A Study of the Dynamic Between Victims and Teachers: How Teachers Can Support Students Who Are Bullied

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate the main research question posed: How is a sample of elementary teachers providing one-on-one support to students who are bullied? Data was collected from two Ontario certified teachers, by using semi-structured interviews. The data was analyzed and interpreted, which allowed three main themes to emerge: Teachers acknowledge that how they support students who are bullied is influenced by how they themselves define bullying, recognize it and what it means to them; teachers recognize the importance of implementing different strategies and approaches in the classroom in order to prevent bullying incent; and teachers recognize the need for victims of bullying to be supported through a variety of strategies. I explain the implications of my research findings for the educational community and myself, as a researcher and teacher. The findings inform school boards, principals and teachers about anti-bullying initiatives, which can be implemented in order to help support victims of bullying.

Key words: bullying, victimization, anti-bullying preventions, teacher intervention, supporting victims
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context and Problem

Bullying occurs at a disconcerting rate among Canadian students (Whitley, Smith, Vaillancourt, 2012). Reports have shown that the rates of bullying (or victimization) are considerably higher in Canada than in many other countries (Craig, Pepler & Blais, 2007). Presently, Canadian schools are feeling pressure to take these issues seriously, and to reduce the frequency of these occurrences (Whitley et al., 2012). Teachers’ roles in these initiatives are pivotal, given their proximity to students when the bullying incidents occur (Mishna et al., 2005; Whitley et al., 2012). Furthermore, they have the power to help negate the effects of bullying before they escalate and the emotional strain of being victimized becomes too strong (Craig et al., 2007).

Bullying occurs when a dominant individual (the bully), repeatedly behaves aggressively, intending to cause harm to a less dominant individual (the victim) (Olweus, 1991). Victimization can result from interacting risk factors, such as physical, social, and psychological characteristics (Hanish & Guerra, 2000). Victims may inherit or possess qualities that others interpret as a weakness or as being different from the rest of the group (Hanish & Guerra, 2000). Studies have consistently demonstrated the short and long-term effects of bullying, for the victims (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). The negative consequences that can be experienced such as, depression, loneliness and anxiety, are wide-ranging, and can put individuals at a heightened risk to experience physical, social, academic, psychological and mental health problems (Craig & Harel, 2001; Pepler, 2006; Craig et al., 2007; Mishna, 2008).
Bullying is a major concern for educators, and classroom teachers can be challenged to respond to bullying incidents and support victims (Yoon & Kerber, 2004). Research has documented that on many occasions teachers do not intervene when students are being bullied in school and that they are unaware that bullying incidents are even occurring (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). How a teacher responds to bullying is important because their response can significantly impact the severity of the consequences the victims could face (Mishna, 2004; Yoon & Kerber, 2004). If students’ perceive teachers’ responses as unsupportive, they could suffer even more (Mishna & Alaggia 2007). This lack of support from teachers creates a need for anti-bullying initiatives to be improved in the teaching world. If teaching practices in relation to bullying, are improved it could in turn: make students less reluctant to approach teachers for help and support when bullied; help teachers to negate the effects of bullying and help put an end to bullying altogether (Craig et al., 2007). However, there has been relatively little research conducted on how teachers’ individual interactions with victims can be improved, in order to better help students who are bullied cope. As a result, more research needs to be conducted in this area to help eliminate the problem at hand.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Through interviewing a sample of two teachers my goal is to learn how to support students who are bullied, in order to negate the short and long-term consequences of bullying. Another goal I have is to learn about the different strategies that teachers can adopt in their teaching practices to try and prevent bullying from occurring. Through reviewing the literature on bullying I aim to understand how a teacher’s response to bullying varies, depending on the kind of bullying that transpires (i.e. physical, verbal,
psychological, exclusion), and the effectiveness of adapting these responses to fit particular situations. I intend to share all of my findings with the educational research community and teachers in order to find a way to reduce or eliminate the negative affects that bullying has on its victims.

1.2 Research Questions

The main question guiding this research study is: How is a sample of elementary teachers providing support to students who are bullied?

The subsidiary questions guiding the investigation include:

- What does bullying (physical, verbal and social exclusion) mean to these educators, and what indicators do they recognize as evidence of bullying?
- How do these teachers create an atmosphere in their classroom that is inclusive to victims of bullying?
- What range of preventative work do these teachers do to educate students about bullying, and the consequences victims can face?
- How do these teachers respond to incidents of bullying when they see them or are told about them?
- What strategies do these teachers carry out in order to help ensure the emotional well-being for victims of bullying?

1.3 Background of the Researcher

As an adult, I witnessed many cases of bullying in elementary schools, and felt compelled to research this topic. There were many instances in which I observed students who were verbally bullied or socially excluded. Those situations demonstrated to me that there are a variety of negative emotions that the victim(s) harbours when victimized. I
have seen children as young as four, sad, hurt, angry and lonely because they were bullied. Some of these children did not like themselves as a result. Although I tried my best to speak to the victims, I was not fully confident that my responses were effective and supportive. There was one situation, in particular, which strongly influenced my interest and dedication to this research and, to this day, still troubles me. A grade two student was continuously called “weird” and had a difficult time coping with this label. When I would speak to him, I would try to explain that being weird was not a negative thing. I told him that I was weird and that it was good to be weird - it meant that we are unique and special. However, the student did not accept this response and did not feel any better. He would tell me that he did not want to be weird, he wanted to be the same as everyone else and he did not understand why he was so different. One time after he was verbally bullied, he told me that the world would be so much better if his classmate (the bully) would just die. The boy’s answer and the possible ramifications of such a wish left me quite anxious and scared. It forced me to question whether this was the wish of a child in a tough situation, or whether there would be any lasting truth to such a wish. Would this boy one day harm himself? Would this boy one day harm someone else? From that moment on, I made a personal vow to find effective methods and responses in order to console the victims of bullying.

Fortunately, I was never bullied as a child. For this reason, I do not possess first hand knowledge of the emotions that victimized children feel. However, my strong empathetic nature helps me to understand and share the feelings of others. When I found out that the student no longer went to after school care because of the bullying he experienced, and that his father began to work only half a day to accommodate this, I
became distraught. One day, when I was talking to a friend who had been verbally bullied and socially excluded in elementary school, he told me that no one ever said anything to him to help him. When he asked me what I would have said to him as a child, had I been in a position to help, I had no idea how to respond. To this day, at the age of twenty-seven, my friend still bears the effects from being victimized as a child. Knowing that the victims of bullying carry with them emotional and psychological scarring for the rest of their lives makes me want to be a teacher who can effectively mitigate the effects of bullying. It is my goal to contribute to the knowledge we possess regarding bullying, and contribute to the ways in which we think of and deal with this issue. Ultimately, the goal is to eliminate bullying, however as it still prevails, we need to have effective strategies to counteract its negative effects. Together, I believe we can achieve this.

1.4 Preview of the Whole

In order to answer the main research question and the subsidiary questions, I will conduct a qualitative research study. Two teachers will be interviewed about their approaches to anti-bullying education and the kind of support they offer to victims of bullying. In Chapter Two I will investigate the literature on bullying in how it relates to the victim; in Chapter Three, I will describe the research methodology. In Chapter Four, I will report my findings and discuss their importance to the literature that exists. Finally in Chapter Five, I will explain the implications of these findings and provide recommendations for the educational community. As well, I will outline areas that could be researched in the future to further develop our knowledge on this topic.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will look at what bullying is, and review various publications regarding: the conceptualization of bullying; the risk factors contributing to being victimized; short and long-term consequences of victimization; how teachers perceive bullying; and how teachers respond to students who are bullied. Through reviewing the literature, bullying can be better understood in its complexity, and therefore help educators prevent bullying and intervene in bullying incidents.

2.1 Defining Bullying

Bullying (or victimization) can be seen as a complex phenomenon involving social relationships (Mishna, Pepler & Wiener, 2006; Pepler, 2006; Craig, Pepler & Blais, 2007). Daniel Olweus a pioneering researcher studying bullying and peer victimization in Norway, first coined the term bullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Olweus (1994) defined bullying or victimization as the following: “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students,” (p. 173). Since the conception of the term bullying, many academics have offered different definitions of this term. However, there has been a general consensus regarding the key elements that characterize bullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004; Rigby & Smith, 2011). It is widely believed that the term bullying is characterized by an intent to cause harm, an imbalance of power or strength, either physical or psychological, and that there is repetition (Olweus, 1994; Smith & Ananiadou, 2003; Rigby, 2007; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010; Rigby & Smith, 2011). The physical imbalance can be very evident, like when a bigger person bullies a smaller individual, or it can be less
evident, like when there is a psychological imbalance of power (Olweus, 1994; Rigby, 2007). Children who bully others have more power than the children who they victimize (Craig & Harel, 2001; Craig et al., 2007). The power can stem from varying sources such as: a physical advantage (based on size and strength); higher social status in a peer group, such as popular students versus unpopular students; or strength in numbers such as, a group of children bullying a solitary child. In cases where bullying occurs, there are two things to consider: the person or persons who commit the act of bullying, and the individual or individuals who become victimized. However, this paper will focus predominantly on the victim in relation to bullying, in order to help the educational community provide support to the victims. For the purpose of this paper, bullying and victimization will be used synonymously.

