerns toward this topic of the implications of preferences and the significance of solitude in a child’s life. How does solitude preference shape an individual? How can it improve one’s physical and
emotional states? What are implications for student success? These are questions that are largely unanswered in the literature. Other researchers like Galanaki (2004, 2005) and Larson (1990) suggest that research is needed in the field of teaching children “solitary skills”. These concerns raises some questions about the impacts solitude has on students, and the implications for future student success. How can educators teach students the skills necessary to be alone, even among others? At what age is that possible or most appropriate? These are questions that research has yet to answer. Lastly, Stern (2014) points out that solitude as a necessary part of well-being is absent in scientific literature, which suggests further research is helpful.

2.9 Conclusion

In this literature review I looked at research on solitude, creativity, silence, and mindfulness. As this review elucidates, solitude has many benefits that contribute to successful individuals. In a Western society that often neglects this reflective and solitary lifestyle or preference, it contributes to many misconceptions. However, as evidenced by various research, it is clear that solitude is more complex than how culture defines it. This idea of solitude should be considered an important means for which students learn to develop independence and self-regulation. Teachers are encouraged to support this notion by providing the safe learning environments that promote positive and healthy solitude. As teachers, it is important that we rethink this idea of solitude in a more positive light, and appreciate it for what it can possibly do for the students in our classrooms. Much of the research is still lacking in some areas regarding students’ understanding of the value of solitude and how solitude connects to creativity in a scientific perspective. This research study hopes to support and contribute to a quieter future that garners more creative individuals.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodological approach. It begins by reviewing the general approach, procedures, and data collection instruments before elaborating more specifically on sampling methods used in participant selection and recruitment. It then explains the data analysis procedures, reviews potential ethical issues, and steps taken to ensure compliance with those procedures. Furthermore, the range of methodological limitations is identified, and the strengths of the methodology despite those limitations will also be discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief summary of key methodological approaches and the rationales for these decisions given the research purpose and questions of the study.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedure

This Master of Teaching Research Project was conducted using a qualitative research approach involving a literature review focusing on the benefits of solitude as a differentiating instruction and conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers. Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes objectivity, seeks to prove facts, and presumed freedom from bias; qualitative research (this study included) aims to create meaning out of the data collected and acknowledges the inevitability of bias and subjectivity on the part of the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013; McCabe & Holmes, 2009). For this reason, qualitative research emphasizes the importance of reflexivity in order to be cognizant of biases (ibid).

In this particular study, I explored how solitude can play a role in supporting the needs of introverted and/or intrapersonal learners within the classroom. In turn, I analyzed the data collected from interviews with teachers who have demonstrated their interest in supporting introverted/intrapersonal learners and have frequently practiced solitude within the classroom. As part of the quality of the research, an interview protocol was carefully designed to facilitate the unique conversations that will further the knowledge of the study question. Semi-structured interviews give way to deeper connection with the understanding of the world around us through the perspectives of individuals within society.
3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection used in this study is the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews are a common method of data collection in qualitative research because of their flexibility, accessibility, effectiveness, and convenience (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The interviews were prepared with guided open-ended questions that identify themes in a consistent and systematic manner that probed more elaborate responses (ibid). It provided the opportunity to hear about participants’ lived experiences, which serve as a primary source of data (Dearnley, 2005).

Semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews that are most appropriate for qualitative research. It allows for personal and intimate encounters with the participants (Whiting, 2008). The questions that were asked in the interviews were informal, but clear and concise so that the participants were able to voice their opinions and elaborate on their responses with ease. The types of questions that were asked are relevant to the research purpose, for example:

- *How do you create opportunities for students to practice solitude in the classroom?*
- *What prompted you to begin providing solitude and quiet time in the classroom? Did you enjoy solitude/quiet time as a student?*
- *What does it mean to you when you hear the word “solitude”?*
- *Do you define yourself as an introvert or intrapersonal learner? How do you know?*

These questions allowed for a deeper understanding of the beliefs, misconceptions, ideas, and motivations behind practicing solitude in the classroom. Some questions were modified due to the interpretation by the participants or clarifications that was required in order to answer the question fully. However, each question remained the same when each participant was interviewed.

3.3 Participants

In this section, I state the sampling criteria that was required of participants in order for them to be suitable for the research study. Furthermore, I have included the sampling procedure
which was used to contact volunteers to participate in this study. Lastly, I have provided a very brief biography to the three participants who took part in the research study.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

The sampling criteria are used as a basis for which the participants are selected. Due to the limitation of this study in terms of time and sampling size, convenience sampling was used. The purpose of this research study was to examine how teachers are differentiating their instruction to include opportunities for solitude in an effort to meet the needs of intrapersonal learners. Thus, it was crucial to select the appropriate participants to ensure quality and detail. The following sample criteria were used to determine participants:

- **Teachers have been in the classroom full time, within the past 10 years.**
  
  It was important that teachers had been teaching within the past 10 years as it reflects societal issues that inspired this research study. For example, instruction focused on oral communication and collaboration continue to be disproportionately emphasized in contemporary classrooms (Cain, 2012; Senechal, 2012). As Senechal (2012) suggests, collaboration is ineffectively conducted in schools, as it is a response to prepare students for a world created for extroverts (Cain, 2012; Fonseca, 2014). Thus, it was important that teachers had experience with shifting that emphasis within the classroom. Furthermore, a lot has changed in the past decade, especially with the advancement of technology and incorporating that into pedagogy and the education system. Students endure a lot of stress in school. Thus, it is important for students to learn how to practice ways which help them to cope with stress, and to relieve that stress in order to maintain a healthy, well-balanced life. For this reason, teachers were selected from the demographic of current or recent teachers who have taught in classrooms. This allowed for the most up-to-date information concerning the research issue.

- ** Teachers have demonstrated commitment to differentiating instruction for a range of learning style preferences.**
  
  This criterion was important because this study is based on the idea that the two temperaments - introversion and extroversion - are different. For this reason, teachers
selected, were required to be aware of this detail to fully engage in the interview. Teachers who were selected for this research study had knowledge of and/or a background on these two temperaments, specifically that of introversion, as it pertains to the research purpose. Teachers had an understanding of how or what an introvert looks like, or what their preferences are. They have also used differentiated instructional strategies to engage all learners within their classroom.

- *Teachers have demonstrated commitment, leadership, and/or expertise in the area of creating opportunities for solitude for students as an instructional practice.*

This was valuable in the research study as it was the main focus. The teachers who were selected have practiced providing opportunities for solitude within the classroom for all students, and particularly for those who are introverted and/or intrapersonal learners. They have demonstrated their interest in and commitment to introverted students through providing support outlets for their preferred learning style. This is the part of the study that will truly develop an understanding and engagement with the topic. Teachers who practice this technique will be able to provide detailed responses due to their experiences.

### 3.3.2 Sampling Procedures

The recruitment of participants combined purposeful and convenience sampling, but primarily relied on convenience sampling due to the small-scale nature and the methodological parameters of this study. Purposeful sampling is a common method of recruitment as it selects the most productive samples. It involves the development of a framework of variables that include the contribution of the researcher’s knowledge of the research area (Marshall, 1996). Convenience sampling is a type of research sampling strategy that involves the selection of the most accessible subjects and is the least costly (in terms of time, effort, and money) (Marshall, 1996).

First, voluntary participants were recruited through contacting my existing networks which included colleagues and personal contacts, or previous volunteer and/or practicum placements. These individuals have demonstrated an interest in differentiating their instruction to meet the
needs of all learners through professional development workshops or conferences. Alternatively, I sought individuals through online teacher/educator groups on social media that specifically have teachers who demonstrated practices of solitude within the classroom, or know of someone who has the criteria listed above. I provided them with an overview of my research study and the participant criteria. I then asked that these individuals/organizations distribute my information to teachers they believe may fulfill the criteria. The communication of information between the researcher and participants was maintained via email.

3.3.3 Participant Backgrounds

I interviewed three teachers for this research study, all that satisfied the necessary criteria. In order to protect the identity of these participants, pseudonyms were created and assigned to identify each individual. The three participants are Lauren, Melissa, and Janice.

**Lauren**

At the time of the interview, Lauren had been teaching for fifteen years with the TDSB. She has taught in the elementary level throughout her career. She has experience with mostly primary grades, especially with kindergarten, Grades one, two, and three. She is currently teaching a Grade two and three class in a diverse school with a range of student ethnic backgrounds, particularly with a predominant group from East and Southern Asia. In the small school of about 300 to 400 students, she has a class of about 20 students. As a parent of two young children, Lauren finds that solitude is a challenge for her even outside of the classroom.