2.1.1 Forms of bullying

The negative actions that constitute bullying can take many different forms (Olweus, 1994; Rigby, 2000; Craig et al., 2007). Bullying can be physical (e.g. hitting, punching, pushing, tripping, spitting), verbal (e.g. threats, name calling, insults, put-downs), social (e.g. social exclusion, malicious gossip) or cyber-bullying (e.g. threats, insults, demeaning messages spread through the internet or cell phone) (Craig et al., 2007). Overtime, researchers have come to classify bullying based on different characteristics of the behaviour. Bullying can be classified as direct or indirect (Pepler & Craig, 2000; Craig et al., 2007). Direct bullying is when there is face-to-face aggressive acts enacted directly towards the victim, such as punching, hitting and name-calling (Woods & Wolke, 2004; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Indirect bullying involves
relational aggression such as exclusion from peer groups, the spreading of rumours, and/or social rejection (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).

Furthermore, bullying can be classified as overt or covert acts of aggression (Espelage & Horne, 2008). *Overt bullying* refers to harmful actions carried out in the open that are more easily witnessed (such as punching, kicking, name calling); whereas *covert bullying* refers to actions that are hidden and are not as visible (such as gossiping) (Byers, Caltabiano & Caltabiano, 2011). The word *relational* has been used to describe behaviour that involves excluding a person from a social group, spreading rumours, keeping secrets or humiliating someone in a social setting (Griffin & Gross, 2004). All of these forms of victimization are negative behaviours, which cause harm and suffering to the victims’ sense of self and their relationship with others (Smith et al., 2004; Craig et al., 2007; Rigby, 2007).

### 2.2 Children Who Are Victimized

Research has concluded that some factors may put an individual at a higher risk of being victimized than others (Smith et al., 2004). Factors such as personality, appearance, family background, having a disability, level of education or having special education needs, sexual orientation, the nature and quality of friendships (not belonging to a peer group) and peer-group reputation, can all have an impact on whether or not a child is victimized (Smith et al., 2004; Woolfolk et al., 2012).

Different researchers have grouped victims into three different categories. This research has categorized victims based on whether they are passive, proactive/aggressive, or bully-victims (both bully and victim) (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Passive victims are sometimes characterized as being anxious, physically weak, unpopular, having a low
self-esteem and/or prone to cry easily (Wilton et al., 2000). They can also be described as low-conflict victims because they are rarely observed engaging in aggressive behaviour (Wilton et al., 2000). These individuals do not provoke bullies and rarely take action to defend themselves when attacked. Proactive or aggressive victims tend to act in ways, which provoke bullies. Typically, these victims are stronger than passive victims, and more involved in the incidents that lead to bullying. Finally, bully-victims tend to provoke bullying in others and initiate aggressive acts (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010; Woolfolk, Winne & Perry, 2012). These victims are described as “high-conflict victims because they actively antagonize bullies and other children and will attempt to counter-attack when bullied,” (Wilton et al., 2000; p. 229). While bully-victims often try to resist the overtures of bullies, they are rarely successful at doing so, and ultimately tend to lose the conflict (Wilton et al., 2000).

Even though a child’s individual characteristics may be a risk factor, Hanish & Guerra (2000) explained that it is the interpretations of these characteristics that motivate peer victimization. This is intended to show that possessing a certain characteristic does not condemn an individual to be victimized, but rather it is the dispositions of others that determine who will be bullied. Victims of bullying are diverse, as are the situations they find themselves in, therefore it is important to remember that there is no single way in which to describe or categorize victims (Yoon & Kerber, 2003; Rigby, 2005). That being said, there is one thing they do all have in common: all victims want to see an end to bullying, and to be released from the lasting effects of victimization (Woolfolk et al., 2012).
2.3 Short and Long Term Consequences of Children Who Are Victimized

Children who are victimized by their peers can experience a wide range of difficulties, especially if the victimization is continued over a long time (Craig & Harel, 2001; Craig et al., 2007). Studies have shown a strong correlation between victimization and one’s development; it has been shown that being the victim of bullying can negatively impact one’s academic, social, and psychological development (Swearer & Espelage, 2003). One’s academic, social and psychological development are not distinct from one another, as an individual’s developmental in one area can have an effect on another.

2.3.1 Academic development

Bullying has been shown to negatively influence a victim’s academic development (Woolfolk et al., 2012). As a result of bullying, victims may develop an intense dislike for going to school because bullying often transpires on the premises. Victimization can occur in the classroom, on the playground and in the hallway (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Rigby, 2007). Students may also be bullied on their way to and from school (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Rigby, 2007). If students are victimized at school they may come to view school as unsafe and become fearful of it, as a result, victims are likely to: avoid and be absent from school; have a reduced interest in class; become less focused on their academic work; have diminished academic goals, and/or drop out of school (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Rigby, 2003; Card & Hodges, 2008; Woolfolk et al., 2012). From the research it is evident that bullying can negatively effect a victim’s academic development.
2.3.2 Social development

Children who are victimized are at a greater risk to endure difficulties in their social development. Students who are bullied are likely to experience loneliness and social anxiety (educational text; Craig & Pepler, 2007; Whitley et al., 2012). Victims often feel lonely because they tend to withdraw from their peer interactions. Individuals may withdraw from their social settings because they have developed social anxiety, which can make them fearful of these social interactions. More so, if students have few or no friends and are labeled as a loser or unpopular, it could open them up to more attacks (Craig & Harel, 2001; Craig & Pepler, 2007). Furthermore, students who are victimized may find it difficult to trust those around them and, consequently, find it difficult to make friends and be in social settings (Craig & Pepler, 2007; Woolfolk et al., 2012).

When students are aware that another person is being victimized, they may hesitate to intervene because they fear that they could be victimized themselves. Consequently, peers may then distance themselves from the victimized child and could even join in on the bullying, should they want to gain acceptance by the one with the perceived power (Craig & Pepler, 2007).

If individuals are victimized over a long period of time, they could lack the necessary social skills needed to have healthy relationships (Craig & Pepler, 2007). This in turn, could have serious and tragic implications for our society. In recent years, Canada, the United States, and Europe have witnessed countless tragedies in which the victims of bullying carried out assaults on their tormentors and peers (Leary, Kowalski, Smith & Phillips, 2003; Woolfolk et al., 2012). The increase in school shootings has caused researchers to study the characteristics of these students, in order to see if there
were any commonalities among the shooters (Dake, Price, Telljohann & Funk, 2003). Out of the thirty-seven cases examined, the majority of the attackers were bullied (Dake et al., 2003; Merrall, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008). In those cases, the experience of being victimized seemed to be a major factor in the motivation for the attack. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that although there appears to be a correlation between school shootings and bullying, it does not imply causation, as other variables could impact a victim’s actions.

2.3.3 Psychological development

Research has documented that students who are victimized are at heightened risk to experience a range of mental health difficulties, due to their peers bullying them. Students who are frequently subjected to bullying, have are likely to have lower levels of mental health compared to their peers (Rigby, 2005; Pepler, 2006). Studies have found that people who are continuously bullied are more likely to experience anxiety and/or depression (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). As well, studies have consistently shown that students who are bullied are likely to have a lower self-esteem and self-worth than students who are not (Whitley et al., 2012). Other effects of frequent bullying include but are not limited to: panic attacks, paranoia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, sleep disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Victims of prolonged bullying may engage in acts of non-suicidal self-injury or attempt suicide (Woolfolk et al., 2012; Klomek et al., 2007). Numerous stories have headlined the news of children who have committed suicide, with the cause of these tragedies being attributed to bullying. The fact that a student’s psychological development can be significantly affected from incidents of bullying makes bullying a serious issue. In order to gain a deeper understanding of how one’s
psychological development can be impacted, an individual’s personal story will be shared in the following section.

2.4 A Perspective From an Individual Who Was Bullied

Research has consistently proven that victimization can cause harm to individuals and that the suffering can be long lasting (Yoon & Kerber, 2003; Rigby 2005; Pepler, 2006). Bullying will affect many different individuals and these effects will manifest in various ways. Each victim will have their own unique and individualized experience as they struggle with victimization, and in the years that follow. During a TEDx event titled *The Skeletons in My Closet*, Dr. Stephen Lewis, a professor at the University of Guelph, spoke of his experience with victimization. The following is an excerpt from Dr. Lewis’ TEDx talk:

I faced certain adversities outside of my home. One such adversity occurred when I was a teenager, when I was bullied relentlessly. I can recall the pain in my arms from being punched so hard, it hurt so much sometimes that it hurt to lift my arms above my head. I can also recall what they said to me on a daily basis, “You’re pathetic,” “You’re worthless,” “You’re weak,” “You should just kill yourself.” Indeed these words hurt more then any punch could. They brought about in me intense feelings of shame and of sadness. They brought about thoughts that I wasn’t a good person, that in fact I was a bad person. That I wasn’t good enough, good enough for anything or anyone. And what started out as thoughts, developed into deep seeded beliefs about me and who I was. I didn’t talk about what was going on, for quite sometime. What I tried to mask soon turned into depression, and then turned into intense emotional pain. I yearned for relief, a temporary break from the
pain felt inside and so out of desperation and in an attempt to feel anything then what was going on inside, I cut myself.

Lewis’ account of his experience with bullying illustrates the suffering that victimization can inflict on someone. The physical and verbal bullying that Dr. Lewis was subjected to created significant physical and psychological wounds. When hearing stories like this, it is hard not to wonder whether a teacher could have prevented such incidents from happening, or whether a teacher could have helped to mitigate the lasting effects of such incidents. While the effects of bullying will be different from person to person, it is important to understand how bullying can influence the victims. Understanding the seriousness and significance of victimization could encourage teachers to recognize that victims need support.