**Melissa**

Melissa taught for about seventeen years and was no longer a classroom teacher at the time of the interview, but still worked for the YRDSB as a teacher trainer. She was a secondary level teacher prior to this position and has taught Grade 11 college English, and Grade 11 college workplace mathematics. Currently, there are about 250 diverse students enrolled in the alternative education program offered at the school. Other roles Melissa was involved in during her time as a teacher include: the subject head of the personalized alternative education
department, student success team, programming and scheduling for disengaged students, and covered administrative roles as well.

**Janice**

At the time of the research, Janice was a secondary level Arts teacher who had been working for the TDSB for twenty-two years. She taught mostly Art classes and one careers course to students in Grades 9 through 12. In the past, she had taught English classes as well. The school includes a diverse range of students from an affluent neighbourhood.

All three participants self-identified as introverted to some extent, and enjoying much needed quiet time and spaces for personal recharging and self-reflection. Furthermore, they have all expressed their personal preference for solitary or independent work, which is reflected in their teaching practices and teaching philosophies.

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Once the data was collected through the semi-structured interviews, the data analysis process was completed in two parts. First, the interviews with participating teachers were transcribed and coded into categories (Creswell, 2013), using the research questions as an interpretive tool. Each interview was coded individually and then clustered into categories. Finally, themes and divergences were identified within those categories. These themes were then used to understand and investigate the deeper issue. Through this process, I gained an increasingly detailed understanding of the topic (Creswell, 2013). The analysis also involved interpreting the findings through the lens of the literature.

### 3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

This research study followed the Ethics Review Protocol outlined by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at the University of Toronto. The ethical review approval procedures for the Master of Teaching program were followed, which consisted of interviews with knowledgeable educators and not involving students or observations of classrooms. Participants were contacted prior to the interview and a letter of consent was given to them to
sign beforehand (see Appendix A). To further protect the privacy of the participants, they were informed in advance by email and in person of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. It is important that the confidentiality of the participants were sustained throughout the process, and in order to do so, the participants were given pseudonyms as a means to create anonymity.

Participants were asked to sign a consent letter providing their consent to be interviewed as well as audio-recorded. This consent letter provided an overview of the study, addresses ethical implications, and specifies expectations of participation (one 60 minute semi-structured interview). They were given the opportunity to review the transcripts and to clarify or retract any statements before I conduct data analysis. All data (audio recordings) are stored on my password protected laptop and recording device, and will be destroyed after five years. Participants were informed that there were no known risks to participation.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

A significant limitation of this research study is the limited scope and sampling size. Due to the short time frame for which this project must be completed and the given ethical protocol, the number and types of participants that could be interviewed were very limited and restricted. For this reason, only 3 teachers were permitted to be interviewed. Moreover, while the findings can inform the topic at hand, they cannot generalize the experiences of teachers more broadly speaking. Nonetheless, the open-endedness of the interview questions encouraged the participants to respond with depth and vitality (Dearnley, 2005), which provided detailed narratives and stories (Hutchinson et al, 1994, Kaiser, 2009; Whiting, 2008) that further the depth of the knowledge and understanding of the research issue.

Another limitation is the fact that biases were inherent in qualitative research methods. In qualitative research, subjectivity is acknowledged through the narrative and stories that are told through the participants’ lived experiences (Hutchinson et al, 1994; Kaiser, 2009). This subjectivity is the basis for the rich data that is discovered in this study. Efforts were made in
order to mitigate my own biases that surfaced. The questions were as specific and clear as possible to avoid leading questions.

Despite the limitations of this research study, there were many strengths in the process. As a qualitative research study, the semi-structured interviews gave a voice to the participants in the research. Not only did the interviews validate the teachers’ voices and experiences, but they were also an opportunity for them to make meaning from their lived experiences. These interviews acted as an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practices and to articulate how they conceptualized particular topics in theory and in practice. Despite the small sample size, these in-depth interviews created a deeper meaning from the interaction to the codified themes. As a result, the detail and quality offsets the limitations of this study.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological research approach and procedures used in creating and executing this study. This study used qualitative research methods to gain insight on the different ways teachers were creating opportunities to meet the needs of intrapersonal learners through solitude. Semi-structured interviews were used to create meaning from real world experiences and interpretative data was collected from creating rapport in a conversational environment with the participants. The participants were chosen on a voluntary basis, including those who have been teaching for the past 10 years and have an interest in and have been creating opportunities for solitude within their classrooms. Ethical considerations and confidentiality issues were addressed and maintained throughout the interview process. Inherent biases have been accounted for and attempts to limit these occurrences have been made. In the next chapter, I report the research findings. This includes a discussion of the themes that arose from the data collection and any commonalities or deviances from the literature.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings on three interviews conducted with one primary and two secondary school teachers from two district school boards. To ensure the anonymity of the three participants, pseudonyms were created to refer to the participants (Lauren, Melissa, and Janice) which will be used for the following discussion. Similarly, the names or descriptive details regarding the schools will be omitted in order to protect the identity and maintain ethical standards of this research study. The teachers that were selected satisfy all the specific criteria and have demonstrated an interest in and commitment to incorporating solitude to support student-specific needs, particularly students who are introverted and/or intrapersonal learners. Although there are some differences in their understandings of the terms, their strategies, and practices of implementing solitude in their classrooms have significant similarities that will be discussed in this chapter. As part of the qualitative component of this research study, the personal experiences, perspectives, and opinions of these teachers contribute considerably to the discussion of the topic.

The findings from the interviews are separated into six overarching themes that contribute to the discussion of practices of solitude as a differentiated instruction strategy to support introverted and/or intrapersonal learners in the class. These themes include: 1) how teachers’ understanding of the terms introvert, intrapersonal, and solitude draw on themes of sociability and learning preferences; 2) teachers believed that solitude is an important life skill that can lead to self and social awareness; 3) teachers believed that incorporating differentiated instruction in their teaching supports the equity of diverse learners; 4) teachers considered student learning spaces and flexibility as a means for supporting student specific needs; 5) barriers to implementing solitude in the classroom include technology, educational policy emphasis on collaboration, and limitations specific to the primary level of schooling; and 6) teachers require further support to continue their work in the practice of solitude to support student-specific needs. In addition, sub-themes have been attached to each appropriate theme to extend the discussion to narrow the focus and conjure a more explicit view on the subject matter.
4.1 How teachers’ understanding of the terms introvert, intrapersonal, and solitude draw on themes of sociability and learning preferences.

All participants reflected on their professional understanding and personal experiences that contribute to their knowledge of the different terms. These terms were defined with some hesitation and uncertainty, which alludes to the notion of misconceptions of different types of learners and the concept of ‘solitude.’ Furthermore, the indicators and descriptions of the different terms draw on themes of sociability and learning preferences of students.

4.1.1 Constructing working definitions for the different terms

When defining the terms ‘introvert’ and ‘intrapersonal’ in relation to ‘solitude’, teachers’ responses were initially very similar. For example, all participants stated that introverts are private individuals who require alone time and they work best given the opportunity to complete their task in solitude. It was clearly noted in all three interviews that “it has nothing to do with isolation”, which is a common misconception of the term ‘solitude’. As Long & Averill (2003) explains, solitude is not necessarily achieved through the complete separation from others.

In regards to indicators that support teacher’s definition of the terms, Lauren suggested that “introverted students are listeners, they think they are intense listeners”, which aligns with Melissa’s understanding that introverts are “[...] preoccupied with their own thoughts, and it minimizes their interactions with other people”. Moreover, Janice believed that,

students are very happy to get on with their work, they’re focused and don’t need to be chatting with people around them, and sometimes it’s those students who express a desire not to work in groups. These responses imply that introverted and/or intrapersonal learners are private, quiet thinkers. These individuals require the time and space in solitude to access their thoughts.

Although some responses from participants were initially similar, there were uncertainty and variance in the idea of intrapersonal versus introvertedness. First, there was a sense of hesitancy towards whether the terms ‘introvert’ and ‘intrapersonal’ may be interchangeable, which suggests that the two terms may be confusing and can sometimes be mistaken as the same
idea. This was noted by Janice who questioned her understanding of whether the two terms can be interchangeable. In her words, she claimed that “introverted people are less comfortable in social situation [...] but you can have someone who is somewhat extroverted but also [an] intrapersonal [learner]” which suggests that intrapersonal learners are not only found in introverts, but could also be a trait found in extroverts. This leads to Melissa’s differentiation of the two terms: “[introverts] would be describing the personality, and [intrapersonal] is a learning style.” Melissa’s understanding clearly suggests that introversion and intrapersonal learners are two separate concepts that both function within the support of solitude. While Janice and Melissa have similar views in terms of their differentiation of the two terms ‘introvert’ and ‘intrapersonal’ as separate concepts, Lauren proposed that the two terms are used interchangeably. This assumes that the two terms are similar or mean the same. Perhaps, the professional and personal connections, and the grade level these participants taught at has an impact on their understanding, such that Lauren is a primary school teacher, while Melissa and Janice are secondary school teachers.

4.1.2 Sociability and learning preferences in introverted and intrapersonal learners

A common misconception that the literature responds to is that introverted individuals are referred to as ‘shy’, unsociable, or isolated (Rubin et al, 2009). Janice explicitly suggests that she sees “introverted learners as being more shy”, which differs from the responses of Lauren and Melissa, who suggested that introversion is an individual’s preference and they are not seen as being shy, because ‘being shy’ is something else. Lauren stated that “there’s no need for a constant seeking of external validation..” She believed that validation is internal, coming from one’s self, which responds to Melissa’s notion that these individuals require a lot of alone time to support their self-awareness and learning needs.

4.1.3 Teachers self-reflect on personal preferences that support their rationale and professional understanding of solitude.

A benefit of qualitative research studies is the one-to-one interviews that enable teachers to share their personal and professional experiences. In this study, participants shared their individual experiences of supporting introverted and/or intrapersonal learners in their classroom.
In many ways, this provided the opportunity for teachers to self-reflect on their instructional practices over the years as a teacher. It is significant to note that Lauren was the most reflective in her response to her teaching practices as she made connections to her personal life throughout the interview as well. For example, she stated:

personally, I’m a parent of two young children and I find that being a parent of young children it’s very difficult to find solitude [...] it’s also very difficult to achieve in the classroom.

In her words she said, “I always seek solitude, but that’s not to say I’m against busyness and noise, and more rowdy situations.” Lauren believed that solitude is a choice, and it is something important even outside of school contexts, specifically for life in general. Similarly, Melissa recognized that her “preference is to be independent, and to figure things out on [her] own.” Through these self-reflections, teachers exposed a connection between their teaching practices as a result of experiences with solitude in their own lives. This bias may reflect in their interest and commitment to the practice of solitude in their teaching, but it is evident that it enabled them to rationalize their actions to support students’ needs.

During the interviews, it occurred to teachers that a rationale for implementing solitude in their instructional practices was actually due to a bias in their own personal understanding and preference for solitude. Melissa, for example, referred to her interest as a teacher’s helper at an early school age, which contributed to her continued interest in supporting disengaged youths later on in her career. Janice also expressed her support towards individualized learning needs and so “solitude [is something she does] instinctively [...] because [she is] trying to meet the needs of all the learners in [her] classroom.” It is also clear that the participants saw a value in solitude which motivated them to commit to and support this practice in the classroom as their long-term teaching goal.

The population size of recognized introverts and/or intrapersonal learners in the classroom are often overseen in the classroom. In the primary level, Lauren has recognized that about 40% of her students would be described as introverted and/or intrapersonal learners. While in the secondary level, it varies from a large portion (approximately 80%) to a small portion (approximately 10%). Although it varies with primary and secondary level, often teachers do not
realize a significant portion of their students are introverted and/or intrapersonal learners, who have specific needs that must to be met in order for them to be successful.

4.2 Teachers believed that solitude is an important life skill that can lead to self and social awareness.

Teachers believed that the connection to the self is important to become socially and self-aware within the extremely stress-inducing society that we live in. All participants alluded to their perspectives on self connection, they have also mentioned to some extent a connection to the wellness of students that is important for maintaining mental health. Furthermore, teachers see the need to explicitly teach students and execute clear expectations in order to reap the benefits of the practice of solitude in the classroom.

4.2.1 Self-awareness empowers and grounds students

Teachers have recognized the power solitude has on students’ self-awareness. Janice claimed that:

socializing can be overstimulating, and there’s very little time for quiet personal thought and I think [solitude] can help strengthen [students’] sense of self, build some confidence [...] it’s something empowering.

Through Janice’s statement, it rings true that self-awareness is important to individual empowerment. Indeed, the overstimulated introvert has yet to be responded to in the classroom context, as proposed by Helgoe (2008). Socialization supports the extroverted ideal and it suggests that all individuals are sociable and require time spent with others in order to function. However, this is not the case for all individuals as the participants have claimed.

Although Melissa spoke very little in regards to the empowerment of students, Lauren suggested that “[students] are more aware of their feelings and they are more productive because they have less distractions.” It is through the practice of solitude that one can encourage self-awareness and eliminate distractions in students. Distractions are often misconstrued as engagement (Senechal, 2012); but as argued by Furnham (2000), brainstorming is a myth. The distraction of others’ thoughts causes students to lose track of their own self-awareness and
personal connection to discussion topics. Cain (2012) contends that solitude is the key to developing creativity in students’ work. Without self-awareness, students are simply out of tune with themselves and are unable to be aware of their surroundings in this world.

Not only does self-awareness ground students, but it also supports their reflective and critical thinking skills. Lauren proposes that self-awareness enables students to have the capacity to be socially aware which also fosters greater thinking skills. This not only heightens their critical thinking, but also their ability to be aware of their surroundings and become more reflective thinkers in general. Independent thought enables students to be more cognizant of their own thoughts and about to become metacognitive on their own. Contemplation is not something that can occur within a group setting, and thus, must be practiced while one is quietly and solely thinking in their own space. This suggestion complements Melissa’s understanding that solitude supports individuals’ abilities to cope with daily struggles and stress.

Something that all participants neglected to discuss in detail was the notion of mindful meditation practices in schools. Although this idea was brought up and mentioned, it was not extensively promoted in the three participants’ teaching pedagogy. Mindfulness has been well received over the recent years over its many benefits. Bryant (2013) suggests that mindfulness helps focus students’ attention, which can transform their thinking towards questioning and wondering. Meditation has also become a widely popular method for enabling students to become self-aware and reflective in their daily lives. This suggests that teachers may require professional development in terms of expanding their knowledge and skills in supporting students in this area of expertise. As suggested by the participants, teachers are not fully skilled with the necessary tools that are relevant to support their interpersonal and/or introverted students in the classroom.

4.2.2 Teachers recognize a link between reflection and mental health

Teachers recognize that students experience an increasing amount of stressors in their daily lives which may contribute to the rising issue of mental health concerns. Long et. al (2003)
suggest that reflection promotes personal and creative development, which are important for success in students. Lauren explained her perspective this way:

every day we go through so many things, so much mumbo jumbo in this world, if you don’t take this opportunity to just sort things out and reflect [...] things are not going to fit in your brain, the brain needs that time to categorize everything and to sort everything out and just be in touch with yourself.

Through her explanation, Lauren suggested that reflection and self-awareness provide an opportunity for students to organize their thoughts, which is also a beneficial coping strategy that allows students to sustain their well-being. In order to do this, students must be “in touch” with themselves. This idea reflects the notion that when individuals are removed from ‘distractions’ and allowed to experience a sense of freedom, a connection to the self will be activated, in which leads to serenity, emotional development, and self-discovery (Burger, 1995; Galanaki, 2005; Hornich-Lisciandro, 2013; Larson, 1990; Long et al, 2003; Long & Averill, 2003; Rubin et al, 2009; Stern, 2014; Winnicott, 1958). Solitude provides the space that allows students to sort their thoughts and manage the overstimulation they encounter in their daily lives. Ultimately, this leads to greater expression of their true selves and an increase in inner self-connection.

4.2.3 Solitude needs to be explicitly taught and modelled for students

Teachers must assume that students are unprepared and ill-equipped in the knowledge of the practice of solitude because they are not exposed to this idea from home. Lauren suggested that teachers have a responsibility in teaching students explicitly what quiet time or solitude means in a school context. Lauren advised that “[teachers] can’t assume [students] know anything.” Although Melissa and Janice spoke rarely about solitude being explicitly taught, it could be because they were secondary school teachers who had a different experience than Lauren, who was a primary school teacher. Indeed, younger students need to be taught and guided in what quiet and solitude means in school. Lauren proposed that the explicit teaching of solitude “has to start really early, even before they get to school” The lack of prior knowledge from students disables their ability to fully execute the expectations teachers require from them in terms of beneficial solitary practices. Furthermore, Lauren recommended that:
classroom expectations need to be clear, so if you want to have a calm classroom then you have to expect that and once you expect that, then you have to teach how that can be achieved.