2.5 Perceiving Bullying Through the Eyes of the Teachers

As teachers are a prominent adult figure in the lives of students, they have the ability to greatly impact their students’ social, academic and psychological development. The proximity of teachers to students makes it critical for teachers to help offset the consequences of victimization (Swearer & Espelage, 2003; Whitley et al., 2012). Research has demonstrated that a teacher’s response to a bullying incident has the potential to positively or negatively impact the victim’s outcome (Yoon & Kerber, 2003; Mishna, 2004). However, research has also shown that students do not believe that teachers intervene enough, and that when they do, the success rate is not high (Craig et al., 2000; Rigby & Griffiths, 2011). Studies show that there are many reasons why a teacher may not intervene when bullying occurs, some of which will be examined below.
2.5.1 Perception of victimization

Some teachers view non-physical bullying as less serious than physical bullying (Mishna et al., 2005). As a result, teachers may downplay the harm that could result from verbal bullying or social exclusion. This view could be formed from a lack of knowledge among teachers in regards to non-physical bullying. In a study conducted by Yoon and Kerber (2003), it was found that teachers were less sympathetic to victims of social exclusion. The teachers’ lack of compassion toward the victims lessened the likelihood of them intervening. Furthermore, Ellis and Shute (2007) discovered that teachers treat social bullying less seriously than verbal and physical bullying, even though evidence shows social bullying can significantly harm students. These findings may stem from teachers not understanding the range of negative outcomes that are associated with victimization (Yoon, 2004). When teachers comprehend the short and long-term consequences associated with bullying it could in turn make bullying incidents seem more serious and as a result, increase the support they provide (Yoon, 2004).

2.5.2 Nature of the school and classroom environment

Teachers need to create an environment where students feel safe to approach them for help (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). An environment that encourages children to come forward to seek assistance from their teachers could reduce students’ reluctance to seek support (Newman, Murray & Lussier, 2001; Smith & Ananiadou, 2003). Victims may be hesitant to seek help from their teachers for many different reasons. They may fear the bully’s reaction if they seek help. Often students are scared that the bully will retaliate and there will be more pain to endure (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Others may not believe that help is possible or they could be afraid of becoming a tattletale.
Furthermore, as students get older, they tend to become less inclined to open up about being victimized (Smith & Ananiadou, 2003). Additionally, gender can be a factor in whether or not a victim seeks support. Studies have suggested that male victims are less likely than female victims to seek help (Smith & Ananiadou, 2003).

If teachers are unaware of the bullying situations occurring, they are unable to intervene. Students need to feel safe speaking to their teachers about bullying as research has shown that victims of bullying can greatly benefit from discussing their experiences with their teachers (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

### 2.5.3 Empathy

Research has found that the level of empathy felt for the student who is bullied could positively correlate to the teacher’s attempt to understand the child’s experience (Mishna et al., 2005). For instance, if a teacher were empathetic toward a child who was bullied, the teacher would try to better understand the child. However, if a teacher was not empathetic toward a child who was bullied, the teacher would be reluctant or unable to understand the experience of the victim. As a result, the victim would be unlikely to receive the support necessary to negate the negative effects. Therefore, the degree of empathy a teacher possesses can be an important indicator when determining how a teacher will respond to a bullying incident (Mishna et al., 2005).

### 2.5.4 Mental health

Bullying has been identified as a significant cause of mental health problems. Students who are bullied are at a heightened risk to experience lower levels of mental health (Whitley et al., 2012). The fact that many victims experience lower levels of mental health could inhibit teachers’ willingness to support these students. Canadian
educators have experienced difficulties when intervening in situations in which mental health was a concern, because they felt unprepared (Whitley, et al., 2012). Studies have consistently suggested that teachers believed that a lack of adequate training was the main reason for them not to support students with mental health issues. These findings are concerning, as teachers play a key role in the prevention, identification and intervention of mental health difficulties among students.

For teachers to successfully support students who suffer from mental health issues, they need to have the following: the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to recognize mental health difficulties; an understanding and the preparation to implement the steps required to integrate the students into classroom activities, and the knowledge of the strategies that could be used to support the students (Whitley, et al., 2012). As one’s mental health can significantly impact one’s learning and overall level of functioning, it is imperative that we are all educated with regards to this subject (Volk, Craig, Boyce, & King, 2006; Whitley et al., 2012).

2.6 Supporting Students Who Are Victimized

Support needs to be given to students who are bullied, in order to foster their positive development and protect their well-being (Craig & Pepler, 2007). If teachers are not prepared to aid students who are victimized, it is unlikely that they will receive the necessary support, and as a result they could develop a sense of helplessness about their bullying experiences (Craig et al., 2007). Teachers need to support children who are victimized during and after the incident (Mishna et al., 2005; Craig et al., 2007; Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). During the incident, teachers should intervene to stop the bullying, and then immediately take the time to discuss what happened. After the incident,
interventions need to focus on building skills that could help to increase confidence and reduce the chance of victimization in the future. The following sub-sections will elaborate on the types of support investigated in the literature.

2.6.1 Moral/psychological and active support

Research has suggested two types of support, moral/psychological support and active support, which could be used to help alleviate the negative effects of bullying (Rigby, 2000). Moral or psychological support entails teachers listening sympathetically to the students as they discuss their experiences (Pepler & Craig, 2000; Rigby, 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). It has been proven that this kind of support helped to counteract the effects that can result from victimization such as, stress, sadness and loneliness. Furthermore, victims benefit from the immediate provision of psychological support because they need to know the teacher cares about the incident. In addition, this type of support allows the teachers to help students replace negative statements about themselves with more positive or realistic statements. This could in turn help increase the victim’s confidence, as well as lessen their social anxiety (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008).

In addition to providing moral/psychological support, active support has been suggested as an approach to help the students cope. Active support can help victims to practice and develop skills, which could prevent future bullying and/or help them to recover from previous victimization (Rigby, 2000). Therefore, teachers can help students who are victimized by providing social-skills training that help to teach more effective and appropriate ways of interacting with others to the victims of bullying, it could reduce or prevent the reoccurrence of these traumatic events (Hanish & Guerra, 2000). Social
skills training such as social-problem solving, positive play skills, group-entry skills, and managing negative emotions (Hanish & Guerra, 2000).

In a study by Fox & Boulton (2003), students who were victimized participated in an eight-session social skills/assertiveness training program. In the social skills component of the program, students were taught different skills, such as listening skills, conversational skills and group-entry skills. In the assertiveness aspect of the program, students were taught ways to be more confidence in their body language, relaxation strategies, positive thinking and verbal strategies for dealing with bullying. Students in this study showed a significant increase in their self-esteem. However, the program was not found to have a significant influence on the victims’ number of friends, peer acceptance, depression or anxiety. Further research in this area is still required in order to understand how to best support our students who are bullied.

2.6.2 Bullying prevention

Researchers have suggested that it may be easier to prevent bullying from occurring rather than intervening in incidents when they arise (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). This is because responding to incidents of peer victimization can be difficult for reasons such as, teachers not being able to directly observe the negative behavior and not being aware of it because the it is not being reported (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008).

Some schools are being mandated to adopt anti-bullying policies in order to help standardize procedures for responding to bullying. These programs tend to focus on preventing problems, rather than taking action after a bullying incident has already occurred (Dake et al., 2003). The main goal is to change the school climate by making it clear that bullying is not tolerated, providing students with knowledge about bullying,
outlining the consequences of bullying behavior for everyone involved, and by stressing the importance of being an effective defender or bystander for targeted peers (Hong & Espelage, 2012). While programs designed to reduce the prevalence of bullying in schools are extremely important, they do not give much attention to how to support victims psychologically, socially or academically.

Whole school anti-bullying programs typically use approaches that include drama activities (e.g. acting out scenarios), watching videos, and reading books, in order to address bullying, in the classroom. The main purpose of these lessons is to sensitize students to the social phenomena of bullying. Through drama, videos, books and discussions that relate to bullying, students can develop language that can be used to help students identify and speak about bullying experiences (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). Furthermore, these activities are helpful for teachers to create and develop an awareness of bullying to their students.

2.7 Conclusion

The information cited in the literature reviewed above, and the conclusions drawn from this information, consistently stress the significance of bullying, and the negative effects being bullied can have on children. These studies pay particular attention to the risk factors that may cause individuals to be bullied, as well as the different kinds of consequences that being a victim of bullying can lead to; however, these authors stress the fact that it is not the presence of these risk conditions that lead to children being bullied, but rather the perception of these qualities by others. The afflictions that result from bullying can manifest themselves in academic, social, psychological ways, and affect people over the short or long-term. These studies also address the possible
solutions or methods for dealing with the effects of bullying. Teachers can help potential victims through proactive interventions and by demonstrating an empathetic nature. Teachers can also help victims of bullying by being vigilant, and intervening if they see any bullying occur; should a teacher break up a bullying incident, there is further room to mitigate the damage caused by bullying by providing comfort to the victim right then and there. Finally, teachers have the ability to follow up with children, and provide additional counseling in the aftermath of a bullying incident; this helps to weaken the long-term effects caused by bullying. One fact that is clear is that the more we study and seek to understand bullying, both its causes and its effects, and test ways of dealing with it, the better able we will be at minimizing the consequences of being bullied. My goal is to further this area of understanding, and to contribute to the possible gains to be had from one-on-one interventions and counseling.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Using a qualitative research approach, I interviewed two teachers to learn how a sample of teachers support victims of school bullying. This chapter reviews the research methodology used to collect the data. It begins by reviewing the general research approach and procedures that guided that study. Next, I review the instruments that were used to collect the data. Then I elaborate, in detail, with respect to the sampling and recruitment process used to select the participants; as well I provide a biography of the participants who were selected. Following the discussion about the participants, I explain the data analysis procedures and review the ethical standards considered throughout the study. Next I identify and explain a range of limitations and strengths that were apparent in this research study. Lastly, I provide a conclusion that briefly summarizes the important methodological decisions and the reasoning behind these decisions, as they relate to this study’s research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This research study was conducted using a qualitative research approach, involving a literature review and two semi-structured interviews with teachers. The main purpose of a qualitative research study is to explain a phenomenon from the participants’ point of view (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). Listening to participants’ perspectives allows situations to be understood in their unique context and natural setting (Merriam, 2002; Golafshani, 2003). For the purpose of this specific study, the social phenomenon of bullying was examined by conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers working in elementary schools. The nature of qualitative research allowed for
insight and specific details about the teacher-student interaction and the teacher’s perception of the victim, to emerge (Olson, Breckler & Wiggins, 2008).

Before beginning the research study, I conducted an in depth literature review of bullying in order to increase my knowledge about the topic. The literature provided strong evidence about the seriousness of bullying and how the consequences of being victimized can be long lasting and detrimental. Furthermore, the research studies have proven that teachers play a key role in bullying prevention and intervention and that their knowledge about the topic, can influence the role they play in anti-bullying initiatives. The literature provided me with insight into the specific themes and topics that I believed were important in order to decipher this social phenomenon.

After the literature review, I conducted two face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with elementary school teachers, using open-ended and informal questionnaires. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to respond to the interview questions in greater detail. Sharing their feelings, attitudes and understanding of the subject, allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants’ perspective about this issue (Merriam, 2002; Golafshani, 2003). The interviews lasted for approximately forty-five to sixty minutes. Following the interviews, they were transcribed, which allowed me to find themes and hypotheses in the data.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument used to collect the data for this study was a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B); whereby a set of pre-determined questions were used to help guide and direct the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Through semi-structured interviews, I obtained information about the teachers’ personal experiences.
and viewpoints relating to the topic at hand (Turner, 2010). A semi-structured approach was valuable because the set of pre-determined questions gave me an idea about the area of interest and questions to pursue. This approach also allowed the participants to explore certain topics at a more personal and novel level, producing richer data (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Furthermore, the semi-structure approach allowed for the participants to influence the direction of the interview, based on their own personal responses (Smith & Osborn, 2007). In addition, data in the form of quotes from the participants were used to support the findings and add to the descriptive nature of this research.

3.3 Participants

In this section, I will begin by outlining the sampling criterion that was formulated, in order to select the participants used in the study. I then review the method that was used to find the participants in the study and the last section will share a biography of the participants.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

I interviewed participants who met the following criteria:

1) At least five years of teaching experience in a full-time elementary school position.

   This criterion was used because I wanted the participants to have at least five years of teaching experience to help ensure that the participants had been faced with a variety of bullying incidents, warranting different responses. In addition, it was important that the teacher was not an occasional or supply teacher; I wanted to ensure that the teachers were able to witness how their responses affected the victims during the course of the school year.

2) Teachers have a commitment to individualized support for victims of bullying.
This was a criteria used because I wanted the participants to be dedicated to supporting victims and be able to use their own personal experiences with victims of bullying, to help answer the research questions at hand.

3) Played an active role intervening in incidents of bullying.

This was a criterion used because I wanted the participants to not be bystanders to bullying incidents. By actively intervening, their approaches could be examined in order to help understand what techniques positively impacted victims of bullying and what techniques did not yield positive outcomes.

4) Believed that bullying is a serious issue with short and long-term consequences for the victim.

This was a criterion used because I wanted the participants to believe that bullying was a serious issue. I needed to ensure that they were dedicated to this issue and were willing to take the time to share their experiences because they themselves wanted to help victims of bullying.

3.3.2 Sampling procedures

In order to select the participants for this study, I relied on convenience sampling. I employed this method because of the small-scale nature of this study and the methodological parameters that were given to work with. Furthermore, the Master of Teaching program created an environment where students were consistently immersed in a community of teacher colleagues and mentor teachers; therefore I relied on existing contacts and networks to recruit participants (Olson et al., 2008).

Using a convenience sample has many advantages. This method is one of the least rigorous techniques that can be used in a qualitative study to select participants (Marshall,
This type of sample uses participants that are easily accessible to the researcher. As well, it is a technique that is cost effective to the researcher, in terms of time, effort, and money (Marshall, 1996). However, this type of sampling can be disadvantageous. As the participants were selected based on convenience, the results cannot be generalized to the whole population (Marshall, 1996). This creates a sampling error because the participants do not represent all members of the population. Furthermore, this type of sampling can produce biased results because the data may not represent the views of specific groups and the populace (Marshall, 1996).

### 3.3.3 Participant biographies

The participants in the present study are both classroom teachers in the public educational system in the Greater Toronto Area in Ontario, Canada. Both teachers have at least five years of experience and are committed to anti-bullying education. The participants will remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms.

Maggie has been teaching thirty years and is currently teaching a Grade One/Two split class. She taught students in classes ranging from Kindergarten to Grade Two, at the same school in the Greater Toronto Area. The school at which Maggie teaches is very multicultural, with students ranging from kindergarten to Grade Five. Her commitment to anti-bullying education stems from the fact that she emphasizes with her students when they feel sad and hurt. Her empathy makes her dedicated to ensure her students’ well-being.

Ava has been teaching for six years. She is currently teaching a Grade Three class and has also taught Grade Two and Grade One. Ava’s commitment to anti-bullying began while she was an undergraduate and majoring in psychology. During the process of
obtaining her degree she learned about the consequences of bullying and became a strong advocate of the necessity of preventing bullying and intervening in bullying situations.

3.4 Data Analysis

Before I analyzed the collected data, I transcribed the interviews that were conducted. I then, reflected on my main research and subsidiary questions, in order to better understand what I wanted to takeaway from the data. I used the data from the research, in order to build hypothesis and theories, to determine how to respond to a victim in a way that would reduce the short and long term consequences of bullying (Merriam, 2002). This enabled me to configure, code and develop themes within the data, in order to respond to the questions I posed in this study. I analyzed the data to find the commonalities that existed among the participants’ responses and that aligned and contradicted with the literature on this topic.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

Research studies that involve the participation of humans can cause harm to those individuals; however, this can be prevented or reduced through the application of appropriate ethical principles (Orb et al., 2001; Olson et al., 2008). The following section will examine the ethical principles, which were used to guide this research study, in order to ensure that the rights of the participants were met.

Before the interviews were conducted, I emailed an informed consent letter to the participants for them to review. They were given the opportunity to read over the letter and direct any questions or concerns to Dr. Angela MacDonald, my course instructor or myself. On the day of the interview, participants were asked to sign a consent letter (Appendix A) in order to indicate their willingness to participate and contribute to the
research study, in a 45 to 60 minute, semi-structured, audio-recorded interview. The participants were instructed to sign two letters of informed consent; one copy was for the participant and the other for myself. The informed consent letter provided an overview of the study stating that the purpose of the study was to help assist the field of educational research, in order to minimize the consequences of bullying. Furthermore, the letter addressed issues related to confidentiality, data storage, risks to the participants and their right to withdraw. The participants were explained these issues again prior to the start of the interview.

In order to ensure confidentiality all participants were given a pseudonym, in order to protect their identity and ensure their privacy. All individuals were assured that their identities would remain anonymous throughout the entire process of the research project and that any identifying markers related to their schools or students, would be omitted. Participants were told that all data, including audio recordings, would be stored on my password-protected laptop, destroyed after five years, and only my course instructor and myself would have access to it.

Given the research topic, it was possible that a particular question could trigger an emotional response from a participant, thus making one feel vulnerable. I minimized this risk, by sending a sample of the interview questions to participants ahead of time. I also re-assured them that they have the right to refrain from answering any question, which they do not feel comfortable with. As well, participants were informed that at any stage of the research study, they could withdraw from the study.

After the interviews were transcribed, participants were provided the opportunity to review the transcripts and clarify or retract any statements, before I analyzed the data.
3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

Given the narrow scope of this research paper, there were some limitations to this study. One limitation was the time frame given to conduct the research, because the study had to be completed within the two-year duration of the Master of Teaching program. This limitation affected the sample size, as the expected sample size was only two participants. This small sample size reduced the reliability of the study and the ability to generalize the findings to a greater population (Butcher, Mineka, Hooley, Taylor & Antony, 2010). Furthermore another limitation in the study was that teachers were the only participants. The ethical parameters that were approved for this program did not allow students to be participants; as a result, the victims’ point of view could not be accounted for. Therefore, the findings need to be viewed with caution because it remains unclear how the teachers’ responses negated the consequences of bullying in the eyes of the victims.

Lastly, a qualitative research approach can be grounded in subjectivity, creating another limitation in the study because the researcher’s perception of the data, and assumptions and biases about the topic, can affect the interview process and the resultant findings (Morrow, 2005). In order to prevent subjectivity, I was mindful of any assumptions or biases that I had in relation to bullying. I tried to represent the participants’ viewpoints fairly and avoid lopsided interpretations that represented my own views. I analyzed and reported the data, by consistently observing and interpreting the findings without judgment or biases (Stiles, 1993).