Providing clear expectations for students leads to greater success. When this is coupled with practices of solitude and student self-awareness, they are better able to cope in stressful situations. In addition, Janice argued that “when students are allowed to be themselves as much as possible, they feel happy! When they feel comfortable, they perform better!” This further proposed the rich benefits self-awareness and solitude has to offer for students, especially those who require those learning preferences in order to succeed.

4.3 Teachers believed that incorporating differentiated instruction in their teaching supports the equity of diverse learners.

Differentiated instruction was described by all three participants in very similar ways. They described differentiated instruction as teaching students in different ways that meet their specific needs, especially their learning needs. By meeting all learners’ needs, teachers are supporting the equity of diverse learners in their classroom. However, teachers admitted they sometimes or often times differentiated their instruction more towards academics rather than social or learning preferences. Lauren admitted that she doesn’t differentiate enough and teachers have the responsibility to teach students in a learning environment that enables them to thrive.

4.3.1 Teachers believe that differentiating their instruction to create opportunities for solitude supports diverse learners’ needs.

Teaching students based on their diverse learning needs provides the equitable environment that includes all students in learning. Teachers have responded to the importance of equity in the classroom by stating their appreciation for different types of learning preferences. Lauren argued that: “it’s not fair to just assume that just because it’s school and the [students] are with 300 other students, that [teachers] automatically think [students] like being with 300 other people.” As teachers, we have to accept that all students are unique and different in their preferences. We have to honour their differences in order to engage them in learning. Lauren specifically stated that “differentiated instruction is being able to change your expectations and
teaching styles according to the needs of the students.” Janice further advocated for individual learning needs as she shared an instance where one of her students “made a comment on her way out of class and said [...] group work makes me feel nauseous, it makes me feel sick.” This suggests that teachers are not supporting the needs of students enough in the classrooms, and differentiated instruction needs to broaden the context of students’ social needs.

Students who do not learn through collaboration are often stifled in their learning. Cain (2012) suggested in the literature that introverts prefer solitude over collaboration, which means that their talents and abilities are often hindered when they do not have that preference for learning. The trend toward collaboration that Cain (2012) refers to limits the abilities of intrapersonal learners, who often prefer and perform best when they are working independently. Furthermore, some students prefer to present their work in writing or through teacher-conferences, rather than give oral presentations. The wide range of learning needs and preferences render its importance for teachers to accommodate and appreciate all learners in their respective area of need. Janice further supported the notion of student success through differentiating to support their specific needs. She proposed that “providing scaffolding for students, making sure they have step-by-step instructions and graphic organizers to use, planning sheets, demonstrating and modelling, and having ability groups is an important part of differentiating.” This suggestion requires teachers to become more proactive and responsive to student specific needs. Ultimately, enabling all students to participate in learning requires teachers to provide the necessary resources and spaces for them to succeed.

4.3.2 Teachers recognize that Literacy arts and visual arts are the most feasible subjects to incorporate solitude

In terms of teaching practices that are most feasible in the classroom context, teachers have suggested that literacy arts and visual arts are the most common and easily accommodative subject areas. This is due to the fact that other subject areas are more constrained in terms of the material that needs to be covered and the resources that are available to the teacher for use in the classrooms.
Literacy is one of the subjects that is most feasible in terms of implementing solitude. Lauren suggested that “reading is a lot easier [to implement solitude] because it’s easier to do independent [work]”, which is why she encouraged her students to read independently each day, increasing the independent reading time to increase students’ focus.

Janice believed that visual arts and essay writing has a natural way of reflecting that frees the mind. She said:

natural reflection that happens when [students] are working on artwork or an essay and [they are] quietly working on it, [they are] constantly thinking [...] there’s sort of a therapeutic experience that [they] have, where the hands are working, and it frees [the] mind in a way to think about life.

Furthermore, Janice believed that “artwork blends itself to quite intensive concentration… so I think art blends itself quite naturally to that experience, art is more natural.” This connection relates back to the self-awareness factor that contributes to the health and well-being of students. Moreover, when students are provided the opportunity to practice solitude while completing their work, they are given the space to think critically and concentrate - which affects their progress toward success.

Music is another practical method of incorporating solitude into daily implementation. Lauren claimed that she “uses music a lot, it’s almost like the teacher’s voice, if [she] plays calm music, [students] will quiet down to listen to it” This suggests that the classroom atmosphere dictates the students’ ability to maintain self-control. Although some may suggest that music may distract students’ reflective thinking process, Janice suggested that “[...] it allows students to have a very pleasant experience working on their own in a classroom of students.” This demonstrates the differentiated aspect in teaching that can occur through different uses of resources within the classroom.

4.3.3 Teachers consider reflection and journaling effective differentiating strategies

In accordance to literacy arts, teachers have suggested the practice of reflection and reflective journaling as an effective way to incorporate solitude into the daily classroom routine. Journaling was suggested by Janice who used it frequently; she affirmed that as a class they
“start at the beginning of the class with 10-15 minutes of private writing.” Reflective writing not only provides students with the ability to express themselves in words, but it also provides students the ability to improve their vocabulary and sentence structure in all grade levels.

Alternatively, Melissa noted that during a novel study, she required her students to “write a reflective journal [entry] at the end of each chapter, and then write a summary of all the different connections they can make with all the characters throughout the story.” This type of reflective journaling allows students to think critically, and provides the opportunity for them to express their thoughts onto paper without feeling embarrassed or at risk of judgement from others. Melissa further suggested that “there’s no risk, when you’re working in solitude, there’s really no risk because the only person [students] are working with is themselves.” When students, particularly those who require the solitary environment to work, feel safe and know that there are no risks, they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

Furthermore, Lauren’s school has an interesting approach where the entire school practices reflection daily. Lauren claimed that “every morning, after Oh Canada, [as a school they] have a moment of silent reflection.” This provided students with an opportunity to reflect on anything in their lives prior to the beginning of each new day of learning. Lauren claimed that this supports the personal growth in students.

4.4 Teachers consider accommodating learning spaces and flexibility as a means for supporting student specific needs.

Teachers suggested that the learning environment of students is key to their learning and success. The environment that the students learn in plays a significant role in their ability to focus and feel safe and comfortable to reach their fullest potential. Furthermore, the teacher’s flexibility is important in differentiating a student’s learning needs and also for accommodating a diverse learning environment.
4.4.1 The space and environment of a classroom has a significant impact on students’ learning

The learning environment of students is essential in determining the success of students. Particularly, if students do not feel safe or comfortable learning in that space, they are unlikely to succeed. Lauren claimed that her students “really appreciate and enjoy the calmness”, especially when she sets the atmosphere for solitary practices. When Lauren practices solitude, “[her students] feel safe [...] and [when they are safe and] comfortable in class, they enjoy coming [to school] just because they feel that it’s a safe and calming environment.” Similarly, Melissa advocated for student learning spaces as indicative of their ability to regulate and promote their own differentiated learning needs. In her words, “[there are] rooms in our space [where students] can go, and it’s interesting because it’s almost like they regulate their solitude on their own because that’s what they want, they know they can do that as long as that’s not abused.” Providing the option for students to work in their own space, allows for more freedom in students’ learning.

Additionally, Lauren affirmed that she has “a quiet corner” in her room which is “just for kids to withdraw themselves and just to read or just to think or sometimes if they’re not feeling well, just to even lie down.” The flexibility of providing options in terms of using classroom space for personal preferences can support students’ needs when necessary. All participants emphasized the importance of creating a positive and comfortable, safe learning environment in order for solitude to occur. This enables students to feel supported and safe to work to their fullest potential.

The size of a class is also a crucial factor in creating the positive learning environment that supports students who require solitude in their learning needs. Indeed, smaller class sizes equate to less bodies in the classroom, which allows more personal space for students to feel comfortable and less suffocated or crammed. This idea is supported by Lauren’s teaching experience in the classroom, she felt that “smaller class sizes definitely help, because the more people, the more bodies can make noise” Noise is the counterpoint of solitary environments that is required for some students to succeed in. Moreover, Janice also argued that when “thirty-three
students are crammed into a small space, there’s no room for personal space.” Personal space is vital for students to be able to be more self-connected and less distracted by their peers. As a result, solitude allows for more successful students and better work ethic.