Although there were limitations to this research study, it did have its strengths because of the function qualitative research serves. This type of research is valuable
because it helps to generate ideas and working hypotheses based on the data that exists in narrative form (Butcher et al., 2010). The study’s in-depth interviews, with experienced teachers, produced data that contributes to our knowledge of bullying intervention.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter explained the research methodology used in the study and how this method was utilized. The purpose and significance of using qualitative research was to gather deep and rich information about how teachers can support students who are victimized. The teachers who were interviewed met certain criterion that was constructed to ensure the participants were dedicated and committed to their students who were bullied. Through two semi-structured interviews, teachers’ individual accounts of how they helped to minimize the negative consequences of bullying, came to light. The data collected from the interviews was analyzed, in order to discover the themes, which emerged in the data. These themes helped to answer the research questions that guided this study. In the next chapter, I will report the researching findings pertaining to the data collected.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings, which emerged from the data collected from two semi-structured interviews with elementary school teachers, each having had six or more years of teaching experience. The main research question that guided this research study was: How is a sample of elementary school teachers providing support to students who are bullied? By conducting the two interviews, I was able to obtain data about the teachers’ personal experiences, beliefs and views about how to support students who are bullied. With this knowledge, I hope to provide teachers with a deeper understanding of the strategies and approaches they can implement, in order to reduce the short and long-term consequences of the victims’ experiences. The data collected from the interviews were analyzed in order to understand how it related to the main research question and the subsidiary questions guiding the study.

After analyzing the data, three themes emerged, along with various sub-themes. Throughout this chapter, I will explore the following themes and sub-themes:

- 4.1 Teachers acknowledge that how they support students who are bullied is influenced by how they define bullying, recognize it and what it means to them.
  - 4.1.1 Teachers understand that there are many indicators that suggest that a student is being bullied.
  - 4.1.2 Teachers have definitions about what they believe bullying is, in order to help them determine whether a student is being bullied.
  - 4.1.3 Teachers believe that bullying is serious because of its consequences concerning the victims.
• 4.2 Teachers recognize the importance of implementing different strategies and approaches in the classroom in order to prevent bullying incidents.
  o 4.2.1 Teachers recognize the importance of building empathy among students.
  o 4.2.2 Teachers recognize the significance of using books.
  o 4.2.3 Teachers recognize the importance of hands-on anti-bullying activities.
• 4.3 Teachers recognize the need for victims of bullying to be supported through a variety of strategies.
  o 4.3.1 Bullying support involves creating a classroom which encourages students to seek support.
  o 4.3.2 Bullying support requires students to be supported psychologically.
  o 4.3.3 Bullying support involves having firm limits on unacceptable behaviours.

4.1 Teachers Acknowledge That How They Support Students Who Are Bullied is Influenced by How They Define Bullying, Recognize it and What it Means to Them

This theme focuses on how the participants define bullying, the different factors that they believe indicate that bullying is occurring and why they believe bullying is a serious issue. This section is important because it illustrates how a teacher’s perspective on bullying can influence the stance that he or she takes to support a student who is victimized. The first sub-theme will highlight how Ava and Maggie become aware of students who are being bullied. The next sub-theme discusses how the teachers define the term. The last sub-theme will describe how understanding the severity of the consequences of victimization encourages the teachers to support victims.
4.1.1 Teachers understand that there are many indicators that suggest that a student is being bullied

Maggie and Ava highlighted the importance of knowing one’s students in order to identify bullying behaviour. They believed that when teachers understand their students, they are better equipped to notice changes in their personal habits. Maggie illustrated that a change in a student’s behaviour can be a sign that a student is being bullied. Maggie alleged:

You need to know your students, so you can recognize changes within the student. [For example], if a student who usually eats lunch, suddenly stops eating, if a student begins to arrive at school looking tired, when a student withdraws from activities and seems withdrawn from peers, if a student continuously has a headache and wants to go home. However, these changes may not always indicate that a child is being bullied. [Therefore], it is important for teachers to have a relationship with each student so that they can ask questions to understand the reasons behind the change in behaviour.

Woolfolk and colleagues (2012) research supports the claim that teachers have to be aware of students’ altered behaviour because this indicator is an important first step in taking action against bullying. Like Maggie, Ava also stressed the importance of learning about one’s students. She explained that she learns a lot about her students and other students by observing them. She believes that by watching students interact, one can really come to understand the social dynamics of the classroom and on playground. Ava shares what she looks for when she observes her students:

I like to see who plays with who, who interacts, who spends recess alone.
Sometimes if students are alone, it could be a [warning] sign that they are being bullied. Maybe they are being excluded, or maybe they are choosing to be by themselves to avoid the bully. [Regardless], if the student is my student or not student, it is important to go up to this student and engage in a conversation to show the student you care about them. Bullying can happen a lot at recess [because] there is less supervision and students have more freedom.

Understanding students’ friend dynamics has been highlighted in the research as one of the indicators of bullying. Scarpaci (2006) noted that teachers should pay attention to students who have few friends and poor social skills because these could be factors that make a student at risk to be bullied. Other researchers have noted similar risk factors. In a study by Hanish and Guerra (2000), it was found that children are more likely to be bullied if they exhibit socially incompetent behaviours, which their peers interpret as not ‘normal’.

The data from the interviews with Maggie and Ava allude to the importance of teachers needing to understand how to recognize students who are being bullied. Research findings suggest that many teachers are unaware of bullying incidents (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). While there is many different indicators that could help educators detect bullying, researchers have argued that how a teacher defines bullying can impede or promote one’s ability to recognize the behaviour (Mishna, 2004). The next sub-theme will identify how Ava and Maggie define bullying.

4.1.2 Teachers have definitions about what they believe bullying is, in order to help them determine whether a student is being bullied

Bullying has been consistently defined as negative intentional behaviour that is
repeated over time on the part of one or more students (Olweus, 1994; Craig et al., 2000; Woolfolk et al., 2012). Ava and Maggie each construed a definition of the term bullying, which aligns with how it has been defined by scholars. Both of them believed that a bullying transpired when someone intentionally tried to pick on another, repeatedly, either by using words, inflicting physical pain, social exclusion or teasing. They both expressed the significance of understanding that bullying is something that is repetitive in nature (Olweus, 2003; Mishna, 2004; Craig et al., 2007). Maggie expressed that if a student calls another student a name, one time, it is not bullying. She argued that if however, the name-calling becomes a recurring pattern, it would be correct to say the child is being bullied. Maggie elaborated further:

Students will occasionally say something that is hurtful because they are learning how to socialize, how to get along with others, and how emotions work. It is important to distinguish between behaviour that is unkind and behaviour that constitutes as bullying.

Nevertheless, Maggie noted that even if someone did something mean once, and therefore by definition it was not considered bullying, it does not mean it should be ignored. She reasoned that if the wrongful behaviour is ignored, the behaviour could be reinforced, and the student could behave this way again. If the behaviour then becomes repetitive it would constitute as bullying.

4.1.3 Teachers believe that bullying is serious because of its consequences concerning the victims

Both Maggie and Ava understood that there is a wide range of negative consequences that can arise from bullying. Each teacher believed that their knowledge of
these adverse consequences is a main reason why they have strict views on bullying and believe it is an extremely serious issue. The thought of their students experiencing negative effects, such as loneliness, extreme sadness, depression, anxiety or reduced enjoyment of school, made these teachers understand the need for their support. These negative consequences are illustrated in the literature as having long lasting effects on the victims (Craig & Harel, 2001; Craig et al., 2007).

Maggie described that she hates to see her students hurt and unhappy:

It breaks my heart to see any child in pain. You want them to be happy and enjoy life. There was a student at my school, in Grade 3 at the time, who was bullied and you could tell he was clearly anxious, angry and upset. He would cry at school and the parents said that he would go home and cry. And it’s just heartbreaking. A child can only handle so much stress. It’s such a critical time for students’ development when they are in elementary school. They are forming their identities and learning about who they are. And victimization can completely affect one’s identity, if you internalize what the bully is saying or doing.

Ava explained that she strongly disapproves of bullying because it means that students are getting picked on or made fun of for being different. She advocated that differences should be embraced and be encouraged. Ava believes that severe consequences could arise such as, depression or suicide, if students are made to feel bad about themselves because they are “different”. She fears that victims could begin to believe the negative things that others say about them, making them unhappy about their appearances or choice of hobby, or their sexuality etc. For these reasons Ava condemns bullying behaviours.
Ava continued to argue why she believed bullying was serious by referencing tragic stories in the news that were due to bullying. She asserted that if any individual read stories about victims of bullying who committed suicide such as Amanda Todd, Phoebe Prince’s or Emilie Olsen’s, it would become evident that bullying is an extremely serious issue. As well, Ava made reference to the tragic school shooting that took place at Columbine High School. She explained that the two shooters were victims of bullying when they were younger and then later retaliated. Ava’s example of the Columbine tragedy correlates with research findings that show that there is a relationship between victimization and violent acts (Woolfolk et al., 2012). An increase in school shootings led researchers to examine if there were any commonalities among school shooters. They found that the majority of school shooters had been severely bullied when they were young (Dake et al., 2003).

Furthermore, the link between suicide and victimization, which Ava highlighted, has been explored throughout the literature. Rigby (2007) explained that even though establishing a cause and effect relationship between suicide and victimization is difficult, because there could be many other interrelated factors, the connection between bullying and suicide seems very likely. This connection could be in part, due to the fact that students who are bullied are more likely to have a lower self-esteem and self-worth, than students who are not (Whitley et al., 2012). Consequently, a low self-esteem and self-worth are two risk factors that have been proven to increase the possibility of suicide (Woolfolk et al., 2012).

The consequences that can arise from victimization make it imperative that teachers implement different anti-bullying practices in their classroom, in order to put a stop to
this kind of behaviour (Mishna et al., 2006). Examining Ava and Maggie’s anti-bullying practices can assist the research and educational community to work together to improve these initiatives. The next section will discuss the different strategies and approaches that Ava and Maggie use in their classrooms to hinder bullying and limit the consequences.

4.2 Participants Recognize the Importance of Implementing Different Strategies and Approaches in the Classroom in Order to Prevent Bullying Incidents

This theme describes how the teachers execute a variety of lessons and activities with their students in order to help reduce the number of bullying incidents that occur. The section is important because it illustrates different teaching practices that can be implemented in the classrooms to foster student awareness about bullying. Student awareness is believed to be important because it can lessen the frequency of bullying and therefore reduce the number of victims. The first sub-theme will explain how the teachers build empathy among their students to reduce bullying. The next two sub-themes will explain how different mediums, such as books and hands-on activities, are used to help students understand the ramifications of bullying.

4.2.1 Teachers recognize the importance of building empathy among students

Both Ava and Maggie advocated that having a sense of empathy can prevent students from bullying others because students can then understand what it is like to be in the victim’s shoes. Ava asserted that it is important for students to be able to empathize with the victims’ experiences and emotions, in order for them to refrain from bullying others. Ava noted:

Empathy is powerful. It is important for students to understand another person’s feelings, and imagine walking in that person’s shoes. If students can relate to
others, they won’t want to bully them. Instead, they will want to try and ensure that no one becomes a victim and experiences the pain of being bullied.

Maggie has also found that building empathy among students was an effective way to combat bullying. In her eyes:

Some students may never experience being bullied and therefore never have the first-hand experience of what it actually feels like. They may never know the pain of being called names, teased and excluded. Bullies themselves may never experience being tormented and not understand the cause-and-effect of their actions. This is why everyone needs to understand what bullying is and understand the hurt it inflicts on others. This understanding can make students sensitive to the topic and recognize the power of name-calling, social exclusion, etc.

Research findings support Maggie and Ava’s views on empathy in relation to victimization. Studies have suggested that individuals who bully are thought to have less empathy than those who do not (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). This is because a person who shares and/or comprehends another’s negative emotional reaction will be less inclined to inflict harm. Evidence suggests that students who bully tend to be less empathetic to the feelings of others, in general (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Therefore, empathy enhancement in students may be beneficial to help prevent bullying.

Both Ava and Maggie use different strategies, which Crothers and Kolbert (2008) refer to as guidance approaches, to help build empathy among their students. Ava explained that she favours using books, in which bullying occurs in the plot. She believed that when students learn how a person who is bullied feels, it could help them to develop a sense of empathy. The next sub-theme will further address how the teachers used books
to help prevent bullying.

4.2.2 Teachers recognize the significance of using books

The teachers iterated that one way they implemented anti-bullying practices in their classrooms was through the targeted use of books. Both Maggie and Ava explained that they used books relating to bullying because they felt that this medium stimulated discussion about the issue. This directly correlates with the research conducted by Crothers and Kolbert (2008), who found that books could help counteract bullying because they can build the students’ awareness of bullying, in order to prevent and stop it.

Maggie strongly believed that reading books to her students could have the power to reduce bullying. She explained that one of her favourite books to read, in order to address bullying was, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today*, by Carol McCloud:

The book is big in my classroom. The goal is for you to fill your bucket, so it is full. You can only fill your bucket if you do good things. If you are mean or do unkind things, the things in your bucket will [fall out]. When my students do good things, their buckets fill up, if they do things that are unkind and mean I take things out. It’s not about rewarding the nice behaviour, it’s about learning what good behaviour is and understanding that there are consequences for mean behaviour. I want my students to understand that when we call someone a name, when we exclude our peers, when we bully, when we ignore someone, when we hit someone, etc, there are repercussions.

Ava also expressed her support for the book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* She frequently used this book as a resource, when teaching the primary grades. She believed
this book was a good resource to address bullying, because it used the power of kindness to combat bullying. She stated:

I really believe that if students understand how to be kind, want to be kind and choose to be kind, bullying can be prevented. I think kindness negates bullying.

Alongside books, the teachers also engage in different hands-on activities with their students, which help students to understand the seriousness of bullying. The next sub-theme will elaborate on these activities that were used by the teachers.

**4.2.3 Teachers recognize the importance of hands-on anti-bullying activities**

Maggie and Ava both illustrated different hands-on activities that they implemented in their classrooms, in order to prevent bullying. In turn, this information can enrich the existing research on the prevention of bullying, by adding to the strategies that have already proven to be effective. Maggie explained that to discourage bullying behaviours, she helps students understand the seriousness of bullying and the long lasting consequences that can result from it, she uses a paper crumple activity. The activity begins by telling students to take a piece of paper and crumple it up, stomp on it and mess it up. The goal is then to unfold the paper and make it look how it originally looked. They are also instructed to tell the paper they are sorry. However, Maggie indicated that students realize that even though they said they were sorry and they tried to smooth out the paper to make it look like the original, all the scars from how they treated it, were still there. She explains to her students that no matter how hard they try to fix the paper, the dents and creases and scars will never go away. Maggie then relates this activity to bullying, by explaining that this is what happens to someone who is bullied. She then engages her students in critical discussions about victimization.
Similarly, Ava did an activity with two apples to convey the message that bullying is serious and has ever-lasting impacts. She starts the activity by taking one apple and telling her students that she thinks the apple is revolting and hates it. She takes it one step further, by dropping the apple on the floor and hitting it on top of the table. After Ava explains to her students that she also doesn't want them to like the apple and they should say mean things to it as well. Students then pass the apple around and say cruel things to it, like, “You’re ugly,” or “Ew you smell.” She noted that one time she had a student say to the apple, “I hope you die.” Once this apple is passed around, Ava takes the other apple, tells the class that she likes this apple and says something kind to it. She will then tell the class to also say kind things to the apple. Next she holds up both apples and discusses the similarities and differences between the two apples with the class. The students acknowledge that the apples look the same. However, after she cuts the apples open, the students are able to see the difference. The apple that heard kind words looks juicy and fresh inside and the apple that was treated meanly is bruised on the inside. Ava noted the connection of the apple activity to bullying:

When people are bullied, they feel awful inside, just like the apple looked awful inside. Sometimes, when people are bullied they often don’t tell anyone or show anyone what they are feeling, so nobody knows. If we never cut open the apple, we would never know the damage that we caused.

After examining different studies, Crothers and Kolbert (2008) concluded that activities, such as the ones outlined above, could sensitize students to the problem of bullying. Sensitizing students allow individuals to develop the ability to understand and share the feelings with the victims (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). This has been suggested
to help reduce bullying. Nevertheless, even though there are many exercises that can be used in anti-bullying practices, research still provides evidence to suggest that bullying prevails. Therefore, teachers are advised to help support students who are victimized (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). The next theme will describe the different strategies that Maggie and Ava have used, in order to help support students who are victims of bullying.

4.3 Teachers Recognize the Need for Victims of Bullying to be Supported Through a Variety of Strategies

This theme describes how the teachers use different strategies to support students who are bullied. This section is significant because a teacher’s response to victims can have a significant influence on the severity of the consequences that victims face. Therefore, it is important to understand the different steps that teachers can take to help support these students. The first sub-theme will explain how the teachers believed that they could help alleviate the pain caused by bullying, by creating a classroom, in which students were encouraged to seek support. The next sub-theme will explain how teachers support victims psychologically. The last sub-theme will identify how the teachers establish firm limits concerning unacceptable conduct in order to deter unkind behaviour.

4.3.1 Bullying support involves creating a classroom which encourages open communication

Ava and Maggie believe that their classrooms need to be set up in a manner, which fosters an environment that empowers students to turn to their teachers for support. Ava explained that she makes her classroom inclusive by utilizing the following practices:

I co-create a classroom contract with my students on how we behave and treat our peers and teachers. I establish the use of the four agreements from [the] Tribes
[Learning Community] of attentive listening; appreciation/no put downs; mutual respect and the right to pass. I discuss bullying with my students and we do anti-bullying activities. With my older students I like reading the novel Wonder by R.J. Palacio, because it tells a story about victimization from the perspective of the victim.

Maggie described her classroom as one in which she has a strong relationship with her students, and there is a respectful and trustful rapport between the students and teacher. She believes that this relationship can benefit the students. She hopes that if they are bullied, they will feel comfortable enough to open up about their feelings and experiences to the teacher, because of the special bond in place. Similarly, Scarpaci (2006) supported the need for classrooms to encourage open communication and advocated for an environment that promotes open communication, as a means to prevent bullying. Scarpaci (2006) found that oftentimes bullies will depend on the silence of their victims; however, if open communication is practiced, the bullies might find it difficult to victimize their peers.

Ava further elaborated on the significance of an environment, in which students can feel safe and cared for. She thinks that this is especially relevant in the case of older students, whose past experiences have taught them that teachers are not supportive. Ava expressed concern that past experiences could deter some students from seeking support from their teachers in the future. Ava strongly believed that if students do not feel that their feelings are valued, they might keep silent about their bullying experiences. Ava elaborated:

It’s sad, because many teachers don’t intervene and support the victims. There are
many different reasons for the [lack of intervention]. Some think that bullying behaviour is a ‘normal’ part of growing up. Some think the bully will just go away if the victim ignores it. Some think that children should just resolve their own problems because learning to solve conflicts is a skill that needs to be acquired. Many believe they don’t have the time to deal with it. They could think that students should not tattletale, and when one discloses incidents of bullying, one is being a tattletale. Sometimes teachers might not be aware that the bullying is going on because it happens on the playground and no one has seen or reported it. One never knows the reasons for sure. But [regardless], there continues to be students who are being bullied, and when teachers turn a blind eye or are unaware, the victims do not get the support they need.