4.4.2 Flexibility is the key to supporting diverse students’ needs

Flexibility requires teachers to provide options and choices to students in order to enable them to feel comfortable performing at their best. Janice advised teachers to be flexible in student requests, as long as they are reasonable. For example, she said “if it’s something unreasonable, like ‘can I go home and work’, [then] no, you have to be at school. But if it’s reasonable, I would say yes.” Some reasonable requests she has received from students include “students [asking] to go out to the hallway where it’s quiet [or] to go to the library to work.”

Building relationships with students is a key foundation for teachers to be able to become flexible and responsive to the needs of their students. Without a clear understanding of where their students are coming from, they will not be able to fully support the students’ needs. Melissa suggested this idea that teachers “need to learn about [their] learners [because] every kid has a different need - you need to be able to connect with the learner.” Without the connection to students, teachers are unable to differentiate to their specific needs. It is then crucial for teachers to build a relationship with their students to have a clearer understanding of their preferences. Lauren proposed another scenario where she experienced working with English Language Learners (ELLs) who she believed would benefit more from learning experiences with groups of students rather than in solitude. Lauren claimed that:

when kids talk, they talk about topics that are relevant to them and they talk at their level, so if you work with ELLs [...] I think that there should be a lot of oral interaction to help them.

This demonstrates that in various situations, teachers need to accommodate to student specific needs, even if in some cases solitude may not be the best option, in order to accommodate, teachers need to know their students. The relationship built between the teacher and their students will create a better learning environment for all.
4.5 Barriers to implementing solitude in the classroom include technology, educational policy emphasis on collaboration, and limitations specific to the primary level of schooling.

Although participants have emphasized the significance and importance of implementing solitude into their teaching practices, there are inevitably many challenges that are faced throughout this journey. Challenges have been brought up when participants discussed their personal experiences as this section will go into further detail. Particularly noting the barriers in terms of the rise of technology use, social and educational trends, and limitations in the primary level, time, and resources.

4.5.1 Advancement of technologies pose as an obstacle for students’ practice of solitude

Since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been a shift in teaching practices due to technological advances. Suddenly SmartBoards were seen in almost all classrooms and schools and iPads became the norm (which has been reportedly used as early as the kindergarten level). Technological devices are not simply added in the classroom, it is also widely used outside of school as well. Lauren shared her concerns towards the early use of technology in her younger students. She believed that kids need to be more self-connected rather than technologically connected. Furthermore, Lauren asserted that:

There are too many distractions in this world, especially nowadays, too many electronics, too many different games, each game has a musical component or a flashing light component. I think we just need to go back to the basics.

Technology has created a major distraction for students. Although, this isn’t to say that students don’t deserve to have fun, they need to have balance. Parents and teachers need to provide students the appropriate amount of time and the space needed to reconnect with themselves and teach them to return to their inner thoughts for fulfillment. This connects to the previous notion of self-awareness and reflective thinking, and even mental health issues that are a concern. Students need to be taught that happiness and fulfillment are things found within oneself and not sought after externally. Particularly, the practice of mindfulness has been praised for its ability to gain insight into one’s mind which improves cognitive inhibition (Bishop et al, 2004). The significance of cognitive inhibition is clear as it supports students in connecting with their own
thoughts and creative capabilities. Furthermore, the practice of mindfulness meditation has been supported by many researchers as it connects to well-being and even creativity.

Contrary to Lauren’s assertion, Melissa proposed that technology can be positively used in the classroom. She suggested to create a blog and encourage students to participate in collaboration and discussion through that medium. When working behind a screen, Melissa discovered that students are more engaged and are more comfortable sharing because they were separated from physically interacting with others (something that may be stress-inducing for some students) and allows for anonymous responses and interaction between students who wouldn’t normally interact in class. This strategy projects a positive outlook on the use of technology and its balanced use in the classroom context.

4.5.2 The Ministry’s move toward prioritizing collaborative learning poses a barrier for opportunities of creating solitude in the classroom.

One of the most frequent beliefs is that creativity is fostered in a high stimulating environment, which contributes to the widely popular trend toward group work and collaboration in the recent years (Armstrong, 1994; Cain, 2012; Coplan et al, 2011; Fonseca, 2014; Senechal, 2012; Stern, 2014). Collaboration is the assumption that groups (or the idea that ‘two heads are better than one’) will yield better results. It is not surprising then that, Lauren comments on a popular belief that the idea of going to school is for ‘socializing skills’. She questioned the notion, and the social norm of going to school:

when people think of the idea of going to school [...] people automatically think that going to school is to learn socialization skills, [because] if I want to learn solitude I can stay at home, all by myself, at home, so why do I need to go to school for that?

She pointed out that going to school has been normalized as a place not only for students to learn, but also for them to socialize and learn socialization skills. Students are grouped together with ten or twenty other peers within a classroom and hundreds of kids within one school, it is no doubt that socialization is required for them to contribute to this kind of environment.
This social norm becomes a barrier that influences ministry mandates toward the politics of teaching practices in school settings. Melissa argued that this is the case in terms of secondary grades in her current knowledge. In her words, she claimed:

your biggest barrier as a teacher would be that solitude is really not the methodology of instruction that your board would want, based on ministry mandates and the board’s plans for the year.

This clearly suggests that when it comes to the politics of teaching practices, the ministry has the upper hand in terms of how and what students are learning. This barrier creates an inevitable conflict between ministry mandates and teachers’ passions toward supporting individual learning preferences.

4.5.3 Barriers confronted at the primary level of schooling include student’s skill level and access to resources.

In terms of the primary level, Lauren acknowledged the limited skills set that younger students have to work with. Firstly, she admitted that “solitude played a minor role” throughout her career as a primary school teacher. Moreover, she expressed that,

in the primary level, a lot of students can not write exactly what they want to share, so sometimes we do have to tell them to say it [aloud] because if they end up writing it then they’ll be missing a lot of parts and pieces they want.

The limitations in the primary level certainly pose as an obstacle for them to partake in solitary activities that may require advanced writing skills - such as journaling and reflective writing. However, this shortcoming does not cease to discourage Lauren in her practice, as she suggested ways to build student confidence in working alone,

for instructional approach, [she likes to] use the gradual release of responsibility, [she] always starts with a big group and then slowly work [her] way down to a smaller group and then partner and eventually get to individual, simply because this level.. like primary level [teachers] have to make sure [students] have some background knowledge to work with, if [the teacher] always sends them to individual work, some [students] will have no idea what to do, some will have no background knowledge, and some will just go blank.

This is a descriptive process of the gradual release of responsibility promotes responsibility and independent learning in students. Younger students will be more confident in their learning
abilities once they are provided the support they need to become more independent in their learning.

In addition to limited skills in the primary level, all participants have voiced their concerns regarding the lack of time and insufficient resources available in supporting their commitment to provide opportunities for solitude in the classroom. Lauren claimed that “time is always an issue” because as a primary teacher, she believed that there is a focus towards meeting curriculum expectations. Lauren was unsure whether there are any explicit expectations in the curriculum that require teachers to implement solitude (because again, it is not something that is supported by the ministry).

4.6 Further support is required for teachers to continue their work in the practice of solitude to support intrapersonal learners

Teachers require further support in order to fully implement the practice of solitude in their classroom. All participants suggested various ways they can be further supported, for example, professional development workshops that heighten their knowledge in this area will greatly improve their skill and expertise to support students. In addition, attaining as much support from the ministry may require changes made to board initiatives that can enable better assistance for intrapersonal learners. Finally, in order to engage students, teachers suggest informing parents and engaging them in the practices of solitude in order to have the support they need outside of the classroom to generate further understanding of the many benefits of solitude.

4.6.1 Professional Development workshops is proposed as necessary for teachers to fully support intrapersonal learners’ needs in the classroom

Professional development is a great way for teachers to improve their skills and heighten their knowledge on a particular area of expertise. Janice asserted that,

a problem in the education system is that there should be more time for colleagues to share issues like this, and to share best practices and there’s just not enough time for that [...] so that’d be good to have specific PD where you’re able to talk about our intrapersonal learners.
Janice believed that teachers should be able to discuss with their colleagues regarding issues of differentiated teaching strategies that can benefit their intrapersonal learners in the classroom. She suggested that there is a lot of focus on other pressing topics such as behavioural or mental health concerns: “there’s a lot of focus on oppositional defiance, behaviours and ADHD, and learning difficulties, but we have quite a range of different types of learners and it would be nice to have some time to focus on them [as well].” But there seems to be a lack of emphasis for diverse teaching strategies, particularly for intrapersonal learners who require differentiated learning environments and practice of solitude which is beneficial for their learning and success.