Ava’s observations support the literature, which suggest that school staff are largely unaware of the extent of bullying that occurs at their school. In a literature review by Pepler and Craig (2000), they found that 71% of teachers, but only 25% of students, say that teachers almost always intervene in incidences of bullying. The discrepancy between these numbers is concerning because it suggests that students do not perceive their teachers as supportive. The statistic is therefore alarming because there is a significant amount of research that provides evidence to suggest that victims do not communicate with their teachers about their bullying experiences. (Rigby, 2000). The different strategies that Ava and Maggie use to create a classroom environment that encourages open communication could help reduce the statistic that was given above. The next sub-theme will discuss how Ava and Maggie support students mentally.
4.3.2 Bullying support requires students to be supported psychologically

Both Ava and Maggie advocated that it is important to support students emotionally in order to reduce the damage that victimization can cause. Ava explained that she believes it is vital to speak with victims one-on-one because they need to feel that they are understood, cared for, supported, and that their feelings are worthy and validated.

Similarly Maggie believed that:

As teachers, we need to listen, and help these kids who are being bullied. We need to help the students resolve these bullying conflicts. We need to help them feel good about themselves.

Ava and Maggie’s views align with research conducted by Rigby (2000), who explained the importance of teachers listening sympathetically to students. According to Rigby (2000), they need to listen to students as they discuss their feelings and share what happened. Listening to students is a type of support associated with psychological support. This type of support has been shown to counter the effects of victimization, such as anxiety, stress, depression and loneliness. Research findings have also concluded that students who are bullied benefit from psychological support that is immediate (Yoon & Kerber, 2003; Pepler & Craig, 2000). This finding highlights the importance of teachers, such as Maggie and Ava, taking the adequate steps necessary to help them detect bullying and/or are aware that bullying is occurring, in order for them to support victims immediately.

Maggie continued to advocate that the teacher is responsible for helping kids to resolve incidents of bullying. She explained that it is important to make a victim feel good about oneself. They must not internalize what the bully is projecting on to them so
that they can build their self-worth and keep it intact. Maggie thinks that it is imperative that the bully knows what he or she is doing and understands the ramifications of the negative behaviour.

Maggie explained that she responds to bullying incidents immediately:

I immediately approach the students involved and talk about it. If you push it aside and deal with it later, the victim could think that he or she is not important or a priority. The victims could come to believe that their feelings aren't important, and the bully’s actions are acceptable.

Mishna (2004) further reinforced the need for teachers to listen to and validate children’s feelings. The researcher explained that if children feel that they are not listened to or validated, they can begin to doubt their own feelings and stop telling adults about their victimization. This research supports both Ava and Maggie’s actions to take the time and put in the effort to support their students emotionally. While it has been proven that it is beneficial for teachers to listen to victims, it has also been found that it is valuable for victims to observe teachers condemning bullying behaviour. The next sub-theme will share how Ava and Maggie are assertive when dealing with unkind behaviour.

4.3.3 Bullying support involves having firm limits on unacceptable behaviours

Both Maggie and Ava expressed that they have clear expectations concerning behaviours that are unacceptable and are firm about making sure students abide by these protocols. Ava stated that she condemns any behaviour that she witnesses, which has the potential to be harmful. She explained that even if she hears a student calling another student a name, such as, “You’re an idiot,” she will intervene in the interaction. Ava reasoned:
I understand kids joke around with each other and call each other names like ‘stupid’ or ‘idiot’ and what not, but even if it is meant jokingly, I will not tolerate it. You’ll never be able to fully understand what a child is feeling on the inside, how the child may internalize something, or what specific words may trigger negative feelings. And I feel that if a student’s hurtful actions are ignored, he or she could think it is acceptable and continue to call that child ‘stupid’. I abide by the old saying, ‘If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.’

Yoon and Kerber (2003) argued that when teachers take a passive approach in dealing with bullying, it could be detrimental to the victims. An absence of consistent and effective disciplinary responses in the classroom is likely to reinforce the bully’s behaviour. Furthermore, if teachers ignore negative behaviours, findings have suggested that it can set the tone for what is acceptable. For example, if Ava ignored a student calling another student ‘stupid’, it could set the precedent for what is acceptable. Thus, even if an incident is a one-time occurrence it could help to guide a bully’s behaviour. Ava’s actions reflect the research because studies have found that classroom and school environments can indirectly support bullying. This provides incentive for school personnel to engage in effective behaviour management practices.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the three themes, which emerged from my research. The data was collected from interviews with two elementary school teachers, Ava and Maggie. It was found that when the participants understood who their students were they were more likely to recognize bullying behaviours. Both Ava and Maggie believed that bullying was an extremely serious issue because of the wide range of negative
consequences that could arise. This perspective encouraged them to create a classroom environment, which implemented strategies to reduce bullying and support the victims. The literature on bullying has concluded that there is a significant need for improvement in teachers’ abilities to help and protect students who are victimized (Craig et al., 2007). The findings from this study add to the literature on this topic because Ava and Maggie’s strategies and approaches give some more insights into teachers’ initiatives in anti-bullying education. The research findings from Chapter 4 will be used in the next chapter to discuss the overall implications and significance of my research study. I will also give recommendations and highlight potential areas for future research.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will give an overview of the key findings of my research study, along with its significance. I will then discuss the implications of my research for the educational community and for myself, as a researcher and teacher. Next, I will explain the recommendations that I have for teachers, school boards, students and the victims of bullying, based on my findings. Then, I will discuss different areas for further research in this field pertaining to bullying. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by summarizing my findings, implications and recommendations.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

There were several key findings that emerged from the data collected from the participants who were interviewed. I organized my findings into three main themes in order to help investigate the research questions that guided this study.

The first theme focused on the factors that influenced how the participants supported students who were bullied. Ava and Maggie both believed that understanding their students made them better equipped to notice changes in their behaviour, which is a key indication of bullying. As well, the participants explained the importance of observation, because they found that by observing their students they could pick up on the social dynamics which can also indicate victimization. In addition, the participants explained that their understanding of the consequences that victims could experience made them committed to supporting victims and preventing bullying. Understanding bullying and recognizing when students are victimized is of great significance because research has suggested that teachers do not intervene nearly enough in incidents of
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bullying (Rigby, 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Therefore, comprehending the seriousness of bullying and being able to recognize bullying can help the victims receive the support they require.

The second theme concentrated on how the participants implemented different strategies and approaches to help prevent bullying. Ava and Maggie actively developed empathy in their students in order to help them share the feelings of others. They believed that when students were empathetic they were less inclined to carry out behaviours of bullying. Moreso, the participants used books that could be related to bullying to build awareness about the behaviour and in turn prevent and stop it from occurring. As well, the participants used hands-on activities in their classrooms to help students understand the long-lasting and damaging consequences that can arise from victimization. They found that when students engaged in critical thinking and discussions pertaining to bullying, it could help them to grasp the harm it causes and how one’s actions have consequences. These strategies and approaches are significant because as bullying remains extremely prevalent in schools, school personnel need to have the knowledge to enable them to take the appropriate actions to stop bullying (Rigby, 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

The third theme focused on how the participants supported victims of bullying through a variety of strategies. Ava and Maggie ensured that their classrooms were set up in a manner that encouraged and empowered students to seek support from their teachers. Their classrooms had co-constructed codes of behaviour on how to treat one’s peers. In addition, they believed that there needed to be a respectful and trustful rapport between the students and teacher. Furthermore, both Ava and Maggie advocated that the victims
of bullying needed to be supported psychologically. They ensured that their students felt understood, cared for, supported, and that their feelings were validated. In addition, it was found that participants never took a passive approach when dealing with bullying. They used disciplinary strategies to ensure that the bully’s behaviours were not reinforced. The findings regarding the actions the participants took to support victims are significant because research has provided evidence that suggests that victims tend to feel unsupported, unworthy and unheard (Rigby, 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

5.2 Implications

In this section I will outline the implications of my research findings. I will begin by discussing the implications of my research findings for the educational community and then explain the implications of my findings concerning myself as a researcher and teacher.

5.2.1 The education community

The literature on bullying illustrates the importance of a teacher’s role in implementing different strategies and approaches in order to prevent bullying and intervene when it does occur. In this research study, both participants addressed the initiatives they took in their classrooms to impede bullying behaviour. They also explained the tactics they employed to help support students who were victimized. However, while these teachers have shown commitment to taking steps to hinder students from bullying and supporting victims, research has suggested that bullying continues to be extremely prevalent in many schools; teachers do not intervene when students are being bullied in school and are often unaware that bullying incidents are occurring and that victims of bullying often feel unsupported (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). As a result,
the implications of my research study provides teacher education programs, school boards, schools, principals and teachers with knowledge of different strategies and approaches that can be carried out to help address the issue of bullying and help the victims.

The literature on victimization has found significant evidence, which documents the wide range of negative consequences, experienced by victims of bullying emotionally, psychologically, socially and academically. Studies have consistently shown that teachers are at the forefront to intervene in bullying situations and that they play a key role in determining how victims cope. Therefore it is important that teachers know how to effectively implement strategies to support victims. As a community we want our children to grow into individuals who are academically, psychologically and socially proficient (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). However, if victims of bullying are unable to get the adequate support needed, one’s academic, psychological and social development could be affected.

5.2.2 Implications for myself as a teacher and researcher

As a teacher I have developed a greater understanding of practices that can be put in to place, to help prevent bullying in the classroom and to support students who are bullied. By reviewing the literature on bullying, I have learned that not only do teachers play a major role in helping students develop academically, but also they can significantly influence their psychological and social development. Our actions as teachers affect our students and therefore it is important for me as a teacher to understand how I can best support my students. However, in order to understand how to best support my students I need to understand different strategies that work and don’t work and the
reasons behind this. Acquiring this knowledge requires actively participating in the research world. Through research I can learn about the complex phenomena of bullying in more detail, to gain a greater insight into the topic.