Although Janice and Lauren spoke about this sort of professional development that may deepen their understanding of how to support intrapersonal learners, Melissa spoke more regarding the limitations of ministry mandates. As previously mentioned, Melissa suggested that solitude as a differentiated practice is not the methodology that is supported or encouraged by the ministry, which halts teachers’ energies toward meeting all their students’ needs.

4.6.2 Teachers require support from the ministry regarding class environment, time, and resources in order to fully support intrapersonal learners

Melissa was worried that there are constraining teaching practices enforced by the ministry that are difficult to compromise. In her words,

when you look at maybe up to the mid 2000s, [solitude] was the way that we learned. I think [solitude] was the primary method of instruction [and] one of the big [barriers] is that it isn’t the methodology of learning that most school boards want to focus on anymore.

It is important to note that solitude was once the method of teaching that was supported by school boards. But as discussed, there has been a shift in teaching practices due to the exploding trend in collaboration and inquiry-based learning and technology use in schools. School boards and the ministry need to acknowledge and recognize student specific needs that are beyond social norms. These include practices such as solitude in contexts where it may not be seen as effective or ‘normal’. But research has proven to support the notion that there are many benefits to student solitary engagement. With limited research conducted on this area of study, this
research hopes to light the way to further research that may encourage change for meeting the needs of all students.

4.6.3 It is important to inform and engage parents to encourage the practice of solitude outside of the classroom

Besides building relationships with students, teachers must also create bonds with parents. Parents are the backbone to students’ learning and success. Without support outside of the classroom context, many of the things taught in class will be disregarded and deemed insignificant in a child’s life. As a parent herself, Lauren spoke about her own experiences of difficulty in creating opportunities for solitude at home with her young children. She believes that it is something that needs to be modelled at home by parents and practiced at school. Lauren also pointed to the fact that,

parents need to talk about quiet play and loud play and the different kinds of environments that they can work in and talk about different kinds of noise - good noise, bad noise, productive noise, and I think it has to start at home, so I find that a little challenging when they come to school with no knowledge in this area.

Moreover, Lauren is concerned that the distractions and the habits of parents in regards to technology use are overwhelming young students and their ability to focus and seek self-awareness.

Similarly, Melissa stated that the relationship with parents is a key factor in engaging students and building the foundation for support outside of the class. It is crucial then, to inform parents and educate them in what you teach the students. In order to fully support students’ needs, parents need to also be informed about what their child needs. The foundation begins at home and continues at home.

4.7 Conclusion

Overall, participants were very open about their understandings, concerns, and recommendations towards further supporting introverted and intrapersonal learners in the classroom through the practice of solitude. It was evident through their responses that they are passionate about supporting individual needs, particularly students who require the practice of
solitude in their learning in order to succeed. All teachers shared their invaluable experiences that contributed substantially to this research study. The differentiated instructional strategies they have suggested were helpful in terms of encouraging teachers who feel there is not enough time and resources to support diverse learners’ needs. Furthermore, participants have alluded to the importance of a safe, calm, and peaceful learning setting that contributes significantly to the learning reception of students. Finally, these teachers’ suggestions and professional experiences regarding limitations and best practices have propelled this research study to another level of interest. The teachers’ reflexivity and reflections have proposed an interesting direction for future studies in this area. The teachers’ beliefs regarding the importance of solitude as a life skill renders it worthy of greater attention. With this in mind, my research findings, though limited due to its scope, have contributed to supporting the literature that currently exists in this area of interest. Indeed, solitude is an important topic that is often neglected and misconstrued in the educational realm and requires attention in the near future.

Next, in Chapter 5, I explain how the findings connect to the existing literature and how, as a beginning teacher, I can implement what I have learned to my own teaching practices. Moreover, I articulate implications and recommendations that may light the way for further research and improvements in terms of supporting the intrapersonal and/or introverted students in the classroom. I will further discuss next steps for stakeholders in the educational realm, and identify areas for further research that is necessary to promote practices of solitude in school settings.
Chapter 5: IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by summarizing the findings from this research study and its significance in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Particularly, I speak to how teachers provide opportunities to support their intrapersonal learners through the practice of solitude in the classroom, the benefits they see in promoting solitary practices, and the challenges they face when supporting their intrapersonal and introverted students. Next, I discuss the implications of the research findings for the educational community and my own teaching practice as a beginning teacher and as an educational researcher. Furthermore, I articulate a range of recommendations that are relevant to various stakeholders in education. Finally, I identify areas that require further research, and I conclude by restating the significance of the research findings in relation to the field of education.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

The purpose of this research study was to investigate how a small sample of teachers differentiate their instruction to include opportunities for the practice of solitude to support intrapersonal learners in the classroom. Three teachers who satisfied the specific criteria were voluntarily selected to be interviewed in this semi-structured qualitative research study. Their professional experiences and personal stories have contributed significantly to this topic.

The six overarching themes that were discovered in the findings include: 1) how teachers’ understanding of the terms introvert, intrapersonal, and solitude draw on themes of sociability and learning preferences; 2) teachers believed that solitude is an important life skill that can lead to self and social awareness; 3) teachers believed that incorporating differentiated instruction in their teaching supports the equity of diverse learners; 4) teachers considered student learning spaces and flexibility as a means for supporting student specific needs; 5) barriers to implementing solitude in the classroom include technology, educational policy emphasis on collaboration, and limitations specific to the primary level of schooling; and 6)
teachers require further support to continue their work in the practice of solitude to support student-specific needs.

Through the findings from the three interviews, it was clear that there is indeed a trend toward collaborative group work in public schools, as suggested by Susan Cain (2012). Ultimately, this notion neglects the learning and social preferences of introverted and intrapersonal learners in the classroom. As a result, these learners’ capabilities are stifled and their potential to thrive is limited. Furthermore, as many researchers and contemporary authors have claimed, schools are constructed in ways that support the ‘extroverted ideal’ which denotes that students are gregarious, outgoing, and social beings - yet, not all students possess these attributes. For this reason it is important to note the findings in the studies of Cain (2012) and Fonseca (2014), who claimed that there are actually more introverted students in the classroom than teachers may predict.

To begin my understanding of this phenomenon, I explored the different teachers’ perspectives on the terms ‘introvert’, ‘intrapersonal’, and ‘solitude’ and how they are linked. Through the interviews, it was evident that the terms are puzzling as the participants had difficulty describing the two types of learners and defining what solitude meant. They were hesitant and uncertain when trying to explain what those terms mean in a classroom context. This is a clear indication that the terms are misconceived in society, which has convoluted the ways in which educators understand and perceive these types of learners in their classrooms.

All three participants were similar in terms of how the terms were described. ‘Introversion’ was described as private individuals who require alone time and work best in solitude. It was significantly noted that “it has nothing to do with isolation”, which is a common misconception that people confuse with other forms of unhealthy solitude (Rubin et al., 2009). Furthermore, solitude was understood as a space for individuals to access their thoughts, which participants believed were crucial in students’ learning. Some variances between the two terms ‘introvert’ and ‘intrapersonal’ were debatable due to the teaching level of the teachers - such that Lauren was a primary teacher, while Janice and Melissa were
secondary teachers. However, it was generally agreed that the teachers’ own personal preferences and experiences pose as a bias towards their understanding of these terms.

In this stress-inducing society that we live in, the significance of solitude was expressed as an important life skill. Particularly, the connection to self, and being socially and self-aware are two of the most important facets of solitude that students must learn. Janice claimed that solitude is empowering because it helps strengthen and build confidence in students. Moreover, Lauren claims that this empowerment will help students cope with stress and alleviate stressors they encounter on a daily basis. Often times, it is evident that society has ingrained in individuals the importance to socialize; however, the findings have suggested that socialization - especially in an overcrowded space like a school - can be overstimulating for students, particularly those who are introverted and/or intrapersonal learners. Thus, solitude comes into play as a tool to support reflective, critical thinking skills, which promotes personal and creative development. In order for this to happen though, it is imperative that teachers provide the appropriate environment and abundant opportunities for solitary reflective practices to occur.