5.3 Recommendations

In this section I will provide recommendations based on my research, to help ensure that school personnel are successful in their attempt to support victims of bullying. Recommendations will be given to help assist teachers’ educational programs, school boards, principals and teachers in supporting students who are victimized. In addition, I will provide recommendations to the victims of bullying in order to provide them with some support.

5.3.1 Teacher education programs

- It is important that teacher candidates are taught anti-bullying practices in order for them to understand how to prevent bullying from occurring in their own classrooms. Through these practices, they can learn different strategies that can be implemented in order to create a classroom environment, which hinders bullying behaviours. Teacher candidates should feel prepared and comfortable to intervene in incidents of bullying in their own classrooms.

- It is essential that teacher candidates are knowledgeable about all types of bullying and are taught that every single type of bullying including, verbal bullying and social exclusion, have serious ramifications. They need to understand the multitude of the consequences associated with victimization such as, depression, anxiety, suicide and absence from school, and that these consequences can follow individuals into adulthood.
5.3.2 School boards

- Anti-bullying policies and anti-bullying initiatives need to be put into effect throughout all schools in the school board.
- School boards need to ensure that schools have the resources that they require to prevent bullying and intervene in bullying situations.

5.3.3 Principals

- Principals need to investigate bullying incidents directly and address bullying situations immediately.
- Principals need to ensure that their school adopts anti-bullying practices. They need to create a school climate where students feel safe and where bullying is strongly condemned.
- It is important that principals hold their teachers accountable for implementing anti-bullying approaches in their classroom and encourage teachers to be vigilant when on yard-duty to help ensure that bullying is not occurring on the playground.

5.3.4 Teachers

- Teachers need to integrate lessons about anti-bullying into the curriculum. They need to sensitize their students to the issues of bullying through the use of activities, books and discussions that would enable them to understand the seriousness of the behaviour and the harm it causes.
- It is critical that teachers do not turn a blind eye to bullying incidents. Teachers must respond to incidents of bullying immediately with compassion, empathy and care. They must validate the victims’ feelings and make them feel worthy. Also, teachers need to take the time to listen sympathetically to their students’ experiences and feelings.
5.3.5 Victims

- It is important that victims of bullying discuss their bullying experiences and their feelings. They need to receive support from their teachers, in order to help limit the negative consequences the victims could experience.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

This study was conducted on a small scale using participants in the primary grades. Therefore it would be beneficial to increase the number of participants and include more teachers from the primary grades, as well as teachers from the junior and intermediate grades. Expanding the research study to include teachers who are representative of all school grades would provide valuable information on how to support students of all ages who are victimized.

Furthermore, it would be useful to interview principals and administrators in the school board, to learn their perspectives and strategies concerning how to support victims of bullying. Interviewing participants in these positions are important because they will have significant influence over what issues are important within schools and the resources that are provided to teachers to help them deal with bullying.

As well, it would be extremely valuable to include victims of bullying as participants in the studies to understand how teachers can support them. This would allow for victims’ voices to be heard and allow for researchers and school personnel to understand their perspective in relation to the support they receive or wish to receive. The victims’ point of view would provide important information that would allow teachers and school administrators to reflect on their current approaches and potentially modify them in order to help students in the future.
5.5 Concluding Comments

The main purpose of the research question that guided my research study was to discover how a sample of elementary school teachers provided one-on-one support to students who were bullied. By posing this research question, my goal was to gain a better understanding of how teachers could effectively respond to victims of bullying, in order to support and console them. My lack of knowledge in this area, my observations of teachers intervening in bullying incidents and a literature review, which concluded that victims of bullying often feel unsupported by their teachers, all led me to want to deeply understand this topic. By interviewing the two participants, I obtained valuable information that could help offset the negative consequences of victimization and learned about the actions that teachers could take to prevent bullying from occurring in the classroom. Throughout my literature review on the subject of bullying, I learned how important the role of a teacher is to a victim’s positive academic, social and psychological development. Therefore, it is critical for teacher education programs, school boards, principals and teachers to understand the measures they can take to positively assist victims. With a combined effort from school personnel in the educational community, we have the ability to help offset the ramifications, which can arise from bullying and stop bullying from prevailing in our schools.
References


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and relevant contextual factors. *Social Development, 9*(2), 226-245.


APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR INTERVIEWS

Date:

Dear ____________________________,

My Name is Jamie McLean 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 provide individual support for students who are victims of bullying, and how they implement anti-bullying education in their classroom teaching. I am interested in interviewing elementary teachers with at least five years experience who have a demonstrated committed to, and leadership in, anti-bullying and peace education. 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. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through 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. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Angela MacDonald. 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 during the interview. 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 to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview 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,

Jamie McLean
jamie.mclean@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: Angela MacDonald
Contact Info: 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 Jamie McLean 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

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making the time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn how teachers provide individual support for students who are victims of bullying, and how they implement anti-bullying education in their classroom teaching. This interview should take approximately 45 – 60 minutes and is comprised of approximately 25 questions. The interview protocol has been divided into 4 sections, beginning with your background information, followed by your perspectives and beliefs about bullying, then your teaching practices, supports and challenges you face, and concluding with questions regarding next steps. I want to remind you that you can choose not to answer any question, and can withdraw from participation at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section A – Background Information

i) What did you major/minor/ specialize in, during your undergraduate degree and postgraduate degree?

ii) How long have you been teaching for?

iii) What is your current position?
   a. What grades and subjects do you teach?
   b. What grades have you taught as a teacher?
   c. Do you have any other roles in the school? (e.g. coach, advisor, counselor etc.)

iv) Can you tell me more about the school you teach in? (e.g. size, demographics, program priorities)
   a. Does your school have any special programming related to bullying and anti-bullying education? (e.g. campaigns, clubs, task force, curriculum support)
   b. What is your school’s approach to addressing bullying when it happens? How does the school typically respond? (e.g. discipline, peer mediation programs, conflict resolution, restorative justice)
   c. How prevalent would you say bullying is in your school?
   d. How often do you encounter bullying in your classroom?

v) What experiences have contributed to developing your interest in the topic of bullying and your commitment to anti-bullying education? What experiences have contributed to preparing you to address bullying in schools?
a. Personal experiences? (e.g. own experience in K-12, family/friends)
b. Educational experiences? (e.g. university course work, teachers college, additional qualifications, professional development). What training have you received around bullying in schools?
c. Professional experiences? (e.g. positions held, teaching experience, observations of school-based bullying)

Section B – Teacher’s Perspectives/Beliefs

i) What does “bullying” mean to you?
   a. How do you understand this term?
   b. How do you characterize it?
   c. What do you consider different forms of bullying?
   d. What kinds of behaviours do you exclude from your understanding of bullying and why?

ii) What do you believe students’ motivations are for bullying? Why do students bully each other?

iii) In your experience, who are the students who are the targets of bullying?

iv) What indicators of bullying behavior do you see from students? How do you when students are engaging in bullying?

v) What indicators of victimization from bullying do you see from students? How do you know when a student is being bullied?

vi) Based on your knowledge and experiences do you believe there are different types of bullying?
   a. What are different types of bullying you have encountered?
   b. Do you believe certain types of bullying are more serious then other types?
   c. In your view, what are some of the most serious forms of bullying?

vii) What is the role of the bystander in bullying, from your perspective?

viii) Based on your knowledge and experiences what are the consequences that victims of bullying face? What impact does bullying have on students?

ix) In your view, what is the role of the teacher in preventing and responding to bullying?

x) What is the role of school?

xi) How well do you think that schools do in preventing and responding to bullying and why?

xii) How do you think schools and teachers could do a better job preventing and responding to bullying?

Section C – Teacher Practices

i) What does anti-bullying education look like in your teaching practice?
   a. What curriculum do you connect this to and why?
   b. What are your learning goals when you teach students about bullying?
   c. What opportunities for learning do you create? Can you provide some examples?
d. What resources support you in implementing anti-bullying education? (e.g. books, children’s literature, websites, videos, music, guest speakers)
e. How do students respond to your teaching about anti-bullying? What indicators of learning have you observed from them?
f. What, if anything, do you assess when teaching anti-bullying education? How do you assess student learning in this area?
g. I would like to shift now from talking about you do preventive work on the topic of bullying to how you respond to incidences of bullying.
   i. How do you respond when you see an incident of bullying?
   ii. What instructional strategies do you use and why?
h. How do you support victims of bullying?
   i. Can you tell me about a time when you have supported a victim of bullying?
      1. Who was being bullied and why?
      2. In what form did the bullying take place?
      3. What indicators of bullying did you see?
      4. How, if at all, did you intervene?
      5. In your view, did the bullying incident affect the victim’s development?
         a. Academically?
         b. Socially?
         c. Psychologically?
   6. What support were you able to offer the victim of bullying?
   7. How did the victim respond?
   8. Do you have any other examples?
i. In your experience, what are some of the most important considerations that teachers need to make when supporting victims of bullying?
   i. What are some key avenues of support?
   ii. What are some effective ways that teachers can help to foster confidence and hope for students who have been bullied?
   iii. What are some of the ways that you do this? What do you say to students who exhibit feelings of depression and low self-worth? How do you console and encourage them?

j. How do you create an atmosphere in your classroom that is inclusive for victims of bullying?

Section D – Supports and Challenges
   i) What range of factors and resources support you and your implementation of anti-bullying education? (e.g. school leadership, community organizations, access to technology, books, websites, anti-bullying programs and curriculum etc.)
   ii) What range of challenges do you encounter when dealing with issues of bullying?
      a. How do you respond to these challenges?
      b. How could the educational system further support you in addressing these challenges?
Section E – Next Steps

i) What goals do you have for your anti-bullying education programming?

ii) What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers who are committed to implementing anti-bullying education and to supporting individual student who are the victims of bullying?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.