Individual needs are best met with differentiated instruction strategies. As the findings suggest, solitude can be seen as a differentiating instruction method to support diverse learning needs. This equitable standpoint promotes inclusivity in classrooms, which is the ultimate goal in schools. Differentiated instruction is the act of changing expectations to meet students’ needs. Lauren admitted that she does not differentiate enough because she simply does not have enough time and resources to support all her students’ specific needs all the time. She does believe that although many teachers are struggling with the lack of time and resources, they differentiate to students’ academic needs more rather than their social learning preferences. However, all participants see an importance to differentiation in order to cater to the needs of all students, even though they find many challenges in the process.

Although it is difficult to provide variety in teaching methods to support all learners in the classroom, it is important to note that literacy arts and visual arts are two curriculum areas that are most practical in incorporating solitude. Particularly, Janice believed that reflection
naturally occurs in artwork and essay writing. Artwork blends itself nicely with concentration and creativity. This reiterates claims made by Long & Averill (2003) that considers the connection between creativity and solitude, as seen in many influential and creative individuals in history and at present (such as Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin, Carl Jung).

For students to learn to their greatest potential, they must feel safe and comfortable to perform at their best. Therefore, the students’ learning environment plays a key role in their learning and engagement in the classroom. Participants have suggested that specific areas should be designated for students to practice solitude, if the classroom environment becomes too noisy, distracting, or overstimulating. Indeed, personal space is essential to students’ learning environment. Without personal space and/or time, students who do not have a preference for, and are averse to overcrowding and overstimulation will fail to perform at their best. Although it may not be possible to accommodate all students at all times, teachers need to be cautious of particular students and be as flexible as possible. Being accepting of reasonable student requests, such as moving to a quieter space in the classroom, and being open-minded can have a positive impact on students’ learning and success. This suggests that building a genuine relationship with students and understanding their needs is beneficial to accommodating and assisting them with their interests in mind.

Although it is ideal to meet the needs of all students, it is not without its challenges. Teachers have expressed their struggle to meet students’ needs but also having to follow ministry mandates. Ministry mandates prioritize and support social trends toward a collaborative and extroverted ideal society. Teachers have stressed the importance to meet curriculum expectations, while having very little time and resources to support their desires to differentiate according to student specific needs. This creates a huge barrier for teachers to support all their students to their fullest abilities. Furthermore, the advancement of technology has pros and cons that often create an even bigger barrier because the lack of control teachers have outside of the classroom. Technology has been argued as a barrier because it distracts students from connecting to their inner self. On the flip side, when technology is used in an academic and engaging way, it can heighten students’ learning and enable them to learn
differently. As the research findings suggest, students who are more self-aware will become better connected to the world around them. When students are focused on their technological devices and games, they forget that happiness is sought from within and that validation should not be granted from others. This emphasizes the importance of teacher responsibility towards explicitly teaching students to balance their daily technology use and to become responsible and self-disciplined individuals.

Finally, all participants have suggested that further support is required for them to provide adequate opportunities for solitude to students who may need it most to succeed. Professional Development workshops are necessary for teachers to ensure they have the right tools and skills to support all students with various learning needs, particularly those who may require the practice of solitude in order to thrive. Although behavioural issues and learning disabilities are still important and continue to be at the forefront of educational concern, participants suggested that there needs to be a shift in thinking or a change in focus toward supporting diverse learning preferences. As suggested by the literature, there are many benefits to practicing solitude and providing that opportunity for students to thrive. It is in that environment that students are able to reflect and think critically. In order to continue the work that teachers do in classrooms, parents must also be informed of the benefits of solitude. The relationship between the teacher and parent is key to the continuity of learning outside of the classroom.

5.2 Implications

The implications for the research findings were discussed in terms of relevance towards the educational community, and to myself as both a beginning teacher and as an educational researcher.

5.2.1 Implications for the educational community

Evidenced through the research findings, it is necessary to note that there are differences in learning preferences that should not be disregarded. Specifically, social preferences such as the need to work undisturbed or independently in a quiet space, is characteristic of introverted
and intrapersonal learners. This is significant in that teachers need to be sensitive to different learning preferences and styles that may require certain steps taken to further support their needs. Furthermore, as suggested by the participants in this study, solitude is beneficial to students in many ways, which suggests an urge toward implementing this practice into daily pedagogy. Solitude, as discussed in the literature and in my research findings, can be practiced in various ways as recommended below.

Teachers need to be aware of the diversity of their learners, and cater to their needs as best as possible. In order for this to transpire, teachers need to establish an appropriate relationship that will allow them to appreciate and value every student’s specific learning need. It is important to emphasize that introverted or intrapersonal learners may not seem engaged or exhibit ideal characteristics (such as those demonstrated by extroverts), they may only thrive when supported in the appropriate environment. That being said, further research in understanding how students thrive in solitary environments will help teachers fully support students who require the practice of solitude to enhance their learning and assist them to perform at their best.

Although collaborative group work is necessary in many occasions in learning, teachers need to realize it is not the only method to engage all students in learning. As discussed in the findings, some students require the quiet space and time to reflect on their thoughts. Even though it may be argued that extroverts do not prefer this learning style, they may still benefit just as much as their introverted counterparts. It is suggested that it is beneficial for the creative development of students because of the reflective and contemplative nature of the practice of solitude.

As this research study implies, introverted students and intrapersonal learners require the attention they lack in the classroom context. It is evident that their abilities are stifled and many of them are unable to fully express themselves and contribute to class work without their preferred method of learning being acknowledged and implemented in the classroom setting. Additionally, the Ministry should reconsider the idea around solitude as it has been given a bad reputation and seen in a very negative light over the past several years. With the developing
research toward this topic, teachers may be interested in learning more in regards to supporting their quieter, intrapersonal learners in the classroom.

**5.2.2 Implications for myself as a beginning teacher**

As a beginning teacher, this research has not only helped me understand myself better, but also helped me see different perspectives towards engaging students who may require assistance to reach their fullest potential. I have discovered many more strategies to support individuals who are introverted or intrapersonal learners in the classroom. For example, allowing students more flexible options to perform tasks and assignments in their own self-selected space will benefit their final result. Moreover, creating an anonymous medium, such as a blog that is safe and monitored, can allow quieter and more independent students to contribute to discussions via the comfort behind a computer screen. I wish to use these new acquired knowledge to support my future endeavours as an educator by creating the positive, and safe environment that allows for students to practice solitude in the comfort of their own space. I believe it is important to allow students the space and time to be reflective. As a teacher, I will explicitly teach students the practice of reflective contemplation through implementing mindfulness meditation. Indeed, there are other pressing issues that need my full support of as well, but as the participants in this study has suggested, there needs a shift in focus towards the diverse learning preferences in students as there is a lack of emphasis in the realm of education.

I truly believe that each students’ learning abilities and potentials should not be stifled by social norms. As a teacher, I think it is crucial to be proactive and responsive to student’s learning needs. This being said, I wish to attend Professional Development workshops to enhance my learning of this specific issue and how I can further support students who may require greater attention. I will use the newly attained knowledge to support my own pedagogy in the classroom as I am sure there will be introverted and/or interpersonal learners in any given class.
5.2.3 Implications for myself as an educational researcher

Considering this was my first research paper, it took me a lot of time to navigate through the findings. Through the many hours of transcribing and coding, I have learned that an advantage of having conducted semi-structured qualitative research studies is that it creates more depth in the responses given to me, which was invaluable not only as a beginning teacher but as an educational researcher as well. The participants’ perspectives through their wealth of teaching experiences has enlightened me. Akin to them, I was fascinated by how much their personal preferences had an impact on their teaching philosophies. Indeed, this research paper may not have existed without my personal connection to this particular issue. I realize that the connection is what sparked the discover ways to better support these types of students. Furthermore, I think it is essential that as an educational researcher and teacher, I continue to seek new ways to improve my teaching practices. In regards to this research topic, I consider it a part of my professional duty to gain further insights on supporting students of this nature.

5.3 Recommendations

Some recommendations that have been suggested by my three participants and myself are listed below:

- I recommend that teachers explicitly teach students the necessary requirements of solitary practices in order to reap its benefits
- I recommend teachers support their diverse learners’ needs through scaffolding and the gradual release of responsibility. This allows students to gain ownership of their own learning.
- Create quiet spaces in the classroom that will allow students to retreat to when they require the time to re-energize, work alone, or move away from distractions and noise
- Do not force group work and be flexible when assigning tasks. Allow students the option to opt out if possible, should they choose to work alone as a preference.
- Be open to reasonable requests by students who require time working alone in places outside of the classroom - such as the library, in an empty classroom, or in a quiet place.
• Create a classroom blog specifically to function as a discussion platform for students to participate anonymously (through an alias or username that the teacher monitors)

• Practice mindfulness meditation with the class to lessen the stimulation and create a calm, safe, comfortable learning environment that allows inclusivity of all students

• Play soft and soothing music for students to listen to while they work on assigned class work. Alternatively, older students may be allowed to bring in their own music players and play their own music.

• Reflective journaling or general reflection writing can be integrated into the curriculum, particularly in literacy arts, or as a general daily practice to provide students the space to practice contemplative and metacognitive thinking.

• Provide many opportunities in art classes for students to concentrate and practice solitude through contemplation.

• Inform parents of the benefits of solitude and how they can support their child further outside the classroom

• Parents should be informed through parent nights or information sessions regarding the benefits of solitude and how they can better support their child outside of the classroom.

• School boards and the Ministry should support teachers in their work through providing more Professional Development workshops and research that offers insight into this current issue.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Through my research findings, it is clear that a lot of work is needed in order to propel the initiative towards supporting introverted and intrapersonal learners in the classroom. The limited scope of this research paper restricted further discovery of strategies and ways teachers are supporting their introverted and/or intrapersonal learners in the classroom. Some areas that are in need of further research include:

• Research is required in learning more about adolescent and children’s ability to understand solitude (Galanaki, 2004). As Lauren suggested in her interview, there are limitations in the primary level that creates a barrier in the primary grades.

• Research might consider exploring the preference for and significance of solitude in a young child’s life (Coplan et al, 2014; Larson, 1990; Stern, 2014).
In the context of classrooms, the practice of solitude has not been researched in depth.

Research might address the questions: How can solitude improve physical and emotional well-being? What are the implications of solitude for student success?

Further research is required in the field of teaching children independent, reflective, and critical thinking skills.

Research can address how educators teach students the skills necessary to be alone, even among others.

5.5 Concluding Comments

As humans, we are social by nature. For this reason, society has set social norms that promotes the ‘extroverted ideal’ that suggests that we need to raise children to be social, out-going, and gregarious human beings in order to thrive. Despite the fact that humans come in many shapes and forms, society has neglected yet another facet of human variance, which is variety in personality types and learning preferences. It is thus the duty of teachers and educators to provide a wide range of learning opportunities to cater to all students’ needs. The method of differentiated instruction supports this notion that each individual student should be appreciated and supported in ways that meet their specific needs. Although this method has its limitations and challenges, passionate teachers will continue to strive to meet all their students’ needs to support growth and promote student success.

This research study aimed to learn how teachers are supporting their introverted and intrapersonal learners through the practice of solitude. In conducting this qualitative research study, teachers have shared their stories and their experience regarding students who have a preference for solitude as a means to learn to their fullest potential. Teachers have presented a range of benefits that are important to students’ well-being and growth including greater connection to their inner self, which heightens their ability to become more self-aware. This can also lead students to become more contemplative, reflective, and critical in their thinking. These benefits not only influence students who have social preferences for solitude, but also those who may not - such as extroverts. The practice of solitude enables students to become
reflective, contemplative, critical thinkers, all of which are crucial to the academic success of students.

The ultimate goal of school is to be safe and inclusive. In order for this to happen, teachers need to create the environment that provides opportunities for students to thrive. Teacher relationships are key to supporting each individuals’ needs. In particular, introverts and intrapersonal learners require the support and guidance of their teacher to achieve their goals and to succeed in school. As teachers who are passionate towards creating inclusivity and equity in learning, I believe there needs to be an adjustment in thinking towards the practice of solitude in schools. In order to support the needs of all students, we must differentiate our instruction as often as possible to reach every learner. Without the proper tools and learning environments, introverted and interpersonal learners are unable to thrive. These students may be quieter in nature, but they are not much different than any other student in the class. Every student requires attention from the teacher to guide them to success. For this to happen, it is important that teachers keep in mind the diversity of learning preferences that may be present in the classroom and never disregard or neglect students who may require a different approach to learning.
References


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Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interviews

Dear __________________________,

My Name is Lisa, and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on how teachers are differentiating their instruction to include opportunities for solitude in an effort to meet the needs of intrapersonal learners. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have demonstrated commitment in this area. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course
instructor Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Chan

Researcher’s name: Lisa Chan

Email: leesa.chan@mail.utoronto.ca

Instructor/Supervisor’s name: Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic

Email: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by ______________________ and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: _________________________________________________

Name: (printed) ___________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introductory Script: Thank you for participating in this interview. The aim of this research study is to learn how teachers are differentiating their instruction to include opportunities for solitude in an effort to meet the needs of intrapersonal learners. The interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes. I will ask you a series of 30 questions focused on how you differentiate your instruction to include opportunities for solitude in an effort to support intrapersonal learners. I want to remind you of your right to choose not to answer any questions. Also, your responses will not be evaluated and you will be assigned a pseudonym so as not to compromise the anonymity of your participation in this study. As per the consent form that you signed, I will be audio-recording this interview through the use of a digital recorder. If at any time you would like me to turn off the recorder, please do not hesitate to let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information

1. What grades/subjects do you teach?
2. Can you describe your school for me? (e.g. size, demographics, program priorities)
3. How long have you been a teacher/teaching?
4. In addition to being a classroom teacher, do you fulfill any other roles in your school? (e.g. counsellor, coach, leader, advisor etc.)
5. As you know, I am interested in how you differentiate your instruction to include opportunities for solitude to meet the needs of intrapersonal learners. Before we talk about how you do this, can you please tell me more about what experiences have contributed to you developing an interest and commitment to this area? (e.g. personal, professional, and educational experiences - your own learning style preference and experience of schooling, your undergraduate focus, Professional Development in learning styles etc...
6. What prompted you to begin providing opportunities for solitude in the classroom? Did you enjoy solitude as a student? How has this influenced your value of solitude, particularly in the classroom?

7. Do you identify more with extroversion or introversion? Why?

8. How would you describe your own preferred learning style?

Teacher Beliefs and Understandings

9. What does solitude mean to you?

10. In your view, what role has solitude traditionally played in school contexts?

11. What are some of the benefits that you associate with opportunities for solitude? And what have you learned about the value of solitude in the classroom for all learners, but especially for intrapersonal learners?

12. What are some of the barriers in creating opportunities for solitude in classrooms and schools?

13. Approximately what percentage of your students, on average, would you describe as introverted and/or as intrapersonal learners?

14. How do you understand these two terms (introvert and intrapersonal)? What do they mean to you? Are they interchangeable in your view? How/how not?

15. What are some indicators of introversion and/or intrapersonal learners that you recognize in students?

16. How would you describe the learning needs of these students? Under what conditions have you seen these students thrive?

17. As you know, a component of this study also focuses on differentiating instruction. Can you tell me what this means to you? What are some of the benefits and challenges that you associate with differentiating instruction?
Teacher Practices

18. Can you tell me more about how you create opportunities for solitude in your teaching? What do these opportunities for solitude typically look like and why?

19. Are there particular subject areas that you find yourself implementing solitude more easily into? Which ones? Can you please give me an example?

20. Can you tell me more about how you create opportunities for solitude as an instructional approach versus a classroom management or classroom climate strategy?

21. Do you typically create opportunities for solitude for all students or only some students? Which students?

22. How often do you specifically differentiate your instruction by creating opportunities for solitude specifically for your intrapersonal learners?

23. How, if at all, do you assess student outcomes from these opportunities for learning?

24. What outcomes have you observed from students? Which students? How has this practice impacted the dynamics of the classroom?

25. How do you create opportunities for solitude for some students in contexts whereby other students are not practicing solitude? (e.g. do these students go to the hallway or another room or to a quiet corner?)

Influencing Factors

26. What kind of feedback have you had from people outside of the school (such as parents or colleagues) about your teaching practices in regards to practising solitude within the classroom?

27. What challenges have you faced in your efforts to create opportunities for solitude
in your teaching? How do you respond to these challenges? How might the education system further support you in meeting these challenges?

28. What range of factors and resources support you in this work? (e.g. manipulatives, books, music, headphones, small class size, cushions etc.)

Next Steps

29. What advice would you give to a beginning teacher looking to better support the introverted student in terms of providing more opportunities for solitude and quiet time in the classroom?

30. What goals do you have for your practice of solitude within the classroom?

Thank you for your participation in this research study